

THE HOLY SPIRIT Chapter 10 The Holy Spirit Regenerating

by A.W. Pink

Transcript

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Chapter 10

The Holy Spirit Regenerating

Self-Regeneration Is Impossible The absolute necessity for the regenerating operation of the Holy Spirit in order for a sinner's being converted to God lies in his being totally depraved. Fallen man is without the least degree of right disposition or principles from which holy exercises may proceed. He is completely under a contrary disposition: there is no right exercise of heart in him, but every motion of his will is corrupt and sinful. If this were not the case, there would be no need for him to be born again and made "a new creature." If the sinner were not wholly corrupt he would submit to Christ without any supernatural operation of the Spirit; but fallen man is so completely sunk in corruption that he has not the faintest real desire for God, but is filled with enmity against Him (Rom. 8:7). Therefore does Scripture affirm him to be "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, to them which believe on His name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12, 13). The latter verse expounds the former. There an explanation is given as to why any fallen descendant of Adam ever spiritually receives Christ as His Lord and Master, and savingly believes on His name. First, it is not because grace runs in the blood—as the Jews supposed. Holiness is not transmitted from father to son. The child of the most pious parents is by nature equally as corrupt and is as far from God as is the offspring of infidels. Second, it is not because of any natural willingness—as Arminians contend: "nor of the will of the flesh" refers to man in his natural and corrupt state. He is not regenerated by any instinct, choice, or exertion of his own; he does not by any personal endeavor contribute anything towards being born again; nor does he cooperate in the least degree with the efficient cause: instead, every inclination of his heart, every exercise of his will, is in direct opposition thereto. Third, the new birth is not brought about by the power and influence of others. No sinner is ever born again as the result of the persuasions and endeavors of preachers or Christian workers. However pious and wise they are, and however earnestly and strenuously they exert themselves to bring others to holiness, they do in no degree produce the effect. "If all the angels and saints in Heaven and all the godly on earth should join their wills and endeavors and unitedly exert all their powers to regenerate one sinner, they could not effect it; yea, they could do nothing toward it. It is an effect infinitely beyond the reach of finite wisdom and power: 1 Corinthians 3:6, 7" (S. Hopkins). Regeneration Is the Sole

Work of the Spirit In regeneration one of God's elect is the subject, and the Spirit of God is the sole agent. The subject of the new birth is wholly passive: he does not act, but is acted upon. The sovereign work of the Spirit in the soul precedes all holy exercises of heart—such as sorrow for sin, faith in Christ, love toward God. This great change is wrought in spite of all the opposition of the natural heart against God: "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom. 9:16). This great change is not a gradual and protracted process, but is instantaneous: in an instant of time the favored subject of it passes from death unto life. In regeneration the Spirit imparts a real, new, and immortal life; a life not such as that which was inherited from the first Adam, who was "a living soul," but such as is derived from the last Adam, who is "a quickening Spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45). This new creation, though as real as the first, is widely different from it; that was an original or primary creation in the dust of the earth becoming man by the word of God's power; this is the regeneration of an actual and existing man—fallen and depraved, yet rational and accountable—into an heir of God and joint-heir with Christ. The outcome is "a new man," yet it is the same person, only "renewed." "Regeneration consists in a new, spiritual, supernatural, vital principle, or habit of grace infused into the soul, the mind, the will and affections, by the power of the Holy Spirit, disposing and enabling them in whom it is, unto spiritual, supernatural, vital actings and spiritual obedience" (John Owen). No new faculties are created, but instead, the powers of the soul are spiritualized and made alive unto God, fitted to enjoy God and hold communion with Him. Regeneration consists in a radical change of heart, for there is implanted a new disposition as the foundation of all holy exercises; the mind being renovated, the affections elevated, and the will emancipated from the bondage of sin. The effect of this is that the one who is born again loves spiritual things as spiritual, and values spiritual blessings on account of their being purely spiritual.

