

BIBLE TRUTHS EXPLAINED

What God's Word teaches about

REGENERATION

Gordon Lyons

KJV Edition

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Regeneration

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Regeneration

Contents

BIBLE TRUTHS EXPLAINED	i
REGENERATION	i
Contents	vi
Part 1	1
Synopsis: Effectual Calling and Regeneration _____	1
Note 1 _____	1
Nature of Effectual calling _____	1
Scripture References _____	1
Note 2 _____	2
The Holy Spirit Seals the Believer to God _____	2
Scripture References _____	2
Note 3 _____	2
In Regeneration, the Sinner is Passive _____	2
Scripture References _____	3
Note 4 _____	3
The Unregenerate Sinner Remains in Satan's Domain _____	3
Scripture References _____	3
Related Bible Truths _____	4
Part 2	7
Doctrine of Regeneration _____	7
Summary of Regeneration _____	7
Different Names for Regeneration _____	7
The Necessity of Regeneration _____	8
Part 3	9
Divergent Views of Regeneration _____	9
Reformed Teaching of Regeneration _____	9
Roman Catholic Teaching of Regeneration _____	9
Baptismal Regeneration _____	9
Baptism Cannot Effect Regeneration _____	9
Baptism is Not a Saving Rite _____	10
Biblical Teaching of Regeneration _____	10
The Natural State of Man _____	10
Part 4	13

How Regeneration is Effected	13
Creation of New Life	13
Deliverance From Darkness to Light	13
The Effect of Preaching The Gospel	14
The External Call	14
Effectual Calling	14
Difference Between Regeneration and Conversion	15
Part 5	17
Sinners Commanded to Seek the Lord	17
Living Water	18
NT Illustrations of Water and The Spirit (Scripture References)	18
OT Illustrations of Water and The Spirit (Scripture References)	18
Water of Life Free to All	19
Part 6	21
Baptised By The Spirit	21
One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism	22
Part 7	25
God is the Author of Regeneration	25
Agency of The Holy Spirit in Regeneration	25
OT Passages on Regeneration (Scripture References)	25
NT Passages on Regeneration (Scripture References)	26
Part 8	27
Examples of Regeneration	27
Jesus and Nicodemus (Scripture References)	27
Other NT Passages	27
Part 9	31
God's Spirit Will Not Always Strive With Man	31
Consequences of Resisting the Outward Call	31
Part 10	33
Born Again as Children of God	33
Children of God (Scripture References)	33
Part 11	35
Evidences Confirming Regeneration	35
Good and Bad Fruit (Scripture References)	35
Living For The Lord (Scripture References)	36
Part 12	39

Evidenced by Love, Victory and Peace	39
New Birth Evidenced by Love for God (Scripture References)	39
Victory in Union With Christ (Scripture References)	40
Peace Within (Scripture References)	41
Part 13	43
Clear Evidences of Regeneration	43
In the World, But Not Of the World	43
Taking Up the Cross (Scripture References)	43
Warring Against the Sinful Nature (Scripture References)	44
Perfection is the Prize (Scripture References)	44
Part 14	47
Evidences Denying Regeneration	47
No Regeneration Without Holiness	47
Holiness of Life	48

Part 1

Synopsis: Effectual Calling and Regeneration

Because of the Fall, all humanity is dead (spiritually) in trespasses and sins and utterly alienated from God, their Creator. Effectual calling is a work of the Holy Spirit, who, in sovereign grace, irresistibly draws a person to Christ, illuminates their mind to understand the basic truths of the Gospel message, and regenerates that person to newness of life. As an immediate and almost simultaneous consequence of the Spirit's convicting, convincing and converting operations, the sinner is enabled to apprehend fully his or her great spiritual need and danger, to repent of their sins, and to believe wholeheartedly on the Son of God as their personal Saviour and Lord. Regeneration is the actual and instantaneous birth of an entirely new spiritual life. A person who once was spiritually dead; in total darkness to spiritual truths, and alienated from God by sin, is made alive spiritually and is reconciled to God. The Lord Jesus delivers that person from the kingdom of darkness, and transfers him to the kingdom of light. The Lord releases this person from slavery to sin, to the freedom to live unto God in holiness of life. The Lord also delivers the believer from the fear of death, replacing it with the gift of eternal life and peace with God. As with effectual calling, regeneration or the new birth is a work of the Holy Spirit. Regeneration, repentance and faith are followed by justification, sanctification, and, ultimately, glorification.

Note 1

Nature of Effectual calling

Effectual calling is that work of the Holy Spirit in a person's heart whereby the Spirit truly and properly convicts that person of his sin, and convinces him of his great need of redemption. The Spirit also makes him deeply aware of the penalty he must pay if he does not avail himself of the redemption freely offered him in Christ Jesus. Then, the Holy Spirit leads this now convicted, convinced and repentant sinner to embrace the salvation promised to him through faith in Christ. Effectual calling stands intimately related to the work of regeneration. However, whereas effectual calling may be a prolonged process, regeneration is an instantaneous act.

Scripture References

John 5:25

⁽²⁵⁾ Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.
(See v.21; contrast vv.28-29)

Acts 2:37-39

⁽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?

⁽³⁸⁾ Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. ⁽³⁹⁾ For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call. (See vv.14-36)

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

⁽¹³⁾ But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

⁽¹⁴⁾ Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Note 2

The Holy Spirit Seals the Believer to God

As with every other aspect of a person's salvation, regeneration is entirely a gift of God's grace. God freely bestows the new birth on the undeserving sinner. He does this according to his sovereign purposes in election. Because of Christ's redemptive work, the believer becomes the purchased possession of God. To identify him permanently as belonging to God, each believer receives the seal of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit acts as the divine guarantor of the believer's final redemption.

Scripture References

2 Corinthians 1:21-22

⁽²¹⁾ Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; ⁽²²⁾ Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

2 Corinthians 5:4-5

⁽⁴⁾ For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. ⁽⁵⁾ Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. (See vv.1-10)

Ephesians 1:13-14

⁽¹³⁾ In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, ⁽¹⁴⁾ Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. (See vv.4-12)

Titus 3:4-7

⁽⁴⁾ But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, ⁽⁵⁾ Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; ⁽⁶⁾ Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; ⁽⁷⁾ That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Note 3

In Regeneration, the Sinner is Passive

God commands all people everywhere to repent; and all mankind is deemed responsible to God and inexcusable if they fail to seek the Lord's mercy. However, although they can seek to know the ways of the Lord, yet—because of their spiritually dead and sinfully inclined natures—no-one anywhere can exercise saving faith in Christ unless God gives this kind of faith to that person. A person is responsible for seeking the Lord or turning toward God (and only his spiritually dead and sinful nature impedes him from doing so). However, because he is spiritually dead, that person cannot repent and believe unless

effectually called and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Concerning regeneration or the new birth, therefore, a person is entirely passive. The sinner can do nothing to assist in his new birth. In the act of regeneration, the sinner is as helpless as a child during the process of natural birth.

