



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

“The Holy Spirit in Regeneration, part III”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] and we pray that Thou would guide us as we consider what the word of God has to say on the topic so that we may be more fruitful servants of Thine. Enable us to practically apply the truth that we learn, and in our Christian witness, therefore, be more useful to Thee in bringing others to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. And so, Lord, we commit this hour to Thee, for Thy blessing upon us.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Tonight is the third and final one of our studies in “The Holy Spirit and Regeneration.” And I had not intended to take but two hours on this topic, according to the schedule by which I'm going, but this subject has interested me considerably, and so I have spent a little extra time in my own private study. And I hope that as a result of our spending an extra hour on it, we will be a little straighter in our minds on this great subject.

We will not meet next Monday night because I expect to be in Detroit that weekend -- or, rather, that Monday, and in Detroit for that week. And then on the weekend in Seattle, Washington, but I will be back for the following Monday night. So

we will miss next Monday, but meet the following Monday, which I believe is about March 1st.

Now, tonight, “The Holy Spirit and Regeneration.” Since we missed last time, I think it would be good for us to review a little, and so let me, for the sake of all of us, and particularly for any who may not have been here in the preceding two times, review what we have been saying about the doctrine of “The Holy Spirit and Regeneration.”

We are examining the teaching of the Bible on the subject of the Holy Spirit and the impartation of new life, and we have tried to stress these things. First of all, that regeneration is the divine act of instantaneously communicating spiritual life to a person dead in sin. Now, to put it in common language, it means simply that the doctrine of regeneration is the Holy Spirit’s impartation of spiritual life to human beings who are dead in sin.

And then, secondly, we stressed that the need of regeneration is found in three things. First, the condition of humanity, for humanity is dead, blind, hardened, alienated, and we also spent a little more time giving some further details of that. We said the need for regeneration was also seen in the character of holiness itself. God, being a completely holy God, it is absolutely necessary, that if we are to ever enter his presence, we must have a holiness that is acceptable to him. And consequently, the old life, which we possess from Adam, is completely unacceptable to God, and therefore, we need a new and holy life. And we said further, that the need of regeneration is also seen in the character of heaven itself, as described in the Scriptures, for in the New Testament we read that, “There shall not enter into heaven anything that is defiled.” And so from these reasons, we know it is necessary for us to have new life, if we are to ever enter into heaven.

We then looked at the characteristics of regeneration, pointing out that it is solely the work of God. As Paul says in Ephesians chapter 2 in verse 10, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.” And so when we are given new

life, it is a created work of God, and it is his work. It is not our work. Now, we do not have anything to do with the impartation of this life. It is solely the work of God. We do not feel it. It is instantaneous. I think that the illustration that is found in the Gospel of John is very apropos, and that illustration is Lazarus. He was dead, and he came forth alive from the grave at the word, and by the power of the word of Jesus Christ.

So regeneration is solely the work of God. Man cannot cooperate in it, for I said, “A dead man cannot assist in his own resurrection.” And we illustrated that by our Lord’s healing of the blind man. The blind man did not cooperate in his -- in his miraculous healing. No, this was something that Jesus Christ accompanied -- accomplished by his own supernatural power.

I said a moment ago, it is an instantaneous act. We do not feel the coming of the new life to us. When a man is born again, he has no sensations whatsoever. It is a nonexperiential thing. It takes place in our subconscious life. And so, consequently, we should not expect to feel the impartation of the new life. Now, we may feel some results that flow from it, and we should ultimately, have joy and happiness and peace, and a sense of acceptance with God, but these are the results of the impartation of the new life. So it is a nonexperiential thing.

Further, we said it affects the intellect, the will, and the emotions. We pointed out that a blind man may have some conception of color but not experimentally. He may understand some of the facts about it, but -- and it may make sense to him, but until he has seen color, he does not really understand color. And that is the kind of understanding that men have of the Scriptures who are not born again. They understand the Scripture grammatically. They can see what it says. They read the text just as well, perhaps better sometimes than we do, but they do not understand, because there is not added to their intellectual comprehension of the grammar of the text, the experience of it. And until we have the experience of seeing color, we do not really know color. We are

ignorant. And, consequently, in the case of the new birth, until we have experienced the new birth, we do not really understand the truth of God.