Regeneration of Existing (Not New) Faculties In view of a certain school of teaching upon "the two natures in the believer," some readers may experience difficulty over our statement above that at regeneration no new faculties are created, the soul remaining, substantially, the same as it was before. No, not even in the glorified state will any addition be made to the human constitution, though its faculties will then be completely unfettered and further enlarged and elevated. Perhaps this thought will be the more easily grasped if we illustrate it by a striking case recorded in 2 Kings 6:17, "Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw; and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." No new faculties were communicated unto Elisha's servant, but the powers of his vision were so enlarged that he was now able to discern objects which before were invisible to him. So it is with our understandings at regeneration: the mind (abstractly considered) is the same in the unregenerate as in the regenerate, but in the case of the latter, the Spirit has so quickened it that it is now able to take in spiritual objects and act toward them. This new spiritual visive (i.e., of vision) power with which the understanding is endowed at the new birth is a quality, super-added to the original faculties. As this is a point of importance, yet one which some find it difficult to grasp, we will proceed to dwell upon it a moment longer. The bodily eye of the saint after resurrection will be elevated to see angels (which are now invisible), and therefore may be rightly termed a new eye, yea, a spiritual eye—even as the whole body will be a "spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:44)—yet that change will be but the super-induction of new spiritual qualities for the eye (and the whole body) unto spiritual objects. In like manner, the entire being of one who is born again is so spiritualized or endued with "spirit" (John 3:6) as to be styled a "new man," a spiritual man; nevertheless, it is but the original man "renewed," and not the creating of a new being. After regeneration things appear in an altogether new light, and the heart exercises itself after quite a new manner. God is now seen as the sum of all excellence. The reasonableness and spirituality of His law is so perceived that the heart approves of it. The infinite evil of sin is discerned. The one born again judges, condemns, and loathes himself, and

wonders that he was not long ago cast into Hell. He marvels at the grace of God in giving Christ to die for such a wretch. Constrained by the love of Christ, he now renounces the ways of sin and gives himself up to serve God. Hereby we may discover what it is which persons are to inquire after in order to determine whether they have been born again, namely, by the exercises of their hearts, and the influence and effects these have upon their conduct. We have pointed out that at regeneration the faculties of the soul are spiritually enlivened, grace putting into them a new ability so that they are capable of performing spiritual acts. At the new birth the Holy Spirit communicates principles of spiritual life, whereby the soul is qualified to act as a supernatural agent and produce supernatural works. The need for this should be evident; God and Christ, as they are revealed in the Gospel, are supernatural objects to the natural faculties or powers of the soul, and there is no proportion between them—not only such a disproportion as the bat's eye has unto the sun, but as a blind man's eye to the sun. Thus there is a greater necessity for the soul to be given new principles and abilities to act in a holy and spiritual manner than at the first creation to act naturally. Manifestations of Regeneration Holiness in the heart is the main and ultimate birth brought forth in regeneration, for to make us partakers of God's holiness is the sum and scope of His gracious purpose toward us, both of His election (Eph. 1:4), and of all His dealings afterward (Heb. 12:10), without which "no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). Not that finite creatures can ever be partakers of the essential holiness that is in God, either by imputation, or much less by real transubstantiation. We can be no otherwise partakers of it than in the image thereof—"which after God (as pattern or prototype) is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:24); "after the image of Him that created him" (Col. 3:10). Regeneration is the first discovery and manifestation of election and redemption to the persons for whom they were intended: "But after the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared" (Titus 3:4); and how and when did it appear? "According to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (v. 5). "God's eternal love, like a mighty river, had from everlasting run, as it were underground. When Christ came, it took its course through His heart, hiddenly ran through it, He bearing on the Cross the names of them whom God had given Him; but was yet still hidden from us, and our knowledge of it. But the first breaking of it forth, and particular appearing of it in and to the persons, is when we are converted, and is as the first opening of a fountain" (T. Goodwin). There is a great display of God's power apparent in our regeneration; yea, an "exceeding greatness" thereof, no less than that which raised up Christ from the dead (Eph. 1:19, 20). Because the work of regeneration is often repeated, and accomplished in a trice, as seen in the dying thief and Paul, and often accomplished (apparently) by a few words from one frail mortal falling on the ears of another, we are apt to lose sight of the omnipotent working of the Holy Spirit in the performing thereof. Indeed the Spirit so graciously hides the exceeding greatness of His power working in sinners' hearts, by using such sweet persuasive motives and gentle inducements—drawing with "the cords of a man" (Hosea 11:4)—that His might is inadequately recognized, owned, and adored by us. The marvel of regeneration is the bringing of a soul out of spiritual death into spiritual life. It is a new creation, which is a bringing of something out of nothing. Moreover the new creation is a far greater wonder than is the old—in the first creation there was nothing to oppose, but in the new all the powers of sin and Satan are set against it. Regeneration is not like the changing of water into wine, but of contrary into contrary—of hearts of stone into flesh (Ezek. 36:26), of wolves into lambs (Isa. 11:6). This is greater than any miracle Christ showed, and therefore did He tell His Apostles that, under the mighty endowment of the Holy Spirit, they should work "greater works" than He did (John 14:12). Not only is there a wondrous exhibition of His power when the Spirit regenerates a soul, but there is also a blessed manifestation of His love. In the exercise of His gracious office towards God's elect and in His work in them, the Holy Spirit proves to a demonstration that His love toward the heirs of glory is ineffable and incomprehensible. As the principal work of the Spirit consists in making our souls alive to God, in

