



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

“The Riches of Divine Grace – I: Regeneration”

TRANSCRIPT

And tonight we have a good deal of material to cover, so I think we should go ahead and begin. Let's open our meeting with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee again for the opportunity to listen to Thy word and to study its doctrines. And we pray, Lord, that tonight Thy blessing may be upon us. Enable us to understand Thy word and to comprehend the riches of divine grace that are ours through the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray for each one present, for instructor, and for those who listen as well that Thy will may be accomplished in this meeting.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Tonight our subject is “The Riches of Divine Grace,” and we will be considering this topic for at least three Monday nights. And in preparation for the subject tonight, which as you can see from the outline on the board is regeneration, I want you to turn with me to the third chapter of the Gospel of John. John chapter 3. Now, I'm going to read the first eight verses, and I will be reading from the Greek text and in case you notice a few little differences you will understand that you have an uninspired copy and I am reading from the inspired version. Now,

“There was a man from the Pharisees, Nicodemus by name, a ruler of the Jews: This one came to him by night, and said to him, Rabbi, we know that thou hast come as a teacher from God: for no one is able to do these signs which you are doing except God be with him. Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ Nicodemus saith unto him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into the womb of his mother and be born, can he?’ Jesus answered, ‘Verily, verily, I say to thee, except one be born of water and Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which has been born of the flesh is flesh; and that which has been born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to thee, ye must be born from above. The wind blows where it wills.’” The Greek text has the same word that has been used all along for Spirit and, of course, it could be rendered the Spirit blows where he wills but we’ll leave it as a figure the wind blows where he wills or it wills, “And you hear its sound, but you do not know whence it comes, and where it goes: so is every one who has been born of the Spirit.”

Now, up to this point in our studies in Soteriology, we have considered the person of Christ and remember we discussed his deity and his humanity. And we also considered some of the aberrations from the faith as represented in false teaching concerning the person of Christ down through the centuries. Then we launched into a brief discussion of the work of Jesus Christ and we dwelt for a little while upon the substitutionary sacrifice attempting to justify the fact that our Lord’s death was vicarious or substitutionary.

And then we launched into a rather lengthy discussion of the application of this work of redemption which Jesus accomplished on the cross at Calvary and we discussed the doctrine of election spending at least five times upon the doctrine of election. And then we discussed common grace and special grace or effectual calling. And so up to this

point, we have been in our most recent times together stressing the application of the work of atonement or redemption. But we have stressed that part of the application of the work of atonement which leads up to salvation. We have not yet stressed what happens at the point of our salvation. And so for now we are going to continue the study of the application of the work of atonement, but we’re going to deal with and stress that which constitutes our salvation itself. So we’re not talking now about the application of the work of atonement in its preparation for salvation, but we’re going to talk about the application of that work of Jesus Christ which constitutes our salvation.

We’re going to try to answer the question what happens to the man when he is saved or to look at it from the divine standpoint what does God do for us when he saves us? As I’ve mentioned to most of you a number of times, when I was studying Systematic Theology at Dallas Seminary one of my teachers was Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, one of the founders of the seminary, and he used to like to say to us that thirty-three things took place the moment we believed. And one of the things we had to do as a student in those days was to memorize the thirty-three things that happened the moment we believed in Jesus Christ. And so we would be going to memorize the list of thirty-three things because we knew that question was sure to be given on the exam. He took a great deal of delight in asking that question because he felt that it was something that he himself had discovered from his study of the Bible and he had never read it anywhere else. And so sure enough on the exam there would appear the question what happened when you believed in Jesus Christ and we would have to put down the thirty-three things that happened.

And Dr. Chafer used to accompany this with an explanation of how he arrived at the thirty-three things that happened the moment that we believed in Jesus Christ. And he would tell us the story, with a great deal of relish, about how one summer he had received an invitation from a friend to use his cottage in the state of Maine for a summer vacation. And one summer he decided he would take advantage of the invitation and so

he went off to spend a month in Maine. And he took with him only his Bible. He determined he would take no books with him but he would just read the Bible and relax. But when he arrived there began a rainy spell and he said that for thirty days it rained in Maine. And he said he discovered for the first time that it was possible for rain to continue for thirty days and there not follow a flood. He used to like to tell us that. Then he said I started to read my Bible because there was nothing else to do. And so I took my Bible down and as I started to read the gospel of Matthew I thought well I ought at least read with purpose. And so he said I think I’ll read in order to see what happens when a man believes in Jesus Christ.