Now, we pointed out that man is made willing by God. He who co -- was unwilling to receive the truth, was disqualified from the -- receiving truth, is made willing by God because his heart is opened by God so that he is able to perceive truth. He cannot perceive it until God works first of all. And I think one of the things that I tried to stress last time was this; that the truth itself is not the cause of regeneration. And I tried to point out to you that because we are by our -- the possession of our sin natures through the fall of Adam, because we are blind, it is impossible for us to see truth. And you may pass as much truth as you like in front of the eyes of an unsaved man, and he cannot see it. More truth does not enable him to see it. Better preaching of the word of God does not make him more likely to respond. In the final analysis, this is wholly a work of God.

Now, that is very important. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says,

“The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God. They are foolishness unto him. Neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.”

So regeneration is not accomplished by the truth because man must have something done to him before he can receive truth. Now, I hope we get that point because there are people who think that if we can just get someone under more effective preaching, that, somehow or another, they will be sure to respond to the word. Now, that is unscriptural. Now, that -- the implication of that is, that the only thing the Holy Spirit does, is just do a little better job than men do in persuading others about the truths concerning the Lord Jesus.

This is a supernatural work of God that must precede, before we respond to the word of God. Therefore, that’s why we pray. That’s why we pray through the preaching

of the Scriptures, that men’s hearts may be touched by God so that they may respond to the ministry of the word of God.

Now, we also stressed that the character of this change that takes place in man is not a mere correction of his mind, his will, his emotion -- his emotions, or is it merely a change of ego. I am still the same old person after I’d been born again that I was before. I’m not a new person. Sometimes I wish that were true. Wouldn’t it be nice if we could swap egos? Now, mine’s big enough. I don’t mean that. I mean, just a different kind. Wouldn’t it be nice if we could look around and pick out some other ego to become when we have been born again. Well, unfortunately, we are stuck with the one we have throughout all eternity. And we shouldn’t object to that. It’s the one God gave us.

So regeneration is not a correction of my mind. It’s not a correction of my will. It’s not a correction of my emotions. Well, that would be a minor change -- not sufficient -- nor is it a complete change of ego. It is a communication of a new nature. A new principle of life in operation, and I illustrated that by the grafting of a good scion on a wild stalk and tried to illustrate that the plant was still the same plant, but a new principle of life had been communicated to it.

Now, in this study, we hope to finish our study of the subject, and I want to do something which is somewhat speculative tonight. I want to attempt to analyze the order of the change that takes place when regeneration takes place. And I want to note the efficient cause of this change, and say just a word about the evidences of it. Now, if you’ve been following the outline, we have come to Roman V in our outline: The Analysis of the Order of the Change in Regeneration.

Now, I want to say to all of you, my dear sweet friends who have been listening to me Monday after Monday -- and I appreciate every one of you -- tonight’s message is going to have to be somewhat speculative. Now, there’s nothing wrong in speculating, providing we don’t go beyond Scripture, contradict Scripture. But I think this is going to

be somewhat speculative, just as is the case with our natural births, as I suggested by way of illustration, a week or two ago.

Now, we have -- even though we know we are alive -- we have a sense of mystery about our own beginnings, do we not? How many of you would like to testify to how you were born? Well, I -- I know that no one but a wild man would stand up and make a testimony -- give a testimony like that, because so far as I know, no -- no human being ever remembers what happens when he was born. And the chances are, if you describe the things that -- if you go back as far as you can in your life, you can go back perhaps, to the time when you used to sit in a high chair.

Now, I don’t think I can go quite that far back myself. I go back to the time when I was about three years of age. That’s about when I came to consciousness, so far as I know. And I can remember living in a little apartment house in Birmingham, Alabama, on Louise Street. And that’s as far as I go, and -- and one of the surprise -- surprisingly, one of the things I go back to is my father punishing me for striking some matches in the back yard. And I can remember a lecture that he gave me on burning down apartment houses. And that is about the beginning of my conscious existence. Now, what happened before that? I don’t have much of a comprehension of, but I have a good idea that I was born, because I’m alive now.

Now, the same thing is true in our spiritual life. We do not really know what happened when we born as precisely as we would like. We can look at the word of God, and reason from the revelation that God has given us and reach, I think, a reasonable degree of certainty about the main things that happen to us when we were born again, but there is still a little mystery about it, I think.

