

REGENERATION OR THE NEW BIRTH Chapter 2 ITS NATURE

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Transcript

REGENERATION OR THE NEW BIRTH

Chapter 2

ITS NATURE

We have now arrived at the most difficult part of our subject. Necessarily so, for we are about to contemplate the workings of God. These are ever mysterious, and nothing whatever can be really known about them, save what He Himself has revealed thereon in His Word. In endeavoring to ponder what He has said on His work of regeneration two dangers need to be guarded against: first. limiting our thoughts to any isolated statement thereon or any single figure the Spirit has employed to describe it. Second, reasoning from what He has said by carnalizing the figures He has employed. When referring to spiritual things. God has used terms which were originally intended (by man) to express material objects, hence we need to be constantly on our guard against transferring to the former erroneous ideas carried over from the latter. From this we shall be preserved if we diligently compare all that has been said on each subject. In treating of the nature of regeneration, much damage has been wrought, especially in recent years, by men confining their attention to a single figure, namely, that of the "new birth," which is only one out of many expressions used in the Scriptures to denote that mighty and miraculous work of God within His people which fits them for communion with Him. Thus, in Colossians 1:12, 13 the same vital experience is spoken of as God's having "made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." Regeneration is the commencement of a new experience, which is so real and revolutionizing that the one who is the subject of this Divine begetting is spoken of as a "new creature"; "old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). A new spiritual life has been imparted to the soul by God, so that the one receiving it is vitally implanted into Christ. The nature of regeneration can, perhaps, be best perceived by comparing and contrasting it with what took place at the fall, for though the person who is renewed by the Spirit receives more than what Adam lost by his rebellion, yet, the one is, really, God's answer to the former. Now it is most important that we should clearly recognize that no faculty was lost by man when he fell. When man was created, God gave unto him a spirit and soul and body, Thus, man was a tri-partite being When man fell, the Divine threat "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die" was duly executed, and man died spiritually. But that does not mean that either his Spirit or soul, or any part thereof, ceased to be, for in Scripture "death" never signifies annihilation, but is a state of

separation. The prodigal son was "dead" while he was in the far country (Luke 15:24), because he was separated from his father. "Alienated from the life of God" (Eph. 4:18) describes the fearful state of one who is unregenerated, so does "she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth" (1 Tim 5:6), that which is dead spiritually is dead Godwards, while alive in sin the spirit and soul and body, each being active against God. That which took place at the fall was not the destruction of either portion of man's threefold being, but the vitiating or corrupting of them. And that, by the introduction of a new principle within him, namely, sin, which is more of a quality than a substance. But let it be stated very emphatically that a "nature" is not a concrete entity but rather that which characterizes and impels an entity or creature. It is the nature of gravitation to attract, it is the nature of the wind to blow, it is the nature of fire to burn. A "nature" is not a tangible thing, but a principle of operation, a power impelling to action. Thus, when we say that fallen man possesses a "sinful nature," it must not be understood that something as substantial as his soul or spirit was added to his being, but instead, that the principle of evil entered into him, which polluted and defiled every part of his constitution, as frost entering fruit spoils it. At the fall, man lost none of the faculties with which the Creator had originally endowed him, but he lost the power to use his faculties Godwards. All desire Godwards, all love for his Maker, and real knowledge of Him, was lost. Sin possessed him: sin as a principle of evil, as a power of operation, as a defiling influence, took complete charge of his spirit and soul and body, so that he became the "servant" or slave "of sin" (John 8:34). As such, man is no more capable of producing that which is good, spiritual, and acceptable to God, than frost can burn or fire freeze: "they that are in the flesh (remain in their natural and fallen condition) cannot please God" (Rom. 8:8). They have no power to do so, for all their faculties, every part of their being, is completely under the dominion of sin. So completely is fallen man beneath the power of sin and spiritual death, that the things of the Spirit of God are "foolishness" unto him, "neither can he know them" (1 Cor. 2:14). Now that which takes place at regeneration is the reversing of what happened at the fall.. The one born again is, through Christ, and by the Spirit's operation, restored to union and communion with God; the one who before was spiritually dead, is now spiritually alive: John 5:24. Just as spiritual death was brought about by the entrance into man's, being of the principle of evil, so spiritual life is the introduction of a principle of holiness. God communicates a new principle, as real and as potent as sin, Divine grace is now imparted. A holy disposition is wrought in the soul. A new temper of spirit is bestowed upon the inner man. But no new faculties are created within him, rather are his original faculties enriched, ennobled, and empowered. Just as man did not become less than a threefold being when he fell, so he does not become more than a threefold being when he is renewed. Nor will he in Heaven itself: his spirit and soul and body will simply be glorified, i.e., completely delivered from every taint of sin, and perfectly conformed to the image of God's Son. At regeneration a new nature is imparted by God. But again we need to be closely on our guard lest we carnalize our conception of what is denoted by that expression. Much confusion has been caused through failure to recognize that it is a person, and not merely a "nature" which is born of the Spirit: "ye must be born again" (John 3:7), not merely something in you must be; "he which is born of God" (1 John 3:9). The same person who was spiritually dead—his whole being alienated from God—is now made spiritually alive: his whole being reconciled to God. This must be so, or otherwise there would be no preservation of the identity of the individual. It is the person, and not simply a nature which is born of God: "Of His own will begat He us" (James 1:18). It is a new birth of the individual himself, and not of something in him. The nature is never changed, but the person is—relatively, not absolutely. The person of the regenerate man is essentially the same as the person of the unregenerate: each having a spirit, and soul and body. But just as in fallen man there is also a principle of evil which has corrupted every part of his threefold being, which "principle" is his "sinful nature" (so-called because it expresses his evil disposition and character as it is the "nature" of swine to be filthy), so when a person is born again another and new