And he said, I had a piece of paper by my Bible and I would note down the things that happened the moment we believed in Jesus Christ as I read along. And when I finished the book of Revelation, having nothing to do but read the Bible, I finished it rather quickly. I discovered that there were thirty-three things that happened the moment that we believed in Jesus Christ but he said I still had a good bit of my vacation left and I thought I ought to check that. And so I went back over the Bible again, beginning the New Testament again beginning with Matthew in order to be sure that I had not omitted anything.

And he said, At the end of my second reading of my New Testament I discovered that my thirty-three things that happened when we believed in Jesus Christ were true. It was thirty-three no more no less. And he said just to further check I went through a third time just checking through the New Testament and I finally reached a conclusion one morning. It was thirty-three no more and no less. And he said I just couldn’t resist it I left out, and if anyone remembers Dr. Chafer, he was a little fellow very dignified and very quaffed, but he said I just couldn’t resist it and there in the house I just let out a “praise the Lord” and he said Mrs. Chafer was upstairs in the cottage. And she yelled down what’s the matter Lewis. He said I’ve just discovered I’m a thirty-third degree

Christian and it hasn’t cost me a cent. [Laughter] And those of you that are Masons who appreciate those words.

Now, I have a friend in Houston who’s pastor of a large church there and he’s a graduate of Dallas seminary and he ought to know better. Because he learned the thirty-three things but he has had the effrontery to suggest that there are not thirty-three things that happen the moment we believe in Jesus Christ but thirty-four. He claims to have read; now I don’t know that he claims to have read through the New Testament. Bob if you’re listening I’m not saying anything but what I’ve heard. He claims that thirty-four things happen but I have not heard him say that he has read through the New Testament three times in order to check his accounting. And so until I hear that from you Bob I’m still going to believe that there are just thirty-three things that happen the moment we believe in Jesus Christ.

Now, we’re not going to have time to consider thirty-three different things that happen the moment that we believe in Jesus Christ but we are going to select the important things and over the next two or three Monday nights we’re going to center our attention upon them.

Now, perhaps the leading thing that happens is the fact that we are born again. And so I have put this at the head of the list for not only that reason that it is probably the most important thing but it is surely the most important thing theologically. We will also consider justification and sanctification and a few other of the important things but I think if we consider this one thoroughly then we will not have to consider the others as thoroughly and I assure you that we could just spend the rest of this year and next year studying the things that happen the moment we believe in Jesus Christ if we were to really do them complete justice, but you cannot do that with anything in the Bible so we’re going to do what we can. And so let’s tonight consider the subject of the new birth or the doctrine of regeneration.

Now, I have put this Roman I – “Regeneration” because Roman II will follow next Monday night as a continuation. These three nights will be the consideration of this one subject.

Now, we have read John 3 verses 1 through 8 and that you probably in your reading of the New Testament have noticed that the doctrine of regeneration is a doctrine that is especially Johnian. He loves this doctrine and probably has more about the doctrine of the new birth or the doctrine of regeneration than any of the New Testament authors. Now, Peter refers to it and Paul refers to it but it is John who stresses it. And when we think of the doctrine of regeneration, we ordinarily think of John’s writings. So we’re going to lay stress upon them, but we will be referring to the others also as you will see.

Capital A in our outline – “The Meaning of Regeneration.” This word regeneration occurs in the New Testament twice. It occurs in Matthew chapter 19 in verse 28 and it occurs in Titus chapter 3 in verse 5. Now, I think it would be well for us to turn to Matthew chapter 19 in verse 28 and will you listen as I read these verses? Matthew chapter 19 in verse 28. They are the words of our Lord and we read,

“And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration.” There is the word and it is in the Greek text the word for regeneration, “Ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

Now, you can see that this particular occurrence of regeneration has reference to the regeneration of the creation during the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. So this meaning “regeneration” Matthew 19:28 is a reference to the regeneration to the creation or the kingdom. Now, we will drop that because that is not really the important use of the

word for us. And we’re going to consider the second occurrence and the significance of it throughout when the word “regeneration” refers to the regeneration of a person. Let’s read Titus chapter 3 in verse 5 which is the other of the occurrences of the precise word “regeneration.” Titus chapter 3 and verse 5. Paul writes,

“Not by works which are in righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration, and renewal of the Holy Spirit.”