Now, I’m going to try to clear up as much as I can tonight, but I want to assure you that I am not presenting this as if this is the truth, and anyone who disagrees with me is therefore, a heretic. Further, before we look at the order, I want you to notice that I have, under A, The Logical Order, have tried to distinguish between the logical order of

events and the temporal or chronological order of events. In the case of the logical order of events, we are reasoning from the standpoint of the statements of Scripture about what logically follows in our conversion process. But in the case of the temporal order, I want to point out that these steps are lo -- are usually indistinguishable. In other words, it is very difficult for us to distinguish between the various steps in the process by which we pass from death through to the conversion experience, or through to salvation. But, logically, there is an order that seems to prevail.

Now, Capital A then: The Logical Order of the Steps Involved in Regeneration. And we will begin at the beginning, and trace the work on to the end. And of course, we have to begin with the state of death. Now, the reason we begin at the state of death, of course, is because the Bible says, as a result of Adam’s sin we are dead in trespasses and sin. Now, of course, sin took place. And as a result of sin, men became guilty before God. And because they were guilty before God, they were sentenced to death. Now, they died spiritually -- or, Adam died spiritually when he sinned. He died physically, ultimately. And his body became dust. And there is a progression then. Sin, guilt, punishment, which is death. And death is the wages of sin.

Now, I’m going to take the liberty tonight to read a few paragraphs from a book called, “The Work of the Holy Spirit” by Abraham Kuyper. Now, Kuyper was a very unusual man. He was a Dutch theologian, lived in the twentieth century, was at one time the political head of the Netherlands, and at the same time, an outstanding theologian. I don’t think that could ever happen, except in a land like the Dut -- like the Netherlands, in which there was such a close connection between the Church and the State. But

Abraham Kuyper was a very godly man and an exceedingly accomplished theologian. And in his book on the Holy Spirit, he has some things to say about death which I found rather unique, and I’m going to read then to you, if you don’t mind. So will you listen?

He’s discuss -- he’s discussing our death, and he says, “Next in order comes the discussion of death. There is sin, which is deviation from and resistance against the law. There is guilt, which is withholding from God that which, as the giver and upholder of the law, is due to him. But there is also punishment, which is the lawgiver’s act of upholding his law against the lawbreaker. The sacred Scriptures call this punishment, death. To understand what death is, we must first ask, What is life?” By the way, wouldn’t it be interesting if we had a president in this country who could teach us a little theology? We’ve never had a president like that, so far as I know. I cannot remember any president who knew the first thing about theology in the United States. He continues, “What is life?

And the answer in its most general form is: a thing lives if it moves from within. A man found in the street, leaning against a wall perfectly motionless, is supposed to be dead, but if he turns his head or moves his hand, we know that he is alive. The motion, though almost imperceptible and so feeble that it requires the practiced fingers of the physician to detect it, is always the sign of life. The muscles may be paralyzed, tendons and sinews rigid, yet so long as the pulse beats, the heart throbs, and the lungs inhale the air, life is not extinct. In the doubtful cases of drowning, trance or paralysis, the doubt is not removed, if removed at all, until motion has been observed. Hence, we may safely say, A body lives if it moves from within.”

Now, about two weeks ago, I cannot remember who told me this true story, but it is a true story. I was in the -- I was in - I think I was in the kitchen of Believer’s Chapel, but my wife disputes me on this point, and so I’m obviously wrong. But she heard the story, too, and a friend was telling about a young doctor -- I presume he had -- was just an intern or staff physician -- and he was helping in an operation on a woman not too many weeks ago in either Dallas or Houston.

And in the course of this operation, the doctors gave up hope that this woman was alive, and the young doctor was a little disturbed over it. Though there was no pulse, he still just seemed to think there might be some life, and he kept saying to the

doctor, “Are you sure that she’s dead?” The doctor had -- had stopped working upon her and had just said that she had died, and that was it. And I think he was getting ready to leave, and the young doctor kept saying, “Are you sure? Are you sure?” And the doctor said, “Yes, he was sure,” until finally, the young doctor, not knowing exactly what to do I guess. He went over to the body, and he said to the body, “Are you alive?” And the woman opened her eyes and said, “Yes,” or made some movement. So -- and I understand she lived.

