

The Order of Salvation - Regeneration

Introduction

- Redemption applied: the 'Order of Salvation' = *calling, **regeneration**, conversion, justification, adoption, sanctification, preservation & glorification.*

1. The Definition of Regeneration

*And **you, who were dead** in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, **God made alive** together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses'*

Colossians 2:13

'My definition of regeneration is this: a sovereign act of God, beginning a new spiritual life in us.'

John Frame, *Systematic Theology*, p. 945

'God the Holy Spirit's hidden work of giving new spiritual life to a sinner, transforming them completely and enabling them to respond in repentance and faith to the outward proclamation of the gospel.'

- The word 'regeneration' is used only a few times in the New Testament (Titus 3:5; Matthew 19:28), but the concept stands behind phrases like 'born of God', 'born again', 'new life', 'new creation', 'raised to life', 'alive to God' etc.

2. The Need for Regeneration

i) We have naturally corrupt hearts

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

Jeremiah 17:9

ii) We are naturally dead, enslaved & condemned

*And you were **dead** in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, **following** the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-- ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature **children of wrath**, like the rest of mankind.*

Ephesians 2:1-3

iii) We are naturally incapable of pleasing God

*Those who are in the flesh **cannot** please God.*

Romans 8:8

iv) We are naturally unable to 'see' or 'enter' the kingdom of God

Jesus answered [Nicodemus], "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" ⁵ Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

John 3:3-5

Implication: Regeneration is entirely God's work

3. The Essence of Regeneration - New Creation Life

i) God's purpose is to make all things new - a new heaven & a new earth

For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.

Isaiah 65:17

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband... ⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new.

Revelation 21:1-5

*And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed me, in the **regeneration** when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

Matthew 19:28, NASB

ii) Jesus' resurrection is the 'firstfruits' - the beginning of the new creation

And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

Colossians 1:18

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23

'As the Firstborn among the many ... Christ not only occupies a special place and dignity, but he also goes before them, he opens up the way for them, he joins their future to his own. ... In him the resurrection of the dead dawns, his resurrection represents the commencement of the new world of God.'

Herman Ridderbos, Paul, p56

iii) Through Jesus' resurrection, believers become a part of the new creation

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

2 Corinthians 5:17

iv) Regeneration consists of both purification and new birth

*I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be **clean** from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will **cleanse** you. ²⁶ And I will give you a **new heart**, and a **new spirit** I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my **Spirit** within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.*

Ezekiel 36:25-27

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John 3:3-5

- 'With the reference to the Spirit we may distinguish in the new birth a negative and a positive aspect: negatively purification from sin, and positively creation of new life through the Spirit.'

John Frame, *Systematic Theology*, p947

Implications

i) Praise

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

1 Peter 1:3

ii) Identity

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

2 Corinthians 5:17

4. The Agent of Regeneration - God the Holy Spirit

*Jesus answered [Nicodemus], "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" ⁵ Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of **water** and the **Spirit**, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.'*

John 3:3-8

Implication: Say your prayers!

5. The Means of Regeneration - the Word of God

*Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, ²³ since **you have been born again**, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, **through the living and abiding word of God**; ²⁴ for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, ²⁵ but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you.*

1 Peter 1:22-25

*Of his own will he **brought us forth by the word of truth**, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*

James 1:18

Implications

i) 'Successful evangelism = faithful evangelism'

- When it comes to evangelism, there is a clear division of labour. Our job is to expose our friends to the life-giving word of God; God's job is to give new life by his Spirit. Therefore the test of a 'good' evangelistic event is not determined by the quality of the atmosphere & oratory (though neither is unimportant), nor by the 'results', but by his faithfulness - has he 'set forth the truth plainly'?

ii) Aim for your friends to be exposed to God's life-giving word

- If God the Spirit is going to work to give new life to the dead, he will do it through the word of the gospel. The most common way to be exposed to God's word is as it is read or taught - that can happen in Church on a Sunday, in a special event, one-to-one in a coffee shop, or online. What is the best way for each of my friends to hear God's word?
- When we sow the seed of God's word, much of the seed falls on rocky ground - lots of people reject it. But some will fall on good soil, and as God's Spirit works, so that seed will produce a crop, thirty, sixty and a hundred times what was sown. Therefore we proclaim God's word with confidence.

6. The Fruit of Regeneration

The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

John 3:8

*And I will put my **Spirit** within you, & cause you to **walk** in my statutes & be careful to **obey** my rules.*

Ezekiel 36:27

i) Righteousness

If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

1 John 2:29

ii) Turning from a life marked by sin

No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.

1 John 3:9

iii) Love for God's people

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

1 John 4:7; cf. 5:1

iv) Belief in Jesus as God's Christ

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.

1 John 5:1

v) Overcoming the world - a life of faith

For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world-- our faith.

1 John 5:4

Implication

These 'tests' are not suggesting that any of us will attain perfection in this life. They are rather asking about the direction of our life, and are designed to reassure us (1 John 5:13). The fact that we believe in Jesus, turn from sin, pursue righteousness, live by faith and love one another is evidence that the Spirit has given us new life. Praise God!

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, ⁷ so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Titus 3:4-7