"principle" is introduced into his being, a new "nature" or disposition, a disposition which propels him Godwards. Thus, in both cases, "nature" is a quality rather than a substance. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" must not be conceived of as something substantial, distinct from the soul of the regenerate, like one portion of matter added to another; rather is it that which spiritualizes all his inward faculties, as the "flesh" had carnalized them. Again; "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" is to be carefully distinguished from that "spirit" which every man has in addition to his soul and body: (see Num. 16:22; Eccl. 12:7; Zech. 12:1). That which is born of the Spirit is not something tangible, but that which is spiritual and holy, and that is a quality rather than a substance. In proof of this compare the usage of the word "spirit" in these passages: in James 4:5 the inclination and disposition to envy is called "the spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy." In Luke 9:55 Christ said to His disciples, "ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of," thereby signifying, ye are ignorant of what a fiery disposition is in your hearts. See also Numbers 5:14; Hosea 4:12, 2 Timothy 1:7. That which is born of the Spirit is a principle of spiritual life, which renovates all the faculties of the soul. Some help upon this mysterious part of our subject is to be obtained by noting that in such passages as John 3:6, etc., "spirit" is contrasted from the "flesh." Now it should scarcely need saying that "the flesh" is not a concrete entity, being quite distinct from the body. When the term "flesh" is used in a moral sense the reference is always to the corruption of fallen man's nature. In Galatians 5:19-21 the "works of the flesh" are described, among them being "hatred" and "envying," in connection with which the body (as distinguished from the mind) is not implicated—clear proof that the "flesh" and the "body" are not synonymous terms. In Galatians 5 the "flesh" is used to designate those evil tendencies and affections which result in the sins there mentioned. Thus, the "flesh" refers to the degenerate state of man's spirit and soul and body, as the "spirit" refers to the regenerate state of the spirit and soul—the regeneration of the body being yet future. The privative (darkness is the privative of light) or negative side of regeneration, is that Divine grace gives a mortal wound to indwelling sin. Sin is not then eradicated nor totally slain in the believer, but it is divested of its reigning power over his faculties. The Christian is no longer the helpless slave of sin, for he resists it, fights against it, and to speak of a helpless victim "fighting," is a contradiction in terms. At the new birth sin receives its death-blow, though its dying struggles within us are yet powerful and acutely felt. Proof of what we have said is found in the fact that while sin's solicitations were once agreeable to us, they are now hated. This aspect of regeneration is presented in Scripture under a variety of figures, such as the taking away of the heart of stone (Ezek. 36:26), the binding of the strong man (Matt. 12:29), etc. The absolute dominion of sin over us is destroyed by God (Rom. 6:14). The positive side of regeneration is that Divine grace effects a complete change in the state of the soul, by infusing a principle of spiritual life, which renovates all its faculties. It is this which constitutes its subject a "new creature," not in respect of his essence, but of his views, his desires, his aspirations, his habits. Regeneration or the new birth is the Divine communication of a powerful and revolutionizing principle in the soul and spirit, under the influence of which all their native faculties are exercised in a different manner from that in which they were formerly employed, and in this sense "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). His thoughts are "new," the objects of his choice are "new," his aims and motives are "new," and thereby the whole of his external deportment is changed. "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10). The reference here is to subjective grace. There is an objective grace, inherent in God, which is His love, favour, goodwill for His elect. There is also a subjective grace which terminates on them, whereby a change is wrought in them. This is by the infusion of a principle of spiritual life, which is the spring of the Christian's actions. This "principle" is called "a new heart" and a "new spirit" (Ezek. 36:26). It is a supernatural habit, residing in every faculty and power of the soul, as a principle of holy and spiritual operation. Some have spoken of this supernatural experience as a "change of heart." If by this expression be meant that there is a change