Now, let’s go back to Kuyper. He says, “Hence we may say a body lives if it moves from within. This cannot be said of a clock, for its mechanism lacks inherent self-moving power. By winding, energy may be stored in its mainspring, but when this is spent, the clock stops. But life is not a force added to a prepared organism, mechanically and temporarily, but an energy that inheres in the organism as an organic principle. Hence, it is plain that the human body has no vital principle in itself, but receives it from the soul. The arm is motionless until moved by the soul. Even the functions of circulation, breathing, and digesting are animated by the soul. For when the soul leaves the body, all these functions stop. A body without a soul is a corpse.

As physical life depends upon the union of body and soul, so is physical death a result of the disillusion of that bond. As in the beginning, God formed the human body out of the dust of the earth, and breathed into its nostrils the breath of life, so that it became a living being, so is the dissolving of that bond which is death to the body, an act of God. Death is, therefore, the removal of that wonderful gift; the bond of life. God withdraws the forfeited blessing, and the soul departs, and separate disembodiment, while the body, freed as a corpse, is delivered unto corruption.”

Now, I’m going to skip a little over to the next page where he says, “If Adam’s life originated in the union which God had established between his soul and the life principle of the Holy Spirit, it follows that Adam’s death resulted from God’s act of dissolving that union, whereby his soul became a corpse. But that -- this is not all. When the body dies,

it does not disappear. The process of death does not stop there. As a unit, it becomes incapable of organic action, but its constituent parts become capable of producing terrible and corrupting effects. Left unburied in a house, the poisonous gases of disillusion breed malignant fevers and cause death to the inhabitants in the community. After this disillusion of flesh and blood, which cannot inherit the kingdom of God, the body as such continues to exist, with the possibility of being re-animated and refashioned into a more glorious body, and of being reunited with the soul.”

Now, the thing I -- reason I'm mentioning all of this is because we -- at least I have -- I've had the idea of the physical death of a body, illustrative of our spiritual death, and have in my own mind thought, “Well, when I die, I'm gone.” And thus, the malignant effects of a body left unburied as illustrative of the kind of spiritual malignant effects that issue from a person who is not born again, that illustration, I must confess, has been lost to me. Now he continues, “All this can almost literally be applied to the soul. When a soul dies, that is, is severed from its life principle which is the Holy Spirit, it becomes perfectly motionless and unable to perform any good work. Some things may remain, like loveliness upon the face of the dead, yet however lovely, it is useless and unprofitable. And as a dead body is incapable of any act and inclined to all disillusions, so is a dead soul incapable of any good and inclined to all evil. But this does not imply that a dead soul is devoid of all activity any more than a dead body. As the latter contains blood, carbon, and lime, so does the former possess will, feeling, intelligence, and imagination.”

Now, that's what we have. “Spiritually dead, we still have these faculties, and these elements of a dead soul become equally active with still more terrible effects, which are sometimes fearful to behold. But as the dead body, by all its activities, can never produce anything to restore its organism, so can the dead soul, by all its workings, accomplish nothing to restore a harmonious utterance before God. All its utterances are sinful, even as the dead body emits only offensive odors. Yea, the parallel goes still

further. A corpse may be embalmed, stuffed with herbs and encased as a mummy. Its corruption is invisible; all unsightliness carefully concealed. So do many men embalm the dead soul; fill it with fragrant herbs, and wrap it like a mummy in a shroud of self-righteousness, so that of the indwelling corruption, scarcely anything appears.”

Well, there is no need to go any further into it. It’s a beautiful picture you see of what we are by nature. We’re not just dead, but we are corrupting, and the influences that flow from the natural man are just as offensive spiritually as are the odors that flow from a body that is allowed to decay.

Now, that is what we are by nature. We are dead in sin. That’s what every man is outside of Jesus Christ, and you don’t have to go very far to see the truth of this. Just have some contact with dead men, or remember how you were. So the first step is death. Now second, preparatory grace. Now, I have under this -- in my own thinking -- the reception of common grace and preparatory grace.

Now, we have studied common grace, and so there is no need for me to go into this. Common grace consists of the blessings that we all have as human beings such as: order in our government, the blessings of a God who bestows upon men, the seasons, the rains, the snows, the sunshine, and all of the other physical blessings; who provides us with shelter and clothing. But also, there’s a preparatory grace which pertains to those who are the elect.