Now, here the word refers to the regeneration of a person. The washing of regeneration what does it mean? What does it mean to be regenerated? There have been quite a few suggestions. Someone has said it means to let your whole life get warm glowing and growing into blossom and coming to fruit in the sunshine of Jesus’ love. Now, that’s a very sweet thought but that really doesn’t have anything to do much with the doctrine of regeneration according to the New Testament. Charles Hodge, who was one of our fine theologians, has said it means “The instantaneous change from spiritual death to spiritual life.” Now, that is much closer to the sense of regeneration, “The instantaneous change from spiritual death to spiritual life,” regeneration.

Another theologian has said it means this “Regeneration is the communication of the divine nature to man by the operation of the Holy Spirit through the word.” So “regeneration is the communication of the divine nature to man by the operation of the Holy Spirit through the word.” The idea back of that, of course, is the idea of communicating God’s nature to a person who does not have it. There is one thing lacking from that definition as you can see from reading Titus chapter 3 verse 5 because here we read “through the washing of regeneration, the washing of regeneration.” So you can see from this that regeneration has an aspect of its teaching that refers to the

forgiveness of sins. “The washing of regeneration.” So I like to think that perhaps this definition is more complete.

Regeneration is the divine act of cleansing the elect. Regeneration is the divine act of cleansing the elect and communicating spiritual life through the Spirit and the word. So in regeneration then we have two aspects of biblical teaching, cleansing and communication of divine life through divine activity through the Spirit and through the word. As we read in John chapter 3 and verse 8, “So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” A person who is born again, a person who is regenerated, is one who in a sense is spiritually pastless. Our past is wiped out and there is nothing but the future for us. Pastless and futureful; that’s what it means to be born again. Everything is wiped out. Wouldn’t it be nice to wipe out all of those debts that you have? And wouldn’t it be nice to have such a conferral of material possessions that you knew you could meet every possible liability that you could have in the future. Well in the spiritual sphere that is what has happened when you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a wonderful place called the land of beginning again and it is possible for us through the redeeming work of Jesus Christ upon which our regeneration is based.

Dwight Moody used to like to speak of the fact that he had two birthdays. In his first birth, he was born in East Northfield, Massachusetts, and the date was 1837 but nineteen later his Sunday school teacher Edward Kimbell put his hand on Moody’s shoulder and said Dwight don’t you think it’s time for you to give your heart to the Lord? And it was then Mr. Moody said that he was born a second time. He had two births one natural one spiritual. Have you had two births? Have you been born again? Can you look back fifty years ago and say that’s where I was born physically but in 19 so and so I was born again. I’ve had two births. A Christian is one who should be able to answer that positively.

Capital B – “The Necessity of Regeneration.” Modern liberal theology denies the need of regeneration because it believes is essentially good. Why should man undergo a

radical change? If man is essentially good, there is no need for regeneration. But there are compelling reasons for the need of regeneration. In the outline Arabic I - I have “The Condition of Humanity.” Let’s read a couple of passages. Let’s turn to the Old Testament and read Job chapter 15 verses 14 through 16. I will declare a slight intermission while you find Job. It’s not often that you have to refer to this book, I know. But it is found in the Old Testament and I’ll tell you if you’ll just open that Bible up about half way through it you’re libel to be close to Job. Job chapter 15 and we’re going to read verses 14 through 16. If you’ve got the Psalms you’re warm. Just turn back a little bit. Job 15 verse 14,

“What is man, that he should be clean? And he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?”