wrought in the fallen nature itself, as though that which is natural is transformed into that which is spiritual, as though that which was born of the flesh ceased to be "flesh," and became that which is born of the Spirit, then, the term is to be rejected. But if by this expression be meant, an acknowledgement of the reality of the Divine work, which is wrought in those whom God regenerates, it is quite permissible. When treating of regeneration under the figure of the new birth, some writers have introduced analogies from natural birth which Scripture by no means warrants, in fact disallows. Physical birth is the bringing forth into this world of a creature, a complete personality, which before conception had no existence whatsoever. But the one who is regenerated had a complete personality before he was born again. To this statement it may be objected, Not a spiritual personality What is meant by this? Spirit and matter are opposites, and we only create confusion if we speak or think of that which is spiritual as being something concrete. Regeneration is not the creating of a person which hitherto had no existence, but the renewing and restoring of a person whom sin had unfitted for communion with God, and this by the communication of a nature or principle of life, which gives a new and different bias to all his old faculties. It is altogether an erroneous view to regard a Christian as made up of two distinct personalities. As "justification" describes the change in the Christian's objective relationship to God, so "regeneration" denotes that intrinsic subjective change which is wrought in the inclinations and tendencies of their souls Godwards. This saving work of God within His people is likened unto a "birth" because it is the gateway into a new world, the beginning of an entirely new experience, and also because as the natural birth is an issuing from a place of darkness and confinement (the womb) into a state of light and liberty, so is the experience of the soul when the Spirit quickens us. But the very fact that this revolutionizing experience is also likened unto a resurrection (1 John 3:14) should deliver us from forming a one-sided conception of what is meant by the "new birth" and the "new creature," for resurrection is not the absolute creation of a new body, but the restoration and glorification of the old body. Regeneration is also called a Divine "begetting" (1 Pet. 1:3), because the image or likeness of the Begetter is conveyed and stamped upon the soul. As the first Adam begat a son in his own image and likeness (Gen. 5:3), so the last Adam has an "image" (Rom. 8:29) to convey to His sons (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). It has often been said that in the Christian there are two distinct and diverse "natures," namely, the "flesh" and the "spirit" (Gal. 5:17). This is true, yet care must be taken to avoid regarding these two "natures" as anything more than two principles of action. Thus in Romans 7:23 the two "natures" or "principles" in the Christian are spoken of as "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind." The flesh and the spirit in the believer must be conceived of as something very different from the "two natures" in the blessed person of our Redeemer, the God-man. Both the Deity and humanity were substantial entities in Him. Moreover, the "two natures" in the saint result in a necessary conflict (Gal. 5:17), whereas in Christ there was not only complete harmony, but one Lord." The faculties of the Christian's soul remain the same in their essence, substance, and natural powers as before he was "renewed," but these faculties are changed in their properties, qualities and inclinations. It may help us to obtain a clearer conception of this if we illustrate by a reference to the waters at Marah (Ex. 15:25, 26). Those "waters" were the same waters still, both before and after their cure. Of themselves in their own nature, they were "bitter," so as the people could not drink of them; but in the casting of a tree into them, they were made sweet and useful. So too with the waters at Jericho (2 Kings 19:20, 21), which were cured by the casting of salt (emblem of grace, Col. 4:6) into them. In like manner the Christian's affections continue the same as they were in their nature and essence, but they are cured or healed by grace, so that their properties, qualities and inclinations are "renewed" (Titus 3:5), the love of God now being shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5). What man lost by the fall was his original relation to God, which kept all his faculties and affections within proper exercise of that relation. At regeneration the Christian received a new life, which gave a new direction to his faculties, presenting new