You remember Paul said in Galatians chapter 1 in verse 15, that he felt that God had had his eye upon him from the time of his mother’s womb. I’m going to read those verses for you. If you want to look over there you can. But Paul says in Galatians 1:15,

“But when it pleased God who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me by his grace.”

Now, that probably should be rendered, “separated me from the time of my mother’s womb.” But the point is not necessary at this juncture, because the thing that Paul is stressing is that long before he met Jesus Christ on the Damascus Road, God had already had his hand upon him.

Now, I know that that is true in my life. I don’t know whether you know that or not. I don’t think you have to know that necessarily, but I do. I know that the reason I took classical Greek in college was because God wanted me to teach Greek ultimately. I never would have selected that. I was interested in golf, and it just happened to fit into my schedule. If -- if physics had fit into my schedule -- well, I was taking physics -- but if chemistry had fit into my schedule, I probably would have taken chemistry. But God arranged it so Greek did, and ultimately I came to teach Greek, because long before I became a Christian, God had his hand upon me. That was preparatory grace. Providentially, he worked in my life.

Now, God when -- in eternity past he -- when he elected us, he did not elect us as a mere name or a figure. He did not look down a list of names and say, “Now, Bob Smith, Joe Jones, Lewis Johnson -- I’m kind of attracted to Lewis Johnson. I think I’ll select somebody by that name.” And then he might have said, “Now, here are northerners and southerners and South Carolinians, and I think I’d like to select somebody from South Carolina by the name of Lewis Johnson.” Well, that is not the way the elect appear before God. They appear before him as living, vital persons in his mind, in the eternity past. Now, that is part of his preparatory grace. So we’re not names or figures.

People often preach election as if it meant nothing; that God is surprised and happy every day as the number continues to increase. And he grows in knowledge, you know. Every day the gospel is preached, you can see God waiting in heaven, “I wonder what’s going to happen today.” And then the gospel is preached, and somebody believes and he says, “Good. Good. One or two more headed to the body of Christ. New.” God is not like that. N

Now, there are some of my friends that actually teach that election takes place when we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, if that were true, God would be increasing in knowledge. He wouldn’t be an omniscient God. So I cannot accept that. You’ll pardon me, but my God -- as I conceive of him -- is all wise, all powerful, knows the end from the beginning, and knows -- knew everything about me long before I ever came into existence, knew precisely what I was going to say tonight, and knew what I was going to feel when I said it, and knows it now. So the second step is the reception of grace.

The third step: calling by the word. Now, this is external calling, not internal calling. You read in Romans chapter 10 in verse 17,

“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”

Now, no one is ever saved apart from the word of God, and so there is an external call that goes forth through God’s appointed ministers of the word of God, and that is a step in our being brought to the knowledge of the Lord. This external hearing of the word of God is a necessary accompaniment of every conversion. It is not, however, effectual in itself. How often people who say, “You know, if we can just have the word preached, people will be saved.” Not necessarily. Not necessarily. What does the Psalmist say?

“Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.”

The law is there, but to understand it, there must be a work of the Holy Spirit upon our spiritual eyes. So it isn’t enough to preach the word. Now, if we can just presume, for the sake of illustration -- Let’s suppose that from the pulpit of Believer’s Chapel, Sunday after Sunday, there goes the purest preaching of the word in all the land.

I think that’s true, but let’s just say, for the sake of illustration. That would not guarantee the salvation of one soul, not one, for external calling by the word of God is not sufficient for the salvation of one soul.

There must be an operation of the Holy Spirit, because dead men cannot respond. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. They are foolishness to him. Neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.” Don’t think for one moment ever, that men are saved because a purer preaching of the word comes from this pulpit. Or a more powerful ministry of the word of God comes from this pulpit. Men are saved ultimately, regenerated through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Now, that brings us to four, regeneration. Now, I’m filling this out because my outline’s a little longer than I was able to put on that. The regeneration of the person by grace without means. Now, I’m going to ask you to turn with me to a passage that I wanted to read for my Scripture reading, but being old and decrepit, I forgot it. 1 Peter chapter 1 in verse 23. 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 23. This is the most important text for you to get tonight. Now, all you who are pupils of Mr. Emgee, get your Greek texts out if you’ve got them. And those of you who are not pupils of Mr. Emgee, shame on you. 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 23. Peter says -- I think I’ll just read this from the Greek text. Now, you read your English text, and we read beginning with verse 22,

“Since you have purified your souls in the obedience of the truth unto love of the brethren without hypocrisy, unfeigned love of the brethren. From the heart love one another fervently. Having been born again -- or, having been born again not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible through the word of the living and abiding God.” [Or perhaps, through the living and abiding word of God.]