That’s a rather straightforward expression of man’s sinfulness. “How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?” Man is filthy. Paul in Ephesians chapter 2 tells us something else about man. He says in Ephesians chapter 2 and I think this is particularly appropriate to us since we’re talking about the doctrine of regeneration. Now, Paul writes in Ephesians 2 in verse 1, “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;” and so Job says that we are filthy and Paul says that we are dead. John tells us in 1 John 3:8 that we are of the devil. That is that we may be characterized as belonging to him. So I think you can see from this that man is in desperate need of some help. He is filthy. He is of the devil and especially he is dead.

Now, to be dead spiritually means to be separated from God. It does not mean to be dead physically. It means that there is no fellowship between man and God. Dead,

that’s what we all are and therefore, we need life, and it is the doctrine of regeneration that explains for us how we obtain light.

Plutarch has a parable of a man who tried to make a dead body stand upright but finished his labors by expressing in Latin *de est aliquid intus*, there’s something lacking inside. And there is something lacking inside all men for they are dead. They have no fellowship with God. Until you came to believe in Jesus Christ there was no relationship between you and God. You were dead that is why when you speak to some of your friends about the gospel of Jesus Christ and there is no response. It’s because they are dead. They cannot respond. They do not respond to your words spiritually any more than a body in a grave might respond to words you can hear with your ears.

Now, secondly, another reason for regeneration is the character of holiness. Holiness separates. Isaiah chapter 59:12 says something like this, “Your sins have separated between you and your God.” Sins separate us from God. Holiness is that which God alone possess completely. Now, holiness means separation. To be holy is to be set apart. When we say that God is holy, we mean that he is entirely different from men. He is set apart from us. He cannot enter into fellowship with us because of our sin. There is a separation. And because of the character of God’s holiness it is necessary for a change to take place in us if we are to enter into his presence.

Now, we do not need simply to be altered. We do not need simply to be influenced. We do not need to be reinvigorated. We do not need to be reformed. We do not need a good case of religion. We do not need to become Presbyterians or Baptists or Methodists. God does not receive all Baptists although all Baptists may think so. He does not receive all Presbyterians although Presbyterians may think so. He only receives into fellowship with himself those who have a complete and perfect righteousness to speak in the terms of justification or who possess divine life to speak in the terms of regeneration. And we cannot enter into the presence of God if we do not have the kind

of life that beings have in heaven or as man used to like to say “One former is worth a hundred reformers.” But if we are to enter heaven we must have the life of God.

And third, another reason for regeneration is the character of heaven itself. In Revelation chapter 21 in verse 27 John says, “There shall no wise enter into the city of Jerusalem, the New Jerusalem, any thing that defileth.” Heaven is a place in which absolute purity prevails. The New Jerusalem is a holy city. It is a glorified city. Only those who are holy shall enter that city, only those who are pure. You know heaven would not be heaven if you had to go to heaven like you are now. I don’t know that I’d want to be there if you were there as you are now. Would you want to be there if I was there as I am now?

Groucho Marx used to like to say he never wanted to be a member of any club that would have him as a member. [Laughter] And I really do not know that we would enjoy heaven if it were like earth down here. You’ve heard me say many times, Dr. Barnhouse used to like to say, “If we went to heaven as we are we’d wreck the place.” And Mr. Spurgeon used to like to say “If a thief went to heaven without a change of heart, the first thing that he would do would be to pick the angel’s pockets.” So if we are to enter into heaven there must be a change for heaven is a holy city. And so the character of heaven itself demands regeneration.

Now, let’s move on to the nature of regeneration. And here we’re going to consider some of the deeper questions. At least, I think they are deeper. Arabic I – “Regeneration is a Creative Work of God in Which Man is Passive.” Now, I didn’t have the space to put the rest of that down there so you could see it but it is a creative work of God in which man is passive. In other words, the work is God’s work. Now, if you just think for a moment about the terms that are used in the New Testament for regeneration you will see this. For those terms are terms like well we’ve had regeneration that word occurs twice. We’ve had the term born again that occurs in several forms both verbal plus adverbial again or from above and then also in one verb which means to be born

again. You also find it in terms like to beget. We have this in the book of James chapter 1 verse 19. It really means to bring forth in birth. Then we have the term to create. Create with a reference to new birth. So we have different terms.