objects before them. Yet, let it be said emphatically, it is not merely the restoration of the life which Adam lost, but one of unspeakably higher relations: he received the life which the Son of God has in Himself, even "eternal life." But the old personality still remains. This is clear from Romans 6:13, "but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." The members of the same individual are now to serve a new Master. Regeneration is that which alone fits a fallen creature to fulfill his one great and chief duty, namely, to glorify his Maker. This is to be the aim and the end in view in all that we do: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). It is the motive actuating us and the purpose before us which gives value to each action: "When thine eye (figure of the soul looking outward) is single (having only one object in view—the glory of God), the whole body is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, the body is full of darkness" (Luke 11:34). If the intention be evil, as it certainly is when the glory of God is not before us, there is nothing but "darkness," sin, in the whole service. Now fallen man has altogether departed from what ought to be his chief end, aim, or object, for instead of having before him the honour of God, himself is his chief concern; and instead of seeking to please God in all things, he lives only to please himself or his fellow-creatures. Even when, through religious training, the claims of God have been brought to his notice and pressed upon his attention, at best he only parcels out one part of his time, strength and substance to the One who gave him being and daily loadeth him with benefits, and another part for himself and the world. The natural man is utterly incapable of giving supreme respect unto God, until he becomes the recipient of a spiritual life. None will truly aim at the glory of God until they have an affection for Him. None will honour Him supremely whom they do not supremely love. And for this, the love of God must be shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5), and this only takes place at regeneration. Then it is, and not till then, that self is dethroned and God enthroned; then it is that the renewed creature is enabled to comply with God's imperative call, "My son, give Me thine heart" (Prov. 23:26). The salient elements which comprise the nature of regeneration may, perhaps, be summed up in these three words: impartation, renovation, subjugation. God communicates something to the one who is born again, namely, a principle of faith and obedience, a holy nature, eternal life. This though real, palpable, and potent, is nothing material or tangible, nothing added to our essence, substance or person. Again: God renews every faculty of the soul and spirit of the one born again, not perfectly and finally, for we are "renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16). but so as to enable those faculties to be exercised upon spiritual objects. Again; God subdues the power of sin indwelling the one born again. He does not eradicate it, but He dethrones it, so that it no longer has dominion over the heart. Instead of sin ruling the Christian, and that by his own willing subjection, it is resisted and hated. Regeneration is not the improvement or purification of the "flesh," which is that principle of evil still with the believer. The appetites and tendencies of the "flesh" are precisely the same after the new birth as they were before, only they no longer reign over him. For a time it may seem that the "flesh" is dead, yet in reality it is not so. Often its very stillness (as an army in ambush) is only awaiting its opportunity or a gathering up of its strength for a further attack. It is not long ere the renewed soul discovers that the "flesh" is yet very much alive, desiring to have its way. But grace will not suffer it to have its sway. On the one hand the Christian has to say, "For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom. 7:18). On the other hand, he is able to declare, "Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself 'for me'" (Gal. 2:20). Some people find it very difficult to conceive of the same person bringing forth good works who before brought forth nothing but evil works, the more so when it be insisted upon that no new faculty is added to his being, that nothing substantial is either imparted or taken from his person. But if we rightly introduce the factor of God's mighty power into the equation, then the difficulty disappears. We may not be able to explain, in fact we are not, how God's

