

Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.

Series: The Benefits Of Salvation

Effectual Calling through Regeneration by the Holy Spirit

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Regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is a gracious work by which one is “born again.” Regeneration is a saving grace flowing from the “in Christ” relationship. Believers are “made alive with Christ” (Ephesians 2:5) and “are [God’s] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Ephesians 2:10). Yes, this is true of every other spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3), including God’s effectual summons (cf Gal. 1:6; 2 Timothy 1:9). It is because the elect sinner was “chosen in Christ before the creation of the world” and because he was “in Christ” when Christ died for him that God effectually called him.

“Regeneration is the inception of being made holy...” (Murray, page 80)

John 3:3, 5, 6 – one must be born from above to see the kingdom of God and one must be born of water and of the Spirit before one can enter the Kingdom of God. Regeneration is prior to seeing or entering the Kingdom of God.

1 John 3:9 – The seed of God must abide in someone prior to his being delivered from the reigning power of sin. The new birth causes the state of freedom and is therefore prior to the state of freedom from the power of sin.

Paul uses only once the Greek word *paliggenesia* which means “generated again” or “regeneration” with reference to the spiritual renewal of an individual.

*Not by works of righteousness which we have done,
But according to His mercy, He saved us
Through the washing of regeneration and
Renewing of the Holy Spirit. Titus 3:5*

Paul, however, elaborates on regeneration elsewhere under the terminology of:

1. life-giving co-resurrection with Christ (Ephesians 2:5; Colossians 2:13; Romans 4:17)
2. the divine work of new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 2:10)

Peter and James speak of God “begetting anew” (1 Peter 1:23) and “bringing forth” (James 1:18).

John is the one, following the teaching of Jesus Himself, who really gives a picture of regeneration and its necessity. John records Jesus’ “birth from above discourse” in John 3:1-15. Eleven times he refers to God’s “begetting” in John 1:13, 1 John 2:29, 3:9, 4:7, 5:1, 5:4,5; 5:18. The true believer is a “born-out-of-God one.”

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of Him..._For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵ Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? ¹⁸ We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him. 1 John 5:1, 4, 5, 18.

The effect of regeneration: It is through the divine work of regeneration that the sinner is “recreated in newness of life” (Murray), has the defilement of his heart cleansed or “washed” away (Ezekiel 36:25, 26; John 3:5; Titus 3:5), and is given the ability to “see” and to “enter” the kingdom of God by faith (John 3:3, 5). By this work of regeneration, the sinner is also enabled to believe in Jesus (John 1:12, 13), to believe that Jesus is the Christ (1 John 5:1), to love others, particularly other Christians (1 John 4:7, 5:1); and to do righteousness and to shun the life in sin (1 John 3:9, 5:18). (Reymond, page 719)

Divine monergism. “Monergism” means “work performed by one person.” Jesus taught this when He said, “No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him.” (John 6:44). He said, “Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.” (John 6:45), and “No one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father.” (John 6:65) It is Jesus who drew the analogy between the wind’s natural operation and the Holy Spirit’s regenerating work (John 3:8). The wind blows, Jesus said. That’s a fact. You hear the sound of it. That’s efficacy. (It produces the desired effect adequately.) The wind blows wherever it pleases. That’s the sovereignty of it. And you cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. That means it is an inscrutable mystery when it comes to the Holy Spirit’s regenerating work.

We are not to be surprised or dismayed at the fact that one must be born again, born from above, a born-out-of-God one. It is a necessity; in the Greek, it is not an imperative. You must be born again. It’s not: Be born again. There’s no spiritual renewal here dependent on man’s cooperation with grace. This is a work of the Holy Spirit.

Regeneration is the precondition of repentance unto life and faith in Jesus Christ; regeneration is not dependent upon repentance unto life and faith in Jesus Christ in order for it to happen. It is as J. I. Packer has observed:

Infants do not induce, or cooperate in, their own procreation and birth; no more can those who are “dead in trespasses and sins” prompt the quickening operation of God’s Spirit within them (see Ephesians 2:1-10).

