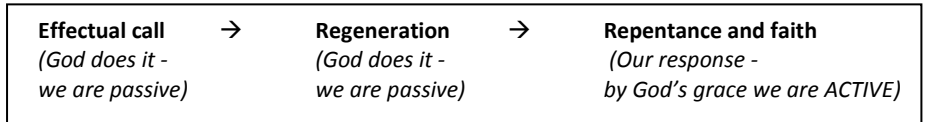


8. REGENERATION, REPENTANCE AND FAITH

JOHN 3:1-15

INTRODUCTION



1. REGENERATION

(a) Key words and definition: born again (John 3), new creation (2 Cor. 5:17)

"Regeneration is a sovereign work of God, accomplished by His Holy Spirit. We are passive in the work of regeneration. By His Spirit, God re-creates the mind and affections of a person. As a result, that person is able to and will necessarily repent and believe the Gospel."

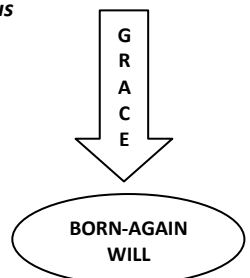