Scripture References

Matthew 11:27

⁽²⁷⁾ All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and *he* to whomsoever the Son will reveal *him*. (See vv.25-26)

John 6:44

⁽⁴⁴⁾ No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. (See v.45)

John 6:65

⁽⁶⁵⁾ And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. (See vv.64-66)

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁽⁸⁾ For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: ⁽⁹⁾ Not of works, lest any man should boast. (See vv.1-10)

James 1:16-18

⁽¹⁶⁾ Do not err, my beloved brethren. ⁽¹⁷⁾ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. ⁽¹⁸⁾ Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. (See vv.19-25)

Note 4

The Unregenerate Sinner Remains in Satan's Domain

Regeneration is the only means by which a person can experience deliverance from Satan's kingdom or the kingdom of darkness, and be transferred into God's kingdom or the kingdom of light. Unless the Holy Spirit regenerates a person, he remains in Satan's domain, a child of the devil, and under the wrath and curse of God. Since he is a sinner by birth and by choice—and since he remains totally alienated from, and at enmity with, a holy and righteous God—this is his just desert. Only by the sovereign grace of God may he be delivered from this state and translated into the state of the children of God.

Scripture References

John 8:44

⁽⁴⁴⁾ Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. (See vv.37-47)

1 John 3:8

⁽⁸⁾ He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

1 John 3:10

⁽¹⁰⁾ In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

1 John 5:19

⁽¹⁹⁾ *And* we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. (See v.18)

Acts 26:17-18

⁽¹⁷⁾ Delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, ⁽¹⁸⁾ To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. (See vv.15-16)

Colossians 1:12-14

⁽¹²⁾ Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: ⁽¹³⁾ Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: ⁽¹⁴⁾ In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins:

Related Bible Truths

Closely linked to the doctrine of regeneration are the doctrines of predestination, faith, repentance, and justification. All those whom God has given to the Son are drawn to him by the Holy Spirit in effectual calling. Those whom the Spirit effectually calls and renews spiritually, he enables to repent of their sins, and believe—*freely and willingly*—on the Lord Jesus Christ. In Christ, and by God's Spirit, they receive justification, adoption, and sanctification. ¹

¹See *Bible Truths Explained: Predestination; Faith; Repentance; Justification; Adoption; Sanctification*, by the same author.

Part 2

Doctrine of Regeneration

Summary of Regeneration

Before considering the doctrine of regeneration in more detail, we will first summarise the principal elements of this doctrine:

1. Regeneration is wholly an act of God, and a demonstration of his omnipotence. It is the same kind of omnipotence as God exercised when, by his word of command, he created the universe; or when, by a like word of command, the Lord Jesus raised the dead to life. If it requires almighty power to create the universe or to raise the dead, so it requires the same almighty power to raise those who are spiritually dead. It is this divine and almighty power that God exerts in regeneration when—by his Holy Spirit—he raises a sinner from spiritual death, making him a new creation. (John 5:25; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 1:19-20)
2. By the Person and agency of the Holy Spirit, God regenerates or gives new birth to the (spiritually dead) soul. This new birth is wrought in the sinner by the almighty working of the Spirit of holiness. This is a divine and omnipotent act; therefore, it follows that the sinner himself can do absolutely nothing to assist in its production. Regeneration of the soul is exclusively the work of God. It is in no respect attributable to the desire or effort of fallen, sinful, and spiritually dead human beings. (John 3:5-8; Eph. 2:8-10; Col. 2:13)
3. Regeneration is not a change of mind or purpose engendered by the sinner himself. It is not a determination on the sinner's part to choose God or holiness, rather than the pleasures of sin. Fallen and unregenerate humanity is spiritually dead. Those who are spiritually dead can have no desire for the things of the Spirit, or for God. His soul must first be made alive. To regenerate is to make alive unto God, or to quicken from spiritual death to new spiritual life. (Eph. 2:1-6; 4:18-19; Titus 3:3-7)
4. Regeneration is the creating of a new heart or new inner life. This inner change or conversion must come from outside the person himself, and from God above. In other words, a person must be born again—born from above—in order to receive a new spiritual nature and have new holy desires created within his heart or mind. Those who are thus born from above are said to be born of God; i.e. they have been born spiritually into the kingdom and family of God. The kingdom of God comprises all the members of the true or invisible Church. (John 1:12-13; Rom. 8:14-17; 1 John 3:9-10)
5. Unless a person is born from above (regenerated), he remains in utter darkness to spiritual truths. He cannot understand them because these truths require spiritual discernment; i.e. they require the presence of the Holy Spirit to enlighten the mind and the understanding. It is the power of the Word and the Spirit that enables a person to see the truth and to repent of his sin. By that same powerful witness to the truth, the sinner is led to believe on the Son of God, and to follow holiness of life. (1 Cor. 1:18-25; 2:12-15; 2 Cor. 4:3-6)

Different Names for Regeneration

The Bible alludes to, or describes, regeneration under different names or terms—including the following:

1. *The new birth*

John 1:13; 3:3,6-7

	1 Pet. 1:3,23
	1 John 3:9; 5:1,18
2. A (spiritual) resurrection, or newness of life	Rom. 6:4-13
	Eph. 2:4-6
	Col. 2:12-13; 3:1-3
3. A new creation	2 Cor. 5:17
	Gal. 6:15
4. A new heart (or mind)	Jer. 24:7; 31:33; 32:38-39
	Ezek. 11:19-20; 36:25-27
	Heb. 10:16

The Necessity of Regeneration

Just as natural birth results in entry into the natural and temporal realm (the kingdom of this world), so spiritual birth results in entry into the spiritual and eternal realm (the kingdom of God and the world or age to come). We cannot experience the physical world without having been *born into it naturally*. Similarly, we cannot experience the spiritual world without having been *born into it spiritually*. Except a person be born again—born spiritually from above—he or she cannot see the kingdom of God. (John 3:3,5,7)

Part 3

Divergent Views of Regeneration

Reformed Teaching of Regeneration

In accordance with the express teaching of the Bible, we maintain that a person can be regenerated only by being born again—the new birth being closely associated with repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, to become a Christian, a person must be reborn or regenerated spiritually by God's Holy Spirit. We maintain also that this new birth occurs as a result of God's eternal and sovereign purposes in election, and of the Holy Spirit's operations in effectual calling. Effectual calling results in regeneration, which in turn result immediately in a person turning to Christ in heartfelt repentance and unreserved faith in God's one and only Son.

Roman Catholic Teaching of Regeneration

Members of the Roman Catholic Church, however, have a completely different understanding of how and when God's Spirit effects regeneration. They believe that a person's spiritual regeneration (or, as they term it, 'justification') occurs at or during baptism. In view of the vast number of people who hold to this belief in *baptismal regeneration*, we will look briefly at the Roman Catholic Church's teaching on this subject. Then, we will move on to consider the true biblical teaching.