Though mysterious to man, spiritual vivification is a free exercise of divine power (John 3:8), not explicable in terms of the combination or cultivation of existing human resources (John 3:6), not caused or induced by any human efforts (John 1:12, 13) or merits (Titus 3:3-7), and not, therefore, to be equated with, or attributed to, any of the experiences, decisions, and acts to which it gives rise and by which it may be known to have taken place. (“Regeneration,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 925 [J.I. Packer])

So to sum up: Regeneration is not the replacing of the substance of fallen human nature with another substance, nor simply the change in one or more of the faculties of the fallen spiritual nature, nor the perfecting of the fallen spiritual nature. Regeneration

is the sub-conscious implanting of the **principle** of the new spiritual life in the soul [implanting new spiritual life in the soul], effecting an instantaneous change in the whole person, spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, and morally, and enabling the elect sinner to then respond in repentance and faith to the outward gospel directed to his conscious understanding and will.

By the electing love of God, certain ones of Adam's race were chosen "in Christ" before the foundation of the world. Jesus was sent by the Father to do all that was necessary and sufficient for those so chosen to be "saved." Of these Jesus will lose none. At a point in time, the Holy Spirit regenerates the elect one. The heart is changed. **If anyone be in Christ, he is a new creation, or new creature. Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 2 Cor. 5:17.**

The "call" goes out like the sowing of seed. It is made effectual through regeneration. As elect ones are "born out of God," their hearts changed, they respond to the irresistible grace of God, enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit alone by which one then has the right to become a child of God.

But as many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that 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. KJV

Lydia is a good example. She was listening and her heart the Lord opened to respond to the things spoken by Paul. Acts 16:14

The hymn, *And Can it be that I Should Gain* has had it right in this section:

Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's might;
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

From Wikipedia, **Prevenient grace** (also referred to as prevenial grace) is a Christian theological concept rooted in Augustinian theology. But there's an important difference when it comes to the power of this grace. Prevenient grace is embraced primarily by Arminian Christians who are influenced by the theology of John Wesley, and who are part of the Methodist movement. Wesley typically referred to it in 18th century language as *prevenient grace*. In modern English, the phrase *preceding grace* would have a similar meaning.

"Prevenient grace is divine grace which precedes human decision. It exists prior to and without reference to anything humans may have done. As humans are corrupted by the effects of sin, prevenient grace allows persons to engage their God-given free will to choose the salvation offered by God in Jesus Christ or to reject that salvific offer. Whereas Augustine held that prevenient grace cannot be resisted, Wesleyan Arminians believe that it enables, but does not ensure, personal acceptance of the gift of salvation." (Wikipedia)

“Prevenient” means anticipating, going before, preceding, expectant, antecedent to human action. The question arises as to this “free will.” The will follows the dictates of the heart. The soul consists of heart, mind, and will. The heart is in the hands of the Lord, who turns it whithersoever He wills. But how free is one’s will when apart from Jesus we can do nothing, when we are totally unable and totally corrupt?

This is saying that God provides the grace preceding any human decision, but that this grace can be resisted. This would make the summons of God **ineffectual in fact** as a divine work. It would put salvation to the person, ultimately. This position says that God has given prevenient grace to all humanity and then individuals must use their “free will” to choose or reject Christ. The person chooses; the person can lose. **Election, then, is conditional, as is preservation. It’s up to the person.**

I do not believe this is what the Scripture teaches and this is what I hope to have shown. God effectually calls, as we have seen; and God effectually calls through regeneration. Those “dead” are passive, needing a Savior, a Deliverer. One who is born out of God, born again, has in him by an irresistible grace the heart’s desire for the repentance unto life and faith in Jesus Christ. God is faithful; who also will do it.

God alone saves...by the Word and by the Spirit. Of all that the Father has given Jesus, Jesus will lose none. Many are called, but few are chosen. Electing love is not conditioned upon anything we ever were, are, or will be. God chose. His own are preserved or kept by the power of God and thus persevere. If it were up to us, would we make it from here to there? From this world to live in a face-to-face relationship with Jesus for all eternity? But salvation is of God, the Living and True God. Let’s get real and give Him all the glory.

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