Now, each one of these terms as you can say has this about it in common. It refers to a work of God in which man is passive. When we are born, we are passive. When we are created, we are passive. And so the characteristic thing that we should say first of all about the nature of regeneration is that it is a work of God in which man is passive. There is another word translated to quicken. I didn’t put this up here I forgot it, to quicken or to quicken together as it is found in Ephesians chapter 2 verse 5. It means to be made alive. But the same thing is true of it. In other words, in the doctrine of new birth there is stressed the fact that we are passive in that activity. God does something for us and he does it creatively. We are the object of that work. That’s the first thing we could say.

The second thing is that regeneration is non-experiential. We do not experience it. Oh I know if you say experience you mean have you been born again. Yes, but did you remember when you were born again. Now, come on. I don’t mean the time. I mean do you remember the precise experience of the change. No you don’t. It is non-experiential. You don’t experience new birth. You know at one moment you were not alive. The next moment you are alive but all you experience are the effects of it. You have joy, thanksgiving. You are enlightened. You begin to read the Bible. You can understand it. You come to know God but as far as the experience of birth itself you can’t describe it. No Christian has ever been able to describe the precise experience of new birth. He can only describe the effects of it. It is non-experiential.

Now, to show you the parallel between your natural birth do you remember when you born naturally? No you don’t but you know you’ve been born by the fact that you’re here. Don’t you? And even those of you that are not here we know you’ve been born. [Laughter] So the second thing that we must say about it that it is not experiential. The

third thing is a thing that we have probably anticipated but I want to say it directly. Regeneration is a supernatural work. It is not a natural work. It is beyond human experience and beyond human explanation ultimately. It is supernatural.

Henry Clay used to say that he did not know for himself personally the experience of a change of heart which his Kentuckians, his friends in Kentucky, used to talk about. But he had seen Kentucky family feuds of longstanding healed by religious revivals. And he went on to say that whatever could heal a Kentucky family feud was undoubtedly more than human. And so he was willing to grant that there was such a thing as a supernatural change in a man's heart. It is supernatural as Jesus put it in John chapter 3 and verse 8, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound, but you do not know whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Born of the Spirit, supernatural birth.

Fourth, regeneration may contain three separable elements. Now, before I say to you what I'm going to say to you in the next five minutes. I want to put you on your guard. What I'm saying is what I, in my thinking seem to be lead to believe, but I admit that what I'm going to say in some measure is my deduction from certain facts of Scripture and human experience. And I don't want you to follow my words without testing it in Scripture for yourself. So be on your guard. Regeneration may contain three separable elements. First of all, as I interpret the New Testament, there is first of all an implantation by God of a spiritual incorruptible seed in the heart of those who are to be born again. Secondly, there is a conception that takes place, a conception of life. And thirdly, there is a birth. Now, as you can see what I'm saying is essentially parallel with human birth. There is the implantation of seed. Then there is fertilization of the seed. There is conception. And then after a period of pregnancy, there is birth. Now, life exists before birth conception before birth. There is a begetting before there is bringing forth. And there is a seed before there is a begetting.

Now, I think that as you study the New Testament you will see each of these things. There is, therefore, a logical order in regeneration. There is the implantation of new life by effectual grace, that is the preparation for the new birth. God implants within the heart or within the person of the one who is to be born again an incorruptible seed. Secondly, the word of God comes as the fertilizing and conceiving agency. And that word together with the incorruptible seed results in new life. And thirdly, a new birth then takes place in which there is manifested the response of faith and growth in grace. In other words, faith is a response. A dead man cannot believe that God gives life, conception takes place, and birth as is evidenced by faith and trust and growth in grace.

Now, the new life, of course, grows in grace and that, of course, is part of the doctrine of sanctification. So I want to sum it up then. First, there is the implantation of seed by effectual grace or by efficacious calling. Secondly, there is the conception of life that occurs with the coming of the word to that responsive heart. We don’t want anything from God but God implants a seed within us of divine principle of life which cause us to be responsive. And then thirdly, spiritual birth takes place, and it is evidenced in faith and the resultant life.