Baptismal Regeneration

According to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church—and certain other churches—an individual's regeneration is not dependent on his or her personal faith in Christ. Rather, according to this view, the Holy Spirit effects regeneration during that person's baptism in or by water. Thus, by baptising infant children, they believe that the Holy Spirit has regenerated them, or infused righteousness into their souls. (In RC theology, they refer to this as (the first) justification—rather than regeneration.)

Those people who hold to this view of regeneration, invariably submit their infant children to baptism. They believe that—in so doing—the Holy Spirit will purify their children's souls, cleansing them from the guilt and pollution of original sin. They further believe that baptism results in the infusion of righteousness into the child's soul, thereby justifying that child and making it acceptable in the sight of God.

From this, it follows that they consider a baptised infant to have been *born again* (i.e. regenerated (or justified)); to have become a Christian, and to have been made a member of God's kingdom. They therefore do not accept that a person needs to profess personal faith in Christ. Again, although practising 'confirmation', they do not necessarily accept that a person must be born again (born from above) at an age of understanding, by the Holy Spirit of God.

Baptism Cannot Effect Regeneration

It is the clear teaching of the Bible that there can be no regeneration or new birth without it being associated with repentance and faith. (This excepts children who die in infancy, and adults who are incapable of responding to the external call of the gospel.) There can be no repentance of sin, however, when one is not consciously aware of sin. But, to be consciously aware of sin, a person must have reached an age of understanding, and must have been convicted of their sin by the Holy Spirit.

Regeneration or the new birth cannot be effected through or during baptism. Nor can righteousness be infused into a person's soul. The Holy Spirit regenerates a person whom he has effectually called to faith in Christ. Consequently, that person repents and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. Through that

faith in Christ—a faith graciously given him—God justifies the believing sinner, or declares him righteous in his sight.

Baptism is Not a Saving Rite

Baptism is not a saving rite, ordinance, or sacrament. In and of itself, baptism does not convey any saving power or efficacy to the soul. Rather, it is a public testimony that the person receiving this ordinance has already been regenerated or born again. The believer has already been washed or purified—but not by water. He has been washed by the Spirit and the Word of God, and he has been cleansed or purified in Christ's atoning blood. (1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5-6; Heb. 9:12-22; 1 Pet. 1:2,22; 1 John 1:7)

Biblical Teaching of Regeneration

The Natural State of Man

Prior to their regeneration, men and women abide in a state of spiritual death. They are guilty of, and polluted by, sin—original, and actual sin. In virtue of their guilt and pollution, men and women are totally alienated from God, and are abiding under God's wrath and curse.

Fallen humanity is totally depraved and utterly blind to the truths of God's Word. Thus, the Scripture says:

1 Corinthians 2:14

⁽¹⁴⁾ But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. (See vv.9-16)

Again, God's Word says:

2 Corinthians 4:3-4

⁽³⁾ But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: ⁽⁴⁾ In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (See vv.2-3)

The natural man—i.e. man without the Spirit of God—may or may not be gifted with considerable intelligence, capacities and abilities. Notwithstanding his intellectual prowess and abilities, however, he is incapable of comprehending the truths of God's Word in a way that leads to his personal and eternal salvation. These truths are folly to him; and they remain so, unless God illumines his soul by the Holy Spirit. Only then does the light of the glorious gospel of Christ penetrate his moral and spiritual darkness to shine upon his heart.

In this regard, the Scripture says:

2 Corinthians 3:15-16

⁽¹⁵⁾ But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.
⁽¹⁶⁾ Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

2 Corinthians 4:6

⁽⁶⁾ For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness {*Gen. 1:3*}, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Only then—as the Spirit enlightens a man’s mind to spiritual verities—is he able to see, to understand, and to believe the things that are of value to the soul.

But concerning those whose minds have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and whom God’s Spirit has regenerated and justified, the Scripture says:

2 Corinthians 3:18

⁽¹⁸⁾ But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord. (See v.17)

Part 4

How Regeneration is Effected

Creation of New Life

Regeneration is not an external change, nor is it a natural change. It is an internal and spiritual change, as to both its nature and its origin. It is not a change of purpose, nor of opinion, nor of feeling. Rather, it is the creation of a new spiritual life and principle.²

Regeneration is the creation of a new life. This new life begins when the Holy Spirit effectually calls a person to Christ in repentance and faith, and when he confesses Christ as his Saviour and Lord.

Regarding a person who has experienced the new birth, God's Word says:

2 Corinthians 5:17

⁽¹⁷⁾ Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Primarily, regeneration is a new birth. Without this new birth, it is impossible for anyone to enter the kingdom of God. However, everyone who experiences the new birth becomes a member of God's kingdom, a child of God, and a joint-heir with the Son of God.

Deliverance From Darkness to Light

A person's salvation—including his regeneration—is referred to as a 'deliverance from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light'. The Bible refers to it also as a 'deliverance from the power of Satan unto God', and as a 'crossing over from death to life'. Thus, concerning why the message of repentance and faith must be preached to people of all nations, the Scripture answers:

Acts 26:18

⁽¹⁸⁾ To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. (See vv.15-17)

Regarding those who have turned to God, the Bible says:

Colossians 1:12-14

⁽¹²⁾ Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: ⁽¹³⁾ Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: ⁽¹⁴⁾ In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins:

² Based on C. Hodge: *Princeton Sermons* [Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1879, 1979 reprint], pp.136-137.

John 5:24

⁽²⁴⁾ Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. (See v.25)

1 John 3:13-14

⁽¹³⁾ Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. ⁽¹⁴⁾ We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death. (See vv.10-18)

Those whom the Holy Spirit has regenerated, and who are presently being sanctified, have forever crossed over from death to life. They have passed from spiritual death to spiritual and eternal life. They have been made alive in Christ Jesus to live by the Spirit, and according to God's will and purpose for their lives.

The Effect of Preaching The Gospel

The External Call

Christ commanded his disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation—or to all humankind. This command is known as *the Great Commission*. At present, the Great Commission is being carried out by preachers, teachers, evangelists, missionaries, and many other Christian workers throughout the world. According to the command of Christ, they are endeavouring to proclaim his name to the whole human race.

Concerning this great commission, God's Word declares:

Matthew 28:18-20

⁽¹⁸⁾ And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. ⁽¹⁹⁾ Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ⁽²⁰⁾ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

Mark 16:15-16

⁽¹⁵⁾ And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. ⁽¹⁶⁾ He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Luke 24:47

⁽⁴⁷⁾ And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

This proclamation of the gospel to all mankind—together with the exhortation to repent and believe the message—is known as *the external call*. Multitudes hear the external call to faith and repentance, but only a relatively small number respond.

Effectual Calling

Those who respond to the external call of the gospel, and to whom God grants the gifts of repentance and faith, are said to have been *effectually called*. They have heard the external call to repentance; they have heeded this call, and they have turned to God in true repentance and genuine faith.

