

Regeneration

by Watchman Nee

Watchman Nee's sermon on regeneration emphasizes the transformative work of the Holy Spirit in bringing spiritual life to believers through faith in Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Proverbs 20:27, Ezekiel 36:26, John 3:6, John 3:14

Topics: "Regeneration", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

Watchman Nee discusses the concept of regeneration, explaining that unregenerated man is spiritually dead and separated from God, with his soul and flesh dominating his life. He emphasizes that regeneration, which occurs when one believes in Jesus, allows the Holy Spirit to enter and enliven the spirit, leading to a transformation where the spirit governs the soul and body. Nee outlines the three stages of a believer's life post-regeneration: the flesh, the soul, and the spirit, highlighting that while regeneration is complete, spiritual maturity is a process. He reassures believers that struggles with sin do not negate their regeneration, as they are still growing in their faith. Ultimately, the Holy Spirit's work in regeneration is foundational for a believer's spiritual journey.

Transcript

Concerning unregenerated man, first, his spirit became far from God and dead. The meaning of death is a separation from life. God is the ultimate name for life. Since God is life, to be dead is to be separated from God. When man's spirit became separated from God, it became as if it were dead and could no longer fellowship with Him. Then, his soul began to rule over his entire being, and he began to live in his reasonings or sensations. Finally, the lusts and cravings of his body put the soul under its subjection.

The unregenerated man was born of the flesh and is therefore flesh (John 3:6). This is why he has to be born again. Through regeneration man is born of the spirit; however, John 3:6 does not say that he is spiritual. He is still very soulish. Regeneration is the application by the Holy Spirit of the accomplished work of the cross to man. When man believes in Jesus as his Savior, that He has died for him and is now resurrected, he is regenerated.

When man is regenerated, the Holy Spirit enters into his spirit. After this, there is a step-by-step progression until perfection is reached.

The unregenerated man's spirit is controlled by his soul. His "self" controls his soul, and his flesh controls his body. The soul has become the life of the spirit, the "self" has become the life of the soul, and the flesh

has become the life of the body. As a result of regeneration, the Holy Spirit controls his spirit; his spirit controls his soul and, through his soul, the body. The Holy Spirit becomes the life of the spirit, and the spirit becomes the life of the whole person.

"The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord" (Prov. 20:27). At the time of regeneration, the Holy Spirit enters into man's spirit. When He enters, it is as if a lamp is lit. This is the "new spirit" spoken of in Ezekiel 36:26. Originally the spirit was as if it were dead, but now the Holy Spirit has put God's uncreated life inside the spirit. As a result, the spirit has life, is enlivened, and becomes like new.

Regeneration is the darkened and fallen spirit of man being enlivened by the power of the Holy Spirit. The basis of the Holy Spirit's regeneration is the cross (cf. John 3:14-15). Jesus died for man on the cross; He paid the ransom for sin and gave life to man. All those who believe in Him have eternal life (v. 16). This eternal life is the life of God imparted into man's spirit by the Holy Spirit. Since this life is the life of God, it will never die. Because of this, when a man is regenerated and has received life, he is said to have obtained eternal life. If God's life could die, only then could we say that eternal life can be lost! Regeneration is the first step in the spiritual life. Although the spiritual life received at the time of our regeneration is complete, it is not full-grown. This is similar to fruit. When it first appears, the life within is complete, yet in form it is still green, immature. It is complete only in its organic capacities; however, it is not perfect in each of its organic parts. This is the same with man's regeneration. We must notice that regeneration is not the accomplishment of perfection.

THE THREE STAGES OF THE BELIEVERS' LIFE

When a man believes in Jesus Christ as the Savior who has died for him, he is regenerated. Regeneration is the initial step in the spiritual life. Those who are regenerated have received eternal salvation. After a believer has received the regenerated life, his Christian life can be broadly divided into three stages. The first is the stage of the flesh, the second is the stage of the soul, and the third is the stage of the spirit.

After his regeneration, and for a period of time, a believer may still lose his temper, become proud, become jealous, or commit other sins. Because of this, some may begin to doubt whether or not their regeneration was genuine. They do not realize that, although they have been regenerated, they are still of the flesh. When they advance further, they begin to develop an interest in reading the Bible and in praying and "feel" a new joy in their heart. At this point, the believer may think that he is already a spiritual Christian. However, he does not realize that he is still soulish, still living in the idealistic world of "feeling"! Later, when the Holy Spirit does a deeper work of the cross in him, he will be enabled not to walk according to himself or his feelings (being up or down all the time) but to live quietly in the spirit. Only then can he be considered as being spiritual.

When he is of the flesh, the flesh is his master. When he is soulish, the soul is his master. When he is spiritual, the Holy Spirit becomes his Lord in the spirit.

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