Now, I have not quoted any text. So what have you been doing as you have been thinking? You been saying where did Dr Johnson get all this? All right, I’m going to ask you to turn with me now in the Bible. And I’m going to show you something, I guarantee, I’m not talking like Justin Wilson, but I guarantee that you probably have never seen this in your Bible but it is in your text in 1 Peter chapter 1 in verse 23 but you have almost always misread it. And the reason you have misread it is not because you are ignorant. The reason you have misread it is because. Tell it not again. Publish it not in Escalon. Lest other preachers here but your preachers probably have misled you.

Now, will you look at what Peter says in 1 Peter chapter 1. He’s talking about the new birth? He says verse 22,

“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, being regenerated.”

Now, notice “Not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever.” Now, tell me. Haven’t you read this always as if the word of God is that incorruptible seed. Come on now. Haven’t you? Be honest. I’ll tell you. I’ll be honest with you. For many years, I guessed. Before I looked seriously at this in the Greek text that’s the way I read it. “Being born again not of corruptive seed but of incorruptible that is the word of God which liveth and abideth forever.”

Now, when you look at the Greek text of verse 23, you’ll discover that there is a significant change in the prepositions. Now, it’s in the English text too. Notice “Being born again not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible seed by the word of God.” He doesn’t say being born again by corruptible seed not by corruptible seed but by incorruptible by the word of God. He said follow and then bide.

Now, in the Greek text *ek* which is the one translated the preposition translated of. *Ek* indicates source. When we speak about being born of the spirit in John 3:8 that’s *ek*. The spirit is the source of that birth. To be born of God that is *ek*. And John 1:13 the source is God, but when he says in verse 23 “by the word of God” he uses the preposition *dia*. Now, *dia* expresses instrumentality or means. In other words, James is saying that the new birth has two elements about it. It is not that it occurs only through the instrumentality of the word but its source is incorruptible seed.

Now, if the word of God is the instrumentality in means, what is the incorruptible seed? Well the incorruptible seed is something else. It’s not the instrumentality. It’s the source. Do you remember that John says something over in 1 John chapter 3 about the man who has been born a God does not practice sin for he cannot go on sinning because his seed abideth in him. What’s that? That’s the divine life. The divine life makes a

change in a man. He cannot practice sin. When you see a man practicing sin and nothing happens divine discipline does not take place. You can be sure that man doesn't really belong to the Lord. If his life is characterized by sin, that's the evidence that he doesn't belong.

The man who is born again may fall into the sin, may persist for a time in sin, but he comes under divine discipline in the family of God. The man who persists in sin over a period of time and nothing happens to him that's one of the signs that he's not really a believer in Jesus Christ. You see a believer has divine seed. He has divine nature. Well, that's what Peter means when he says we are born again of incorruptible seed. God implants life in us. And through the word of God, which comes to the one who has been prepared, there are then results after the implantation of the seed of life, birth and the new birth takes place. So you see I wasn't telling you something just on my own. I was telling you something that's really in the Bible. I think. I'm kidding you a little now, but now you go home and you take a look at that text and think about it a while. And I think you'll come back and say, Dr. Johnson you were right again. [Laughter]

Now, let's think about Lazarus for a moment. Lazarus, of course, is the supreme illustration of the Gospel of John of how God brings us to life. Lazarus was dead. That's plainly stated. Lazarus was dead, but Lazarus heard the voice of the Lord Jesus and he came forth bound hand and foot with the grave cloth. What happened? Well, Lazarus had to be made alive in order that he could hear. And so he was made alive and then he heard and then he came forth. And it expresses exactly what takes place when a man is born again. God implants within the heart by efficacious grace of those who are to be born again a divine seed, which transforms their being. So that instead of resisting God, they wish to know about God. They hear the word, conception takes place, and new birth follows.

And the expression of it is the faith and trust and witness of the new birth. There's a noise. What happens when a baby is first born? My picture, you know, when

my children were born; I was not anywhere to be seen. I was shaking like a leaf. I don’t remember much about it at all but my idea of what goes on in the delivery room is that the doctor takes the little infant out and spansks it. And the first thing you hear is a sound. That’s the sign of new birth that agrees at least with what was said here in John chapter 3, “Thou hearest the sound there of canst not tell whence it cometh or whether it goeth so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.” And so the expression of faith as it expresses itself is the sign of something that has transformed. The reason I believe in the Lord Jesus is because something has happened down within to change my disposition. And that’s because God has prepared me for new birth. Unlike the black convert, my conversion is due to myself and God. I fought against God with all my might and God did the rest. I like that.