In their case, the Holy Spirit has made the external call to repentance effective or effectual in their lives. Those whom God's Spirit effectually calls, are regenerated and receive forgiveness of sins and life eternal through faith in Christ.

Effectual calling is a work of the Holy Spirit. Effectual calling results in spiritual regeneration, and this includes the ability which God gives to those who have been drawn to Christ to begin to understand the things of God. By nature, fallen man cannot comprehend spiritual things. They are foolishness to him. By grace, however, God removes the veil of darkness that has been covering their minds, so that they can see (or understand) spiritual truths, repent, and believe. (1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 3:16; 4:6)

Everyone whom the Holy Spirit effectually calls to faith in Christ is regenerated or born again.³

Difference Between Regeneration and Conversion

Although sometimes used interchangeably, regeneration and conversion are not identical terms. They refer to different aspects of a person's salvation, and we should not confuse or confound these aspects.

We may express the distinction between the two terms as follows:

1. *Regeneration:* Regeneration = The New Birth.

In regeneration, the sinner—whom the Holy Spirit has drawn effectually to Christ—is entirely **passive**; i.e. there is absolutely nothing that the sinner can do to effect his new birth or to assist in its production. In this respect, spiritual birth and regeneration is analogous to natural birth.

2. *Conversion* Conversion = Repentance + Faith.

In conversion, the Holy Spirit—having fully convicted and convinced a sinner of his sin and great need of salvation, and of the forgiving love of God—enables that sinner to turn toward God. This the sinner does, *freely and willingly* repenting of his sins and believing on the Lord Jesus Christ for his salvation. In this sense, the sinner is said to be **active** in his conversion.

Salvation is wholly the work of God, and none of self. However, in regeneration a person is *passive*, while in conversion a person is *active*.

³ For further information regarding the external call and effectual calling, see *Bible Truths Explained: Repentance*, by the same author.

Part 5

Sinners Commanded to Seek the Lord

God commands all mankind to repent of their sins, and to seek his mercy. Although men and women are dead in trespasses and sins, yet they are responsible for their sinful condition and are commanded to seek the Lord. But to what extent can fallen and spiritually dead mankind respond to this command?

All mankind hear the external call of the Gospel. Even if they should plead ignorance of the Gospel message, all mankind can see, or come to understand, the revelation of God's existence, power and glory in his natural creation. This revelation in nature, or the external call, makes all men and women fully aware of their responsibility and accountability toward God. It also places them under obligation to acknowledge God and to seek to discover his ways more fully—leaving them inexcusable if they refuse. (Rom. 1:19-20)

Supposing, then, that—in response to God's command to seek him, or in response to what he has understood of God in the natural creation—a sinner seeks to find God or to discover his mercy and forgiveness. In his fallen and spiritually dead condition, what can a sinner do to find out about God, or to discover his mercy?

Let us illustrate by example: A man who has been born blind earnestly desires to be able to see. He knows he is completely unable to heal himself. However, he learns that a person called the Lord Jesus Christ is able to heal him.

The blind man now has two choices:

1. He can remain where he is—hoping that the Lord Jesus will come to him.
(This represents disobedience to God's command to seek the Lord while he may be found).
2. He can make his way to where he knows the Lord Jesus is to be found.
(This represents obedience to God's command to seek him with all his heart and soul.)

It is the man's responsibility to choose the latter course. Let us assume that this is what this particular individual does. (In the passing, we must concede that most of sinful mankind do not follow this man's example, for they fail to actively seek the Lord.) This man, however, believes the reports that he has heard about the Lord Jesus Christ (the external call), so he determines to seek the Lord while he may be found. (Isa. 55:6)

The blind man—probably with the help of friends—has made his way to the Lord Jesus. He now stands before the Lord, by this time convinced of his very great need and believing that the Lord Jesus alone can fully meet his need (effectual calling).

There is, however, absolutely nothing that the man himself can do to assist in his physical healing (or spiritual rebirth, which this example illustrates). He is entirely in the Lord's hands. He believes the Lord can heal him; but, in and of itself, his faith will not actually restore his sight. This will depend entirely on Christ's willingness to heal him (although, of course, there is no question of the Lord failing to respond to a person's cry for help).

By means of the Holy Spirit, this man has been drawn to Christ—firstly, in obedience to God's command to seek him (the external call); and, secondly, by the more direct operation of the Holy Spirit in effectual calling. Having come to this point, there is now nothing more that this man can do. If he is to receive his sight, he must depend wholly on Christ to grant him this priceless gift. This represents the sinner whom the Holy Spirit has drawn to Christ and is about to regenerate.

In regard to his regeneration, the sinner cannot co-operate in any way. The new birth is the priceless gift of God. In his grace and mercy, God freely bestows this gift upon everyone whom the Holy Spirit effectually calls to Christ. However, no-one who comes to Christ in this manner will ever be refused healing of their soul or turned away without their need being fully met. All who thus come will be received; all will find the mercy of the Lord, and all will be forgiven and granted full spiritual healing together with the gift of eternal life. (John 4:13-14; 6:37; 7:37-38)

Living Water

As has been noted, regeneration is a work of the Holy Spirit. The Word of God often refers to, or alludes to, this aspect of the Spirit's work as *living water*. The Holy Spirit is the spring or source of life—in this case, abundant and eternal life. The Spirit of God is the only person who is able to quench a sinner's deep inward and spiritual thirst, or the longing for righteousness, forgiveness of sins, and peace with God

NT Illustrations of Water and The Spirit (Scripture References)

Regarding this living water or source of eternal life, and as the only true satisfaction for the deepest needs of the soul, Jesus said to the woman of Samaria:

John 4:10

⁽¹⁰⁾ ...If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. (See vv.4-9)

John 4:13-14

⁽¹³⁾ Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: ⁽¹⁴⁾ But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. (See vv.11-26)

Again, the Scripture says:

John 7:37-39

⁽³⁷⁾ In the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. ⁽³⁸⁾ He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. ⁽³⁹⁾ (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) (Cf. v.38 with Isa. 12:3; 44:3)

All who believe on Christ have received the Holy Spirit; i.e. they have been born again or regenerated by the Spirit. In addition, the Holy Spirit indwells them, sanctifies them and seals them as belonging to God for all eternity. This is the gift of eternal life.

Because of its refreshing and renewing effects upon the soul—and therefore upon the whole person and personality—the effects of the Spirit's work in regeneration is sometimes described as *living water*.

