

Regeneration and the Holy Spirit

by C.H. Spurgeon

Regeneration is a supernatural work that cannot be wrought by the sinner's own self, but is given to those who believe in Jesus.

Scripture: John 3:3, John 3:14

Topics: "Regeneration", "Faith in Christ"

Description

C.H. Spurgeon emphasizes the necessity of being born again, highlighting that this regeneration is a supernatural act of the Holy Spirit, beyond human effort. He reassures believers that while the new birth is essential for salvation, it is through faith in Jesus that one receives this gift. Spurgeon points out the harmony between the need for divine intervention and the call to believe, asserting that true faith is evidence of the Spirit's work in the heart. He encourages listeners not to let the mysteries of spiritual rebirth deter them from trusting in Christ for salvation. Ultimately, he warns against overthinking and missing the simplicity of faith that leads to eternal life.

Transcript

YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN." This word of our Lord Jesus has appeared to flame in the way of many, like the drawn sword of the cherub at the gate of Paradise. They have despaired, because this change is beyond their utmost effort. The new birth is from above, and therefore it is not in the creature's power. Now, it is far from my mind to deny, or ever to conceal, a truth in order to create a false comfort. I freely admit that the new birth is supernatural, and that it cannot be wrought by the sinner's own self. It would be a poor help to my reader if I were wicked enough to try to cheer him by persuading him to reject or forget what is unquestionably true.

But is it not remarkable that the very chapter in which our Lord makes this sweeping declaration also contains the most explicit statement as to salvation by faith? Read the third chapter of John's Gospel and do not dwell alone upon its earlier sentences. It is true that the third verse says:

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

But, then, the fourteenth and fifteenth verses speak:

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

The eighteenth verse repeats the same doctrine in the broadest terms:

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

It is clear to every reader that these two statements must agree, since they came from the same lips, and are recorded on the same inspired page. Why should we make a difficulty where there can be none? If one statement assures us of the necessity to salvation of a something, which only God can give, and if another assures us that the Lord will save us upon our believing in Jesus, then we may safely conclude that the Lord will give to those who believe all that is declared to be necessary to salvation. The Lord does, in fact, produce the new birth in all who believe in Jesus; and their believing is the surest evidence that they are born again.

We trust in Jesus for what we cannot do ourselves: if it were in our own power, what need of looking to Him? It is ours to believe, it is the Lord's to create us anew. He will not believe for us, neither are we to do regenerating work for Him. It is enough for us to obey the gracious command; it is for the Lord to work the new birth in us. He who could go so far as to die on the cross for us, can and will give us all things that are needful for our eternal safety.

"But a saving change of heart is the work of the Holy Spirit." This also is most true, and let it be far from us to question it, or to forget it. But the work of the Holy Spirit is secret and mysterious, and it can only be perceived by its results. There are mysteries about our natural birth into which it would be an unhallowed curiosity to pry: still more is this the case with the sacred operations of the Spirit of God. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." This much, however, we do know--the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit cannot be a reason for refusing to believe in Jesus to whom that same Spirit beareth witness.

If a man were bidden to sow a field, he could not excuse his neglect by saying that it would be useless to sow unless God caused the seed to grow. He would not be justified in neglecting tillage because the secret energy of God alone can create a harvest. No one is hindered in the ordinary pursuits of life by the fact that unless the Lord build the house they labor in vain that build it. It is certain that no man who believes in Jesus will ever find that the Holy Spirit refuses to work in him: in fact, his believing is the proof that the Spirit is already at work in his heart.

God works in providence, but men do not therefore sit still. They could not move without the divine power giving them life and strength, and yet they proceed upon their way without question; the power being bestowed from day to day by Him in whose hand their breath is, and whose are all their ways. So is it in grace. We repent and believe, though we could do neither if the Lord did not enable us. We forsake sin and trust in Jesus, and then we perceive that the Lord has wrought in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure. It is idle to pretend that there is any real difficulty in the matter.

Some truths which it is hard to explain in words are simple enough in actual experience. There is no discrepancy between the truth that the sinner believes, and that his faith is wrought in him by the Holy Spirit. Only folly can lead men to puzzle themselves about plain matters while their souls are in danger. No

man would refuse to enter a lifeboat because he did not know the specific gravity of bodies; neither would a starving man decline to eat till he understood the whole process of nutrition. If you, my reader, will not believe till you can understand all mysteries, you will never be saved at all; and if you allow self-invented difficulties to keep you from accepting pardon through your Lord and Saviour, you will perish in a condemnation which will be richly deserved. Do not commit spiritual suicide through a passion for discussing metaphysical subtleties.

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