power acts upon us, how He cleanses the unclean (Acts 10:15) and subdues the wolf so that it dwells with the lamb (Isa. 11:6), any more than we can thoroughly understand His working upon and within us without destroying our own personal agency; nevertheless, both Scripture and experience testify to each of these facts. It may help us a little at this point if we contemplate the working of God's power in the natural realm. In the natural realm every creature is not only entirely dependent upon its Maker for its continued existence, but also for the exercise of all its faculties, for "in Him we live, and move (Greek, 'are moved') and have our being" (Acts 17:28). Again; as the various parts of creation are linked together, and afford each other mutual support—as the heavens fertilize the earth, the earth supplies its inhabitants with food, its inhabitants propagate their kind, rear their offspring, and cooperate for the purpose of society—so also the whole system is supported, sustained and governed by the directing providence of God. The influences of providence, the manner in which they operate on the creature, are profoundly mysterious: on the one hand, they are not destructive of our rational nature, reducing us to mere irresponsible automatons; on the other hand they are all made completely subservient to the Divine purpose. Now the operation of God's power in regeneration is to be regarded as of the same kind with its operation in providence, although it be exercised with a different design. God's energy is one, though it is distinguished by the objects on which, and the ends for which, it is exerted. It is the same power that creates as upholds in existence: the same power that forms a stone, and a sunbeam, the same power that gives vegetable life to a tree, animal life to a brute, and rational life to a man. In like manner, it is the same power that assists us in the natural exercise of our faculties, as it is which enables us to exercise those faculties in a spiritual manner. Hence "grace" as a principle of Divine operation in the spiritual realm, is the same power of God as "nature" is His process of operation in the natural world. The grace of God in the application of redemption to the hearts of His people is indeed mighty as is evident from the effects produced. It is a change of the whole man: of his views, motives, inclinations and pursuits. Such a change no human means are able to accomplish. When the thoughtless are made to think, and to think with a seriousness and intensity which they never formerly did; when the careless are, in a moment, affected with a deep sense of their most important interests: when lips which are accustomed to blaspheme, learn to pray; when the proud are brought to assume the lowly attitude and language of the penitent; when those who were devoted to the world give evidence that the object of their desires and aims is a heavenly inheritance: and when this revolution, so wonderful has been affected by the simple Word of God, and by the very Word which the subject of this radical change had often heard unmoved, it is proof positive that a mighty influence has been exerted, and that that influence is nothing less than Divine—God's people have been made willing in the day of His power (Ps. 110:3). Many figures are used in Scripture, various expressions are employed by the Spirit, to describe the saving work of God within His people. In 2 Peter 1:4 the regenerated are said to be "partakers of the Divine nature," which does not mean of the very essence or being of God, for that can neither be divided nor communicated—in Heaven itself there will still be an immeasurable distance between the Creator and the creature, otherwise the finite would become infinite. No, to be "partakers of the Divine nature" is to be made the recipients of inherent grace, to have the lineaments of the Divine image stamped upon the soul: as the remainder of that verse shows. Being "partakers of the Divine nature" is the antithesis of "the corruption that is in the world through lust." In 2 Corinthians 3:18 this transforming miracle of God's grace in His people is declared to be a "changing" into the image of Christ. The Greek word there for "change" is the one rendered "transfigured" in Matthew 17:2. At Christ's transfiguration no new features were added to the Saviour's face, but His whole countenance was irradiated by a new light; so in 2 Corinthians 4:6 regeneration is likened unto a "light" which God commands to shine in us—note the whole context of 2 Corinthians 3:18 is treating of the Spirit's work by the Gospel. In Ephesians 2:10 this product of God's grace is spoken of as His

"workmanship," and is said to be "created," to show that He, and not man, is the Author of it. In Galatians 4:19 this same work of God in the soul is termed Christ's being "formed" in us—as the parents' seed is formed or molded in the mother's womb, the "likeness" of the parent being stamped upon it. We cannot here attempt a full list of the numerous figures and expressions which the Holy Spirit has employed to set forth this saving work of God in the soul. In John 6:44 it is spoken of as a being "drawn" to Christ. In Acts 16:14 as the heart being "opened" by the Lord to receive His Truth. In Acts 26:18 as the opening of our eyes, a turning us from darkness unto light, and the power of Satan unto God. In 2 Corinthians 10:5 as the "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." In Ephesians 5:8 as being "light in the Lord." In 2 Thessalonians 2:13 it is designated the "sanctification of the Spirit." In Hebrews 8:10 as God's putting His laws into our mind and writing them on our heart—contrast the figure in Jeremiah 17:1! Thus it should be most apparent that we lose much by limiting our attention to one figure of it. All we have given, and still others not mentioned, need to be taken into consideration if we are to obtain anything approaching an adequate conception of the nature of that miracle of grace which is wrought in the soul and spirit of the elect, enabling them to henceforth live unto God. As man was changed in Adam from what he was by a state of creation, so man must be changed in Christ from what he is by a state of corruption. This change which fits him for communion with God, is a Divine work wrought in the inclinations of the soul. It is a being renewed in the spirit of our minds (Eph. 4:23). It is the infusion of a principle of holiness into all the faculties of our inner being. It is the spiritual renovation of our very persons, which will yet be consummated by the regeneration of our bodies. The whole soul is renewed, according to the image of God in knowledge, holiness and righteousness. A new light shines into the mind, a new power moves the will, a new object attracts the affections. The individual is the same, and yet not the same. How different the landscape when the sun is shining, than when the darkness of a moonless night is upon it—the same landscape, and yet not the same. How different the condition of him who is restored to health and vigor after having been brought very low by sickness; yet it is the same person. The very fact that the Holy Spirit has employed the figures of "begetting" and "birth" to the saving work of God in the soul, intimates that the reference is only to the initial experience of Divine grace: "He which hath begun a good work in you" (Phil. 1:6). As an infant has all the parts of a man, yet none of them come to maturity, so regeneration gives a perfection of parts, which yet have need to be developed. A new life has been received, but there needs to be growth of it: "grow in grace" (2 Pet. 3:18). As God was the Giver of this life, He only can feed and strengthen it. Thus, Titus 3:5 speaks of "the renewing" and not the "renewal" of the Holy Spirit. But it is our responsibility and bounden duty to use the Divinely-appointed means of grace which promote spiritual growth: "desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2); as it is our obligation to constantly avoid everything which would hinder our spiritual prosperity: "Make not provision for the flesh to the lusts" (Rom. 13:14), and cf. Matthew 5:29, 30; 2 Corinthians 7:1. God's consummating of the initial work which we experience at the new birth, and which He renews throughout the course of our earthly lives, only takes place at the second coming of our Saviour, when we shall be perfectly and eternally conformed to His image, both inwardly and outwardly. First, regeneration; then our gradual sanctification; finally our glorification. But between the new birth and glorification, while we are left down here, the Christian has both the "flesh" and the "spirit," both a principle of sin and a principle of holiness, operating within him, the one opposing the other: see Galatians 5:16, 17. Hence his inward experience is such as that which is described in Romans 7:7-25. As life is opposed to death, purity to impurity, spirituality to carnality, so is now felt and experienced within the soul a severe conflict between sin and grace. This conflict is perpetual, as the "flesh" and "spirit" strive for mastery. From hence proceeds the absolute necessity of the Christian being sober, and to "watch unto prayer." Finally, let it be pointed out that the