OT Illustrations of Water and The Spirit (Scripture References)

This thought is not confined to the teaching of the New Testament. In the Old Testament, God says of the Spirit's work:

Isaiah 44:3

⁽³⁾ For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: (See vv.1-5)

Isaiah 55:1

- ⁽¹⁾ Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. (See vv.2-7)

Concerning those of God's people who had turned away from the LORD, the Scripture says:

Jeremiah 2:13

- ⁽¹³⁾ For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, *and* hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. (See vv.4-19)

For those who return to the LORD with all their hearts, however, the Scripture declares:

Isaiah 12:3

- ⁽³⁾ Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. (See vv.1-6; see also Isa. 11ff)

Or, as God's abundant salvation is expressed by the prophet Joel:

Joel 2:28

- ⁽²⁸⁾ And it shall come to pass afterward, *that* I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

Joel 2:32

- ⁽³²⁾ And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call. (See vv.25-31)

Water of Life Free to All

Again, in the New Testament, the Lord Jesus offers the water of life freely to all who come:

Revelation 22:17

- ⁽¹⁷⁾ And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

Part 6

Baptised By The Spirit

God pours out his Spirit upon all his people—the same Spirit by whom he has effectually called them to faith in Christ. All who believe on Christ are baptised by the Spirit into the body of Christ; i.e. the church. Thus, the Scripture says:

Mark 1:8

⁽⁸⁾ I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost. (See vv.1-15; cf. Matt. 3:11-12)

John 1:33-34

⁽³³⁾ And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

⁽³⁴⁾ And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God. (See vv.29-32)

Before ascending into heaven, the Lord Jesus said to his disciples:

Acts 1:5

⁽⁵⁾ For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. (See vv.1-8; see esp. v.8)

When the Lord's followers had come together on the day of Pentecost ⁴ the Scripture records:

Acts 2:2-4

⁽²⁾ And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. ⁽³⁾ And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. ⁽⁴⁾ And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (See vv.5-21,33; see also vv.37-39)

Concerning God's intention to include Gentiles in the body of Christ (the Church), Peter gives this testimony:

Acts 11:15-16

⁽¹⁵⁾ And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. ⁽¹⁶⁾ Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. (See vv.1-14)

Acts 11:17-18

⁽¹⁷⁾ Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as *he did* unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?

⁽¹⁸⁾ When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

⁴ The Feast of Weeks or the feast of the first fruits of wheat harvest.

Concerning the unity of the body of Christ, the apostle Paul says:

1 Corinthians 12:13

⁽¹³⁾ For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. (See vv.1-31)

The apostle Paul uses similar language when he speaks of the redemption of God's people Israel and their deliverance from bondage in Egypt:

1 Corinthians 10:1-5

⁽¹⁾ Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; ⁽²⁾ And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; ⁽³⁾ And did all eat the same spiritual meat; ⁽⁴⁾ And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. ⁽⁵⁾ But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

1 Corinthians 10:6

⁽⁶⁾ Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. (See vv.7-14; cf. v.6 with v.11)

One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism

When the Holy Spirit baptises a repentant and believing sinner into the body of Christ, he makes that person a partaker of all the benefits of the redemption secured by Christ. There is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.

Thus, God's Word says:

Ephesians 4:4-6

⁽⁴⁾ *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; ⁽⁵⁾ One Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁽⁶⁾ One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all. (See vv.1-3)

Ephesians 4:7-8

⁽⁷⁾ But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. ⁽⁸⁾ Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. {*Psalm 68:18*} (See Eph. 4:9-10; cf. v.8 with Col. 2:15)

Ephesians 4:11-13

⁽¹¹⁾ And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; ⁽¹²⁾ For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: ⁽¹³⁾ Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: (See vv.14-16; cf. Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:1-31; 14:1-40)

Part 7

God is the Author of Regeneration

God is the Author of the new birth. The power he employs to effect the new birth is not physical or natural but spiritual and divine. It is therefore impossible for a person to be born again if he has not personally experienced God's regenerating power in his life.

(We should note that the evil one often attempts to deceive believers by mimicking the work or the effects of the Holy Spirit. Satan, of course, cannot impart the new birth—and it would be blasphemous to attribute to him anything that pertains to the Holy Spirit. However, to some extent, the evil one can cause effects that might lead some people to believe that a person has received the Holy Spirit, when in fact he has not. Again, the devil can produce effects that may cause us to believe that a person is speaking and acting under the power and influence of God's Holy Spirit when indeed he is not. We must test the spirits according to the rule of Scripture. We must observe that no-one acting under the power and influence of the Holy Spirit can misuse the Word of God or abuse the gifts of God.)

Agency of The Holy Spirit in Regeneration

The divine efficiency that God employs in causing the new birth is effected through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Although the Spirit of God may work when, where, and how he pleases, he generally works by the means of grace. In this case, the Spirit operates by applying the truths of God's Word to the sinner's soul.

The Spirit of God works within the heart of the unbeliever, revealing to him the truths of God's Word, and causing him to understand these truths. During this process, the Holy Spirit convicts that person of his sin. He convinces the sinner of his great need of salvation, and he regenerates him. Almost simultaneously, the now regenerated sinner turns in heartfelt repentance and faith toward God, thereby experiencing full justification in the sight of God and the forgiveness of all his sins.

OT Passages on Regeneration (Scripture References)

In the Old Testament, regeneration (or spiritual rebirth) is alluded to by the Prophets, including Ezekiel. In their immediate contexts, these passages refer to Israel's restoration to their own land following their captivity and exile. However, they are equally applicable to the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration.

Thus, God's Word says:

Ezekiel 11:19-20

⁽¹⁹⁾ And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh: ⁽²⁰⁾ That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. (See vv.13-18)

Ezekiel 36:24

⁽²⁴⁾ For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. (See vv.16-23)

Ezekiel 36:25-27

⁽²⁵⁾ Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. ⁽²⁶⁾ A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.

⁽²⁷⁾ And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*. (See vv.28-31; cf. Jer. 24:6-7; 31:31-34; 32:36-41)

In a vision given to him by the LORD, Ezekiel describes the valley of dry bones (representing the spiritually dead nation of Israel). The prophet then speaks of the spiritual resurrection and restoration effected on these dead bones by the Holy Spirit of God.

To this end, the Scripture says:

Ezekiel 37:3

⁽³⁾ And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest. (See vv.1-4)

Ezekiel 37:5

⁽⁵⁾ Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: (See vv.6-8)

Ezekiel 37:9-10

⁽⁹⁾ Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. ⁽¹⁰⁾ So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. (See vv.11-14)

NT Passages on Regeneration (Scripture References)

In the New Testament, regeneration or the new birth is referred to in passages such as the following:

Matthew 18:3

⁽³⁾ And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. (See vv.1-6)

John 1:11-13

⁽¹¹⁾ He came unto his own, and his own received him not. ⁽¹²⁾ But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: ⁽¹³⁾ Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (See vv.6-18)

Part 8

Examples of Regeneration

Jesus and Nicodemus (Scripture References)

In his conversation with Nicodemus, the Lord Jesus emphasises the absolute necessity of the new birth:

John 3:3

⁽³⁾ Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (See vv.1-2)

John 3:4-5

⁽⁴⁾ Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

⁽⁵⁾ Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

John 3:6-7

⁽⁶⁾ That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁽⁷⁾ Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

John 3:8

⁽⁸⁾ The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. (See vv.9-15)