Now, if you will look at verse 23, you will notice in the English text it says simply, “Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the word of God.”

Now, you wouldn’t have to be able to read Greek to notice that those two prepositions, “of” and “by,” are different. Now, almost everyone reads verse 23 as if it meant that we are born again, simply by the word of God. Isn’t that the way you read it? “Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the word of God.” And you thought of the word of God as the incorruptible seed, haven’t you? Now come on, haven’t you? Yes, you have, because almost everybody else has thought of it that way.

But those prepositions are different. One of them indicates source; the other indicates instrumentality. And so the corruptible -- the incorruptible seed is not the same as the word of God. “Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible.” What is incorruptible seed? Why, that is the life of God communicated to us by the Holy Spirit. That’s spiritual life. That’s the spiritual *semen* that the Holy Spirit deposits in the heart of the elect, which brings them to life. So that we are born again, not of corruptible semen but of incorruptible spiritual semen, through the word of God.

Now, this text then tells us that our regeneration is not accomplished by the word of God. It is accomplished by the direct activity of the Holy Spirit upon our hearts. That’s necessary for us to be able to receive the word of God, because as natural men, we cannot receive the word of God.

Now, if you’ll turn over to 1 John chapter 3 in verse 9, you’ll read an interesting text that says,

“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.” [That means does not practice sin.] “For his seed remaineth in him.”

What seed? God’s seed. The new life. That which is responsible for the new life within us. “For God’s seed remaineth in him.” And he cannot go on sinning, because he is born of God. And so when Peter says that we are born again, “not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible,” he’s talking about the seed of God that is implanted in the heart by

the Holy Spirit of every one of the elect, when the time comes for them to be regenerated. That’s when they receive new life. That’s when they are born, when they have divine seed. There it is, just as plain as day.

Shedd, in his theology, has these comments to make. He says, “The unenlightened understanding is unable to apprehend, and the unregenerate will is unable to believe. Vital force is lacking in these two principle faculties. What is needed at this point is life and force itself. Consequently, the author of spiritual life himself must operate directly without the use of means or instruments, and outright give spiritual life and power from the dead. That is *ex nihilo*. That is, from nothing.

The new life is not implanted because man perceives the truth.” Now, haven’t you always thought that was why the new life was given? I -- I just -- I just know. Now, maybe I’m the only person that thought this in all the world, but I don’t think so. I think there are a lot of people -- members of my club, but I have -- I must confess, for years I thought that the new life was implanted because I believed the truth. Now come on, isn’t that right? Isn’t that what you thought? And yet, you never thought that the Bible said, “The unsaved man couldn’t believe the truth.” You never put those together, did you? Do you know why? Because you listen to preachers. You didn’t read the Bible. That’s the trouble with a lot of us. We listen to preachers, and we don’t read the Bible for ourselves. Applied to the present person, too. Read the Bible three times as much as you listen to teachers, and you’ll be better off.

Now he continues, “The new life is not implanted because man perceives the truth, but he perceives the truth because the new life is implanted.” That should be obvious to us. “A man is not regenerated because he has first believed in Christ, but he believes in Christ because he’s been regenerated. He is not regenerated because he first repents, but he repents because he has been regenerated.” Simple as that. Just as simple as that. What happened to Lydia? Why, the text says, remember, about Lydia -- you know, I preached on Lydia again last week. I was away from you. You didn’t hear it.

You didn’t have to get it again, but they loved it over there in Nashville, and some of them wanted the tapes. What did Lydia -- what does it say about Lydia? It says, “Whose heart the Lord opened that she attended unto the things that were spoken by Paul.” In other words, the faith came because the Lord opened her heart, not the opening of the heart because she attended.

Now, back in the Old Testament in the Book of Proverbs, I must confess, I never noticed this verse until I did this study for these three messages on regeneration. But back in Proverbs chapter 20 in verse 12, we read that,

“The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them.”