Now, what I have tried to do for you is to set forth for you the logical order of what happens when we’re born again. Now, what I want to point out here is that the logical order of what happens of when I am born again is not necessarily the temporal order. Actually, all of this is instantaneous. You won’t be able to look at someone and say you know I believe that life has been implanted there but they’re not born again yet. In other words, what we’re trying to do as theologians, that’s what you are now you see, what you’re really trying to do is you’re trying to reason through what happens in the new birth but no one of us is ever able to distinguish these elements in the individual case of a person. It all happens at once so far as we’re concerned. It’s when we’re born. And so do not get all tangled up in the parts of our new birth and fail to remember that all of this, really as far as we’re concerned, is instantaneous and non-experiential. So think about it but don’t get to excited over it in the bad sense.

Capital B – “The Efficient Cause of Regeneration.” Now, I want to just say a few words here. We may eliminate at the beginning the Pelagian views. You know who Pelagius is now? The Pelagian view regeneration is solely an act of the human will in which it become really self-reformation. When you see a man who believes that it’s not

necessary to be born again, all we really need to do is to reform and we have the power to do it. Say to him well you know who you are? You’re a Pelagian. And if he doesn’t hit you maybe it’ll be the means of introducing discussion. We want to eliminate Arminian views. That is that regeneration is accomplished by the cooperation of man’s will with the truth.

Now, listen, if we really believed that regeneration was accomplished by the cooperation of our will with the truth as it came to us without believing that is God who inclines our will to receive the truth, if we really believe that the way we were saved was because our wills cooperated with the truth, we really would not believe in total depravity because you see if we could believe that our will could cooperate with the truth we must believe that there is something good in man. So I do not accept that Arminian view. Furthermore, I would not be believing that it is God who inclines the will and that’s what the Bible teaches. It is God that worketh in you both the will and to do of his good pleasure. So the new birth does not come by the cooperation of man’s will with the truth unless we believe it is God who has already worked in our wills to make us wish to cooperate then you passed from Arminianism to Calvinism or into Paulineism which is even better.

The Bible presents the new birth in this way. It states that God is the author. John chapter 1 verse 12 and 13. Do you remember the verses? They go something like this,

“He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God (or the children 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.”

Born of God. God the author it is he who implants the seed. It is he who brings the birth. The Spirit is the agent. Jesus said “So is everyone who is born of the Spirit born of God, the author, born of the Spirit, the agent.” I’ll give you a good three-point message for you to give sometime to your Sunday school class. And the third, the word is the instrument. 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 23 the word that we were just reading a moment ago “Being born again through or by the word of God.” So the word is the instrument. God is the author. The Spirit is the agent. The word is the instrument. So when we say the efficient cause of regeneration, it is God who performs it through the Spirit by means of the instrumentality of the word. And he does it through own will as James says in chapter 1 verse 18 “By his own will he begat us.” Not by our will by his will he begat us through the belief of the truth.

Now, I want to close on this note. You ought to make theologians think. And I want to preface what I’m going to say by saying I’m not trying to criticize any fine Christian man. As I regard Billy Graham as a fine Christian man, but in the light of what we have seen here about the will of God and the will of man, is it the best way to present the gospel to appeal to an audience to surrender your will to God without some word of explanation that it cannot be done apart from divine enablement? Do we find that in the Bible anywhere, surrender your will to God? Why don’t you think about it during this week? Don’t go out and attack Billy Graham now because I said that. Remember he’s an evangelist. God has had his hand upon him for the winning of souls. He’s an evangelist. Evangelists are not theologians. But think about it.

Time’s up. We must stop. Today I’m stopping within five minutes of when I should of tonight. Let’s close with a word of prayer and then we’re going to have, I think, a little refreshment. And we’ll have a discussion afterwards of any points that you may want to raise. Let’s close in prayer

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[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for Thy word. We ask Thy blessing upon us and may the things that we have studied be profitable to us in the understanding of the Scriptures.

We ask in Jesus’ name. Amen.