John 3:16-18

⁽¹⁶⁾ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. ⁽¹⁷⁾ For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. ⁽¹⁸⁾ He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (See vv.19-21)

Other NT Passages

Titus 3:3-7

⁽³⁾ For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, *and* hating one another. ⁽⁴⁾ But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, ⁽⁵⁾ Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; ⁽⁶⁾ Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; ⁽⁷⁾ That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (See vv.1-2)

James 1:16-18

⁽¹⁶⁾ Do not err, my beloved brethren. ⁽¹⁷⁾ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. ⁽¹⁸⁾ Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

1 Peter 1:3-5

⁽³⁾ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁽⁴⁾ To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁽⁵⁾ Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (See vv.2-12; see esp. v.12)

1 Peter 1:23

⁽²³⁾ Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. (See vv.13-25)

1 John 2:29

⁽²⁹⁾ If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him. (See vv.26-28)

1 John 3:9

⁽⁹⁾ Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. (See vv.7-16)

1 John 5:18-19

⁽¹⁸⁾ We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. ⁽¹⁹⁾ And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. (See vv.16-17; see also vv.1,4-5)

Other Scriptures referring to the new birth include the following:

Romans 6:3-4

⁽³⁾ Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? ⁽⁴⁾ Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (See vv.1-14)

Ephesians 2:4-6

⁽⁴⁾ But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, ⁽⁵⁾ Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by (grace ye are saved;) ⁽⁶⁾ And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: (See vv.1-10)

Colossians 2:12-13

- (12) Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.
- (13) And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; (See vv.10-17; see also Col. 3:1-3)

2 Corinthians 5:14-16

- (14) For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: (15) And *that* he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.
- (16) Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we *him* no more. (See vv.10-13)

2 Corinthians 5:17

- (17) Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (See vv.18-21)

Galatians 6:15

- (15) For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. (See vv.13-14)

Hebrews 10:14-18

- (14) For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.
- (15) *Whereof* the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, (16) *This is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them {*Jer. 31:33*}; (17) And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more {*Jer. 31:34*}.
- (18) Now where remission of these *is*, there *is* no more offering for sin. (See vv.19-25; cf. Heb. 8:7-13; Ezek. 36:25-27)

Part 9

God's Spirit Will Not Always Strive With Man

Regeneration is the invariable culmination of effectual calling. It is the granting of new birth and new life to every sinner whom the Holy Spirit draws to Christ, and who come to him repentant and believing.

This is wholly the work of God and it is in full accord with God's sovereignty, and with his purposes in election. It is also in full accord with man's free will and responsibility, since the Holy Spirit enables men and women to respond freely and willingly to the effectual call of God. However, although God graciously calls individuals to repentance by his Holy Spirit, he has warned that—for those who refuse to repent—his Spirit will not always strive with man.

Consequences of Resisting the Outward Call

A person cannot resist God's grace in effectual calling. However, he can resist God's grace in the outward or external call to repentance. It is, however, a fearful thing to resist and reject the external call of God. Those who persist in doing so will ultimately perish.

Concerning those who resist the Spirit of God, the Scripture says:

Genesis 6:1-3

- ⁽¹⁾ And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, ⁽²⁾ That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they *were* fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. ⁽³⁾ And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also *is* flesh: yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years.

Deuteronomy 6:3-4

- ⁽³⁾ Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do *it*; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey. ⁽⁴⁾ Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD: (See vv.1-6; cf. Jos. 23:12-13)

Acts 7:51-53

- ⁽⁵¹⁾ Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye. ⁽⁵²⁾ Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: ⁽⁵³⁾ Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept *it*. (See vv.1-50)

Hebrews 2:2-4

- ⁽²⁾ For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; ⁽³⁾ How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*; ⁽⁴⁾ God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will? (See v.1)

Hebrews 10:28-31

- ⁽²⁸⁾ He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: ⁽²⁹⁾ Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? (Cf. Ex. 24:1-8)
- ⁽³⁰⁾ For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord {*Deut. 32:35*}. And again, The Lord shall judge his people {*Deut. 32:36; Psalm 135:14*}. ⁽³¹⁾ *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* (See vv.26-27; cf. 1 Pet. 4:17-18)

Hebrews 12:18

- ⁽¹⁸⁾ For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

Hebrews 12:22

- ⁽²²⁾ But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

Hebrews 12:24

- ⁽²⁴⁾ And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of Abel*. (See vv.14-23)

Hebrews 12:25

- ⁽²⁵⁾ See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more *shall not we escape*, if we turn away from him that *speaketh* from heaven: (See vv.26-28)

Hebrews 12:29

- ⁽²⁹⁾ For our God *is a consuming fire* {*Deut. 4:24*}.

Part 10

Born Again as Children of God

Those whom the Spirit regenerates to newness of life, God justifies and adopts into his family as his own children. By his grace, God gives them all the rights, privileges and responsibilities of his children. The rights and privileges of God's children include full acceptance as sons and daughters of God. As co-heirs with God's one and only Son, they also include all the rights of inheritance that pertain to the children of God.

The responsibilities incumbent upon the children of God includes the obligation to live their whole lives for the sake of the one who loved them. They ought always to remember that he who loved them died to make them his own, so that—together with him—they might become the heirs of glory. Those who assume these responsibilities ought to do their utmost to live to the praise of God's glory; to honour their Father in heaven, and to serve his Son with all their heart and soul.⁵

Children of God (Scripture References)

Concerning these things, the Scripture says:

Romans 8:14-18

- ⁽¹⁴⁾ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.
⁽¹⁵⁾ For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.
⁽¹⁶⁾ The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: ⁽¹⁷⁾ And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.
⁽¹⁸⁾ For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (See vv.19-23)

Galatians 4:6-7

- ⁽⁶⁾ And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. ⁽⁷⁾ Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. (See Gal. 3:26-29; 4:1-5)

Ephesians 2:18-19

- ⁽¹⁸⁾ For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.
⁽¹⁹⁾ Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; (See vv.11-22)

Ephesians 5:1-3

- ⁽¹⁾ Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children: ⁽²⁾ And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.

⁵ See further on *Bible Truths Explained: Adoption*, by the same author.

⁽³⁾ But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; (See vv.4-8)

Philippians 1:29-30

⁽²⁹⁾ For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; ⁽³⁰⁾ Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear *to be* in me. (See vv.27-28)

1 Peter 1:13-16

⁽¹³⁾ Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ⁽¹⁴⁾ As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: ⁽¹⁵⁾ But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; ⁽¹⁶⁾ Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy {*Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7*}. (See 1 Pet. 1:3-12; cf. Deut. 7:6)

1 John 5:1-2

⁽¹⁾ Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.
⁽²⁾ By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. (See vv.3-5; cf. John 14:15,21,23-24)

Part 11

Evidences Confirming Regeneration

Whether a person has experienced spiritual regeneration or not, determines whether that person is God's child or not. A tree is known by its fruit; and a good tree must produce good fruit. Conversely, a bad tree—an unregenerate heart—can produce only bad fruit or no fruit at all.