Now, it is at this point when God opens the heart, that conception takes place figuratively. Now, I know what you’re thinking. You’re saying, “Well, it didn’t happen that way to me in my experience. It seemed that I believed, and then I got new life.” Well, you see, now that’s because you’re looking at it from the standpoint of your human experience, not from the standpoint of the divine word.

Five. Effectual calling; the inward effectual calling in illumination and conviction of the intellect and will. This is what follows next, for, you see, after new life is communicated to us, then we respond. Then we are illuminated. Then we come under conviction for sin. Then our wills are brought under conviction. It’s then that our hearts are pricked as the -- as those who heard Peter on the Day of Pentecost were. For remember when he reached the climax of his sermon, Luke, in describing their response, says in Acts chapter 2 in verse 37,

“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles; Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

Now they are alive, and they’re going to respond in faith because the new life has been communicated to them. So the inward effectual calling is next.

And sixth, repentance and faith. Now, I don’t want to talk about repentance and faith, and distinguish them at this present time. I think that faith is the broader term. That repentance, which means “a change of mind,” is essentially a negative response and a genuine response and an important response. That is, that men should change their minds regarding all of their former trusts. That is repentance. And faith is the belief and committal of our eternal destiny to the Lord Jesus Christ, as we perceive of him our substitute on the Cross. So repentance and faith, but repentance and faith is the response of regeneration, not the cause of it. Listen again to what the Bible says about Lydia,

“Whose heart the Lord opened that she gave heed -- faith -- to the things that were spoken by Paul.”

So her heart was opened, and she responded in faith.

By the way, turn over to 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 24. 2 Timothy 2, verse 24. Why, I’ve got to hurry. This is such wonderful truth. What do you say we go on to twelve o’clock tonight? Verse 24. Did I say 2 Timothy 2, verse 24? That doesn’t look like the verse I’m looking for. It’s really verse 25, but let’s read 24, too. That’s a good verse also,

“And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient. In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.”

In other words, the acknowledging of the truth follows this transformation that takes place in the person.

Now, I think if we can say that, at regeneration we have conception by God, it is here that we have birth. And perhaps, as we look at this process, we have something similar to the way a man is brought to physical life. For we all know that through the union of male and female, conception takes place, but life does not follow for nine months -- birth does not follow for nine months. There is life within the womb, but there is no manifestation of life, no birth to the world. And so in the spiritual conversion, there may well be -- now, I speculate a little here, I’ll warn you. Go to your own Bible and study for yourself. But there may well be this regeneration, communication of life, and then there follows the birth of repentance and faith, which means salvation. That certainly would be a perfect parallel. We do not, of course, settle Scripture by human analogies, but it’s remarkable how often the human illustrations are the best illustrations of divine truth.

So the final step is salvation or conversion, and there’s no need for us to talk about that.

Now this I want to say for the sake of the time. This is the logical order, as I see it, of a person’s salvation. He’s in death. He receives preparatory grace, which is insufficient for his salvation. It prepares him. He is called by the word of God externally, but the Word of God is insufficient. There must be the communication of life by God, and then the effectual calling of the Holy Spirit, so that the Holy Spirit opens the heart which has been given new life, or leads the heart that has been given new life -- new life, to place faith -- repentance and faith -- in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, that’s the logical order, but when we come over to the temporal order -- or chronological order. Let me hasten to say this; I do not believe myself that it is possible for us to say that we can perceive this order in the salvation of individuals step by step. In other words, we don’t have anybody running around, so far as I know, who has been regenerated, but who has not yet act -- exercised faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. These steps in a man’s salvation often are, to our eyes, just instantaneous. And a man comes in,

he hears the word of God, he is born again, he exercises faith, and he's saved right there in our midst, and it all takes place, and we cannot distinguish the steps. So we must be careful to distinguish the logical order of these things theologically, from the practical aspects in the preaching of the gospel. The temporal order.

Now, I don't know how to illustrate this. I think that, perhaps we could illustrate it by a wheel. I don't know of any better way to illustrate it than this, and I know you've always wanted to see some of my artwork. And so I'll give you some of it. Let's just -- that's not very round, I grant you, but this is the prototype of B.C.'s wheel. And my wheel has spokes, seven of them. Now, the names of my spokes are the steps in our salvation.