giving us to apprehend the transactions of the Father and the Son in the Everlasting Covenant, and in imparting to them spiritual principles whereby they are fitted to enjoy and commune with God, it is internal—hence it is that His work being within us, we are more apt to overlook Him, and are prone to neglect the giving to Him the glory which is distinctly His due, and most sadly do we fail to praise and adore Him for His gracious work in us. Thus it is with all believers: they find themselves more disposed to think on the love of Christ, or on the Father's love in the gift of Him than in exercising their minds spiritually in soul-inflaming and heartwarming meditations on the love and mercy of the Holy Spirit towards them, and His delight in them. Yet all that they really know and enjoy of the Father's love by faith in the finished work of the Son, is entirely from the inward teaching and supernatural influences of the eternal Spirit. This is too plainly evident in our neglect to ascribe distinctive glory to Him as a Divine person in the Godhead as God and Lord. Summary "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him" (1 Thess. 5:9, 10). Yet, the Father's appointment and the Son's redemption, with all the unspeakable blessings thereof, remained for a season quite unknown to us. In their fallen, sinful, and guilty state, Christians lay "dead in trespasses and sins," without hope. To bring them out of this state, and raise them from a death of sin into a life of righteousness is the great and grand work reserved for the Holy Spirit, in order to display and make manifest thereby His love for them. The Holy Spirit is fully acquainted with the present and everlasting virtue and efficacy of the Person and work of Immanuel, and what His heart was set upon when He made His soul an offering for sin, and how infinitely and eternally well pleased was Jehovah the Father with it, who has it in perpetual remembrance. The Father and the Son having committed the revelation and application of this great salvation unto the persons of all the elect to the Holy Spirit, He is pleased therefore, out of the riches of His own free and sovereign grace, to work in due season in all the heirs of glory. And as Christ died but once—His death being all-sufficient to answer every design to be effected by it—so the Holy Spirit by one act works effectually in the soul, producing a spiritual birth and changing the state of its partaker once and for all, so that the regenerated are brought out of and delivered from the power of death and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Without this spiritual birth we cannot see spiritual objects and heavenly blessings in their true worth and excellence. The effect of the new birth is that the man born again loves spiritual things as spiritual and values spiritual blessings on account of their being purely spiritual. The spring of life from Christ enters into him, and is the spring of all his spiritual life, the root of all his graces, the perpetual source of every Divine principle within him. So says Christ: "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). This regeneration introduces the elect into a capacity for the enjoyments which are peculiar to the spiritual world, and makes the one alteration in their state before God which lasts forever. All our meetness for the heavenly state is wrought at our regeneration (Col. 1:12, 13). Regeneration is one and the same in all saints. It admits of no increase or diminution. All grace and holiness are then imparted by the Spirit: His subsequent work is but to draw it forth into exercise and act.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/aw-pink/the-holy-spirit-chapter-10-the-holy-spirit-regenerating/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net