The man or woman who has truly experienced the new birth will show the evidence of this by their daily conduct. This does not mean that those who have been born again will never commit sin. However, it *does* mean that sin will not dominate their lives; nor will they deliberately practise sin. Since, by the Spirit of holiness, their old sinful nature must be put to death, then sin must no longer rule over them. Instead, their lives will become more and more like Christ, as the Holy Spirit continues the ongoing work of sanctification: a work that must result in holiness of life.

Regeneration is also confirmed in a person's life by their love for God, for Christ, and for his people. This kind of love will manifest itself by its actions.

Again, there will be the desire and the power to believe and obey the Word of God. There will be the desire to put into practice the teachings of that Word, and to live daily in its truths. There will be the power to overcome sin: power granted by the indwelling Holy Spirit to provide victory. This power over sin may be immediate or gradual. However, we must not understand this to mean that we can achieve total or absolute victory over all sin in this life. Throughout this life, each child of God will find himself engaged in a constant spiritual warfare against sin and against the desires of his old sinful nature.

There will be joy of heart, and true peace with God.

Good and Bad Fruit (Scripture References)

Concerning the significance of good or bad fruit—or the lack of fruit—in a person's life, the Scripture says:

Matthew 3:7-10

⁽⁷⁾ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁽⁸⁾ Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: ⁽⁹⁾ And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. ⁽¹⁰⁾ And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. (See vv.1-6)

Matthew 3:12

⁽¹²⁾ Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. (See v.11)

Matthew 7:15-20

⁽¹⁵⁾ Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. ⁽¹⁶⁾ Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? ⁽¹⁷⁾ Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. ⁽¹⁸⁾ A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. ⁽¹⁹⁾ Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn

down, and cast into the fire. ⁽²⁰⁾ Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Matthew 7:21-23

⁽²¹⁾ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. ⁽²²⁾ Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ⁽²³⁾ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Matthew 12:50

⁽⁵⁰⁾ For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother. (See vv.46-49)

Matthew 25:34-35

⁽³⁴⁾ Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ⁽³⁵⁾ For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: (See vv.31-36)

Matthew 25:37

⁽³⁷⁾ Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed *thee*? or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink? (See vv.38-39)

Matthew 25:40

⁽⁴⁰⁾ And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me.

Matthew 25:41-42

⁽⁴¹⁾ Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: ⁽⁴²⁾ For I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: (See v.43)

Matthew 25:44-45

⁽⁴⁴⁾ Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

⁽⁴⁵⁾ Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did *it* not to me.

Matthew 25:46

⁽⁴⁶⁾ And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Living For The Lord (Scripture References)

As God's redeemed and holy children, we must never allow sin, or the desires of the sinful nature, to dominate our lives. Rather, as truly regenerated people, we should ensure that—by God's grace—our

lives are producing the fruit of the Spirit. We should ensure also that godliness and holiness characterises our daily lives.

Thus, the Scripture says:

Romans 6:6-10

⁽⁶⁾ Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. ⁽⁷⁾ For he that is dead is freed from sin.

⁽⁸⁾ Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: ⁽⁹⁾ Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. ⁽¹⁰⁾ For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. (See vv.1-5)

Romans 6:11-14

⁽¹¹⁾ Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. ⁽¹²⁾ Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. ⁽¹³⁾ Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. ⁽¹⁴⁾ For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. (See vv.15-23)

Romans 7:4

⁽⁴⁾ Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. (See vv.1-7)

Galatians 5:19-21

⁽¹⁹⁾ Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, ⁽²⁰⁾ Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, ⁽²¹⁾ Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (See vv.16-18)

Galatians 5:22-24

⁽²²⁾ But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, ⁽²³⁾ Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. ⁽²⁴⁾ And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. (See vv.25-26)

Part 12

Evidenced by Love, Victory and Peace

New Birth Evidenced by Love for God (Scripture References)

That a person confirms his regeneration or new spiritual birth by such things as love for God, for Christ, and for his people, is demonstrated by such Scriptures as the following:

John 14:15

⁽¹⁵⁾ If ye love me, keep my commandments. (See vv.16-20)

John 14:21

⁽²¹⁾ He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. (See v.22)

John 14:23-24

⁽²³⁾ Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. ⁽²⁴⁾ He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. (See vv.25-31)

John 15:12-14

⁽¹²⁾ This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. ⁽¹³⁾ Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. ⁽¹⁴⁾ Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. (See vv.1-15)

John 15:16

⁽¹⁶⁾ Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. (See v.17)

James 2:14-17

⁽¹⁴⁾ What *doth it* profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? ⁽¹⁵⁾ If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, ⁽¹⁶⁾ And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what *doth it* profit? ⁽¹⁷⁾ Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. (See vv.18-26; see esp. v.26; cf. Prov. 3:27-28; 19:17; 21:13)

1 John 3:16-18

⁽¹⁶⁾ Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. ⁽¹⁷⁾ But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of *compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

⁽¹⁸⁾ My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. (See vv.10-24)

Victory in Union With Christ (Scripture References)

When we abide in Christ, and walk by the Spirit, God gives us the power to subdue and to overcome sin in our lives. As a rule, however, we achieve this victory only by engaging in a constant spiritual warfare. This entails wholehearted trust in the Lord Jesus to give us the strength to persevere in our fight against sin and against the desires of our old sinful nature.

Thus, God's Word says:

John 15:3-6

⁽³⁾ Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. ⁽⁴⁾ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

⁽⁵⁾ I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. ⁽⁶⁾ If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned. (See vv.1-8; cf. v.6 with Matt. 3:10; 7:19)

Romans 8:10-11

⁽¹⁰⁾ And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness. ⁽¹¹⁾ But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. (See vv.1-9)

Romans 8:12-13

⁽¹²⁾ Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. ⁽¹³⁾ For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. (See vv.14-17)

Galatians 5:16-18

⁽¹⁶⁾ *This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. ⁽¹⁷⁾ For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. ⁽¹⁸⁾ But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. (See vv.19-26; cf. v.17c with John 15:5c)

Ephesians 6:10-13

⁽¹⁰⁾ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. ⁽¹¹⁾ Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ⁽¹²⁾ For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*. ⁽¹³⁾ Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (See vv.14-18; cf. v.12 with John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11)

1 John 5:1

⁽¹⁾ Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. (See vv.2-3)

1 John 5:4-5

⁽⁴⁾ For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith. ⁽⁵⁾ Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

Revelation 3:19-21

⁽¹⁹⁾ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. ⁽²⁰⁾ Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

⁽²¹⁾ To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. (See vv.14-22)

Peace Within (Scripture References)

Regeneration is also confirmed by the possession of true and lasting peace and joy in the heart of the believer. Thus, the Scripture says:

Isaiah 12:1-3

⁽¹⁾ And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. ⁽²⁾ Behold, God *is* my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH *is* my strength and *my* song; he also is become my salvation. ⁽³⁾ Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. (See vv.4-6; cf. v.3 with John 4:10-14; 7:37-39)

John 14:26-27

⁽²⁶⁾ But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. ⁽²⁷⁾ Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (See v.25)

Part 13

Clear Evidences of Regeneration

Those Christians who determine to live—not for self—but for God's glory, give one of the clearest evidences of their regeneration. The further a person progresses in the Christian life, the more deeply conscious he becomes of his own utter unworthiness and sinfulness in the sight of a holy and righteous God. At the same time, the believer begins to appreciate more and more the value and necessity of the superabounding grace of God that saves him and keeps him.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, the believer determines to fight against temptation—or to flee from it. Similarly, by the aid of the Spirit, he makes it his aim to overcome besetting sin in his life, and to live his life only for God's honour and glory. The believer, however, also becomes increasingly aware that the fight against temptation and sin is a continual spiritual warfare. He learns that victory over sin comes only by abiding in Christ, and by walking in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Never in this life will the believer reach his ultimate goal of moral and spiritual perfection. However, he must determine resolutely to put to death the old sinful nature, and to pursue holiness of life: for without holiness, no-one will see the Lord.