Now, one thing we notice about these spokes is that one of them precedes another one. This one, for example -- I'm going this way, by the way, in case you wondered. This spoke precedes this spoke, so that when the wheel turns, this one turns first. But actually, when the wheel turns, they all turn, and so this I think, would be a simple illustration of what takes place when a person -- when salvation takes place. It is true that there is an order in these steps in our regeneration, but the -- the facts of our experience are, that they all seem to operate at the same moment, frequently. And we cannot, from the standpoint of experience, see the distinction between them. Now, I hope that makes some sense to you, and I hope you don't go out and look for somebody now who has been regenerated. He's alive, but he hasn't believed in Jesus Christ yet. So what I've tried to do is to set forth for you the logic of our human salvation.

Now, for just a few moments -- we don't need much -- Roman VI: The Efficient Cause of Regeneration. Now, we of course, now as you can see from what I've said to you, can eliminate any Pelegian views like; regeneration is solely an act of the human will, which is nothing more than sanctified self-reformation. Or Arminian views, that regeneration is accomplished by the cooperation of man's will with the truth, which denies total depravity. For if the will is totally depraved, what good is it going to do for

man’s will to cooperate with the truth? And it also denies the fact that, it is God who inclines the will. As Paul says, “It’s not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.”

Now, the Bible presents the efficient of regeneration then in this way. God is the author. We are born of God. The Spirit is the agent. We are born of the Spirit. And the word is the instrument. We are born through the word. Now, this agency of the word is mediate agency, not immediate agency. In other words, the Spirit brings us to new life, and then the Spirit brings the word to bear upon our enlightened understanding and our renewed will so that we are able to see and respond. So the ministry of the word in our salvation, is mediately, not immediately, but the Spirit works immediately -- directly upon us -- to give us new life. The seed of God implanted by the Holy Spirit within us.

Now, if that’s true, then what shall we say of evangelists who go around all the time saying, “Surrender your will. Surrender your will. Surrender your will.” Well, truth of the matter is, we cannot surrender our wills. Something must take place before that, and so unless we are clear in our theology and make that plain -- that we are hopelessly and totally dependent upon God for our salvation, we should be creating false impressions about how people come to God through Jesus Christ.

Now, I think you can see that from this understanding of the method of salvation, it is God who gets the glory for our salvation, not man. Not our human will. Not our human understanding, but God is glorified, for he alone can take a dead, corrupt, filthy spiritual being, and re-animate, recreate in the image of our Lord Jesus Christ. What then, is the evidence of regeneration? Well, they are both internal and external. Internal; faith, love for him. External; righteousness, good works. And in Lydia’s case, baptism. Observing the ordinances of God.

Now, I want you to turn over with me to 1 John chapter 5, verse 1 for just one text, because we have thirty seconds. 1 John 5:1. Now, all of Tony’s pupils look at your Greek text, and listen as I read it. Now, you’ll understand the Bible a lot better if you just

remember, we are logically born again before we exercise faith. Does that seem strange to you? I know it does, doesn’t it? Just test it by the word of God. Listen.

“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God.”

Did you notice the tenses? “Everyone who believes -- present tense -- that Jesus is the Christ has been -- perfect tense -- has been born of God.”

What’s the evidence of the new birth? Well, the evidence is, that we now believe that Jesus is the Son of God. The birth precedes the faith. Does that give you enough to think about tonight? Now, when you get down on your bed tonight, and you wonder if you’re going to get sleep or not, just think about 1 John 5:1, about some of the things we’ve been talking about.

Well, remember, we’re not having a meeting next week. Two weeks from tonight, the subject will be “The Doctrine of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit”. Let’s close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for Thy Word, and, Lord, we know that occasionally, as we ponder it and study it, there come to our minds conceptions that seem strange to us, contrary to the things that we have studied and believed. But help us, Lord, to be subject to the Scriptures and enable us to be like the Bereans, to search the Scriptures daily to see whether these things are so.

And, Lord, I would pray tonight, as a simple servant of Thine, that by Thy grace, the things that I’ve said may be tested by each one in this audience by the Scriptures, that they will not believe them because I have said them, but if they believe them, they may believe them because they are the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. Deliver us each from error, but enable us, Lord, to be persistent in our search for the truth. Guide and direct us

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as we separate tonight, and throughout the remainder of this week help us to effectively represent our Lord Jesus Christ and more knowledgeably make him known.

We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.