principle of life and obedience (the "new nature") which is received at regeneration, is not able to preserve the soul from sins, nevertheless, there is full provision for continual supplies of grace made for it and all its wants in the Lord Jesus Christ. There are treasures of relief in Him, whereunto the soul may at any time repair and find necessary succour against every incursion of sin. This new principle of holiness may say to the believer's soul, as David did unto Abiathar when he fled from Doeg: "Abide thou with me, fear not; for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life; but with me thou shalt be in safeguard" (1 Sam. 22:23). Sin is the enemy of the new nature as truly as it is of the Christian's soul, and his only safety lies in heeding the requests of that new nature, and calling upon Christ for enablement. Thus we are exhorted in Hebrews 4:16, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." If it ever be a time of need with the soul, it is so when it is under the assaults of provoking sins, when the "flesh" is lusting against the "spirit." But at that very time there is suitable and seasonable help in Christ for succour and relief. The new nature begs, with sighs and groans, for the believer to apply to Christ. To neglect Him, with all His provision of grace, whilst He stands calling on us, "Open to Me . . . for My head is filled with dew and My locks with the drops of the night" (Song of Sol. 5:2), is to despise the sighing of the poor prisoner, the new nature, which sin is seeking to destroy, and cannot but be a high provocation against the Lord. At the beginning, God entrusted Adam and Eve with a stock of grace in themselves, but they cast it away, and themselves into the utmost misery thereby. That His children might not perish a second time, God, instead of imparting to them personally the power to overcome sin and Satan, has laid up their portion in Another, a safe Treasurer; in Christ are their lives and comforts secured (Col. 3:3). And how must Christ regard us, if instead of applying to Him for relief, we allow sin to distress our conscience, destroy our peace, and mar our communion? Such is not a sin of infirmity which cannot be avoided, but a grievous affront of Christ. The means of preservation from it is to hand. Christ is always accessible. He is ever ready to "succour them that are tempted" (Heb. 2: 18). O to betake ourselves to Him more and more, day by day, for everything. Then shall each one find "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). All men are by nature the children of wrath, and do belong unto the world, which is the kingdom of Satan (1 John 5:19), and are under the power of darkness. In this state men are not the subjects of Christ's kingdom, and have no meetness for Heaven. From this terrible state they are unable to deliver themselves, being "without strength" (Rom. 5:6). Out of this state God's elect are supernaturally "called" (1 Pet. 2:9), which call effectually delivers them from the power of Satan and translates them into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13). This Divine "call," or work of grace. is variously denominated in Scripture: sometimes by "regeneration" (Titus 3:5), or the new birth, sometimes by illumination (2 Cor. 4:6), by transformation (2 Cor. 3:18), by spiritual resurrection (John 5:24). This inward and invincible call is attended with justification and adoption (Rom. 8:30; Eph. 1:5), and is carried on by sanctification in holiness. This leads us to consider:

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