In the World, But Not Of the World

Although the believer is *in* the world, he is not *of* the world. This world is not his home. He has a better and an abiding home prepared for him on high. While in this world, therefore, each believer resolves to separate himself from the contamination of the world (but not to isolate himself from the people of the world). He desires to dedicate his life wholly to God. He endeavours to glorify the name of God by every thought, word and deed, and by every attitude of heart and mind.

Taking Up the Cross (Scripture References)

Concerning the believer's determination to live for God, rather than for self, we should consider the following Scriptures:

Mark 8:34-37

⁽³⁴⁾ And when he had called the people *unto him* with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. ⁽³⁵⁾ For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. ⁽³⁶⁾ For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? ⁽³⁷⁾ Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Cf. Matt. 16:24-26; Luke 9:23-25)

Mark 8:38

⁽³⁸⁾ Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. (Cf. Matt. 10:32-33; Luke 9:26; 12:8-9)

Romans 12:1-2

⁽¹⁾ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your* reasonable service. ⁽²⁾ And be not conformed to this world: but be ye

transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (See vv. 3-8)

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

⁽¹⁹⁾ What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? ⁽²⁰⁾ For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. (See vv.13-18; cf. 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 6:14 - 7:1)

Warring Against the Sinful Nature (Scripture References)

Concerning the growing believer's increasing awareness of sin, and increasingly greater dependence on the grace of God, the Scripture says:

Romans 7:18-20

⁽¹⁸⁾ For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not. ⁽¹⁹⁾ For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. ⁽²⁰⁾ Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. (See vv.5-17)

Romans 7:21-23

⁽²¹⁾ I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. ⁽²²⁾ For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: ⁽²³⁾ But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. (Cf. Gal. 5:16-18; Jas. 4:1; 1 Pet. 2:11)

Romans 7:24-25

⁽²⁴⁾ O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? ⁽²⁵⁾ I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. (Cf. v.24; with Rom. 6:6; 8:2)

Perfection is the Prize (Scripture References)

Although God requires the believer to pursue holiness of life, he will not attain perfection in this life. Thus, God's word says:

Philippians 3:12-14

⁽¹²⁾ Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

⁽¹³⁾ Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, ⁽¹⁴⁾ I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (See vv.1-11)

Philippians 3:15-16

⁽¹⁵⁾ Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. ⁽¹⁶⁾ Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. (See vv.17-21)

Concerning the believer's obligation to pursue holiness of life, God's Word says:

Matthew 5:48

⁽⁴⁸⁾ Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.
(See vv.43-47; cf. Luke 6:36; Col. 1:28; 1 Pet. 1:15-16)

Hebrews 12:14

⁽¹⁴⁾ Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: (See vv.15-16)

Part 14

Evidences Denying Regeneration

What kind of evidences would indicate that a person has *not* been born again? At times, this can be very difficult to determine with certainty; but we list some of the more obvious possibilities below:

1. Their refusal to believe the Word of God.
2. Their refusal to accept the teaching of God's Word, or to put that teaching into practice.
3. Their wilful rejection of the fundamental doctrines of the faith. This refers to the outright repudiation of particular doctrines that are essential to the faith. It does not apply to differences of opinion regarding the interpretation of non-essential matters.
4. An aversion to Christ, or to spiritual things.
5. Their deliberate neglect of the ordinances of the church (baptism and the Lord's Supper).
6. Their not associating regularly with God's people. This presupposes that there is no valid reason for their continued absence from church fellowship.
7. Their continuance in the deliberate practice of sin.

These are some to the evidences or signs that could indicate that a person has not been born again.

Not all of these signs need be present. A person may claim to be a Christian: that person may attend church services and activities regularly. However, regardless of their claim and of their church attendance, if some of the signs listed above are unmistakably evident in their life, the assumption must be that this person does not belong to Christ. If, however, he does not belong to Christ, he is yet in his sins.

This, however, is only an assumption. God alone knows a person's heart, and he alone knows their true spiritual condition. If we think a professing Christian may not be regenerated, we must deal with this person not only in love and with great compassion, but also truthfully, and—if necessary—firmly. We must show him what the Lord requires. Ultimately, however, we must leave it to the Lord to apply his Word to this person's life. This process of instruction and correction from the Scriptures may require to be complemented by church discipline.

No Regeneration Without Holiness

We cannot emphasise too strongly that there is no such thing as regeneration that does not result in holiness of life. Those who have been born again are born of God. If, however, they have been born of God, then God's seed is in them. They cannot continue in the deliberate practice of sin, for they are indwelt by the Spirit of holiness.

Regarding these things, God's Word says:

John 1:12-13

- ⁽¹²⁾ But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: ⁽¹³⁾ Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
(See vv.9-14)

Romans 8:9-10

⁽⁹⁾ But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. ⁽¹⁰⁾ And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness. (See vv.1-13)

Romans 8:14

⁽¹⁴⁾ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (See vv.15-17)

1 Peter 1:14-16

⁽¹⁴⁾ As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: ⁽¹⁵⁾ But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; ⁽¹⁶⁾ Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy {*Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7*}. (See 1 Pet. 1:13)

1 Peter 1:23

⁽²³⁾ Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. (See vv.22-25)

1 John 3:9

⁽⁹⁾ Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. (See vv.1-10; cf. ch. 5:18)

Holiness of Life

It is well for us to remember these points:

1. Profession of faith in Christ is no guarantee of regeneration—unless it results in holiness of life.
2. Giving a testimony of conversion is no guarantee of regeneration—unless it results in holiness of life.
3. Regular attendance at church services is no guarantee of regeneration—unless it results in holiness of life.

The guarantee of regeneration is the fruit of holiness in the believer's life. Without this fruit, the branch is dead—and fit only for the burning.

John 15:4-8

⁽⁴⁾ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

⁽⁵⁾ I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. ⁽⁶⁾ If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned. ⁽⁷⁾ If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. ⁽⁸⁾ Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. (See vv.1-3)

John 15:16

⁽¹⁶⁾ Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.
(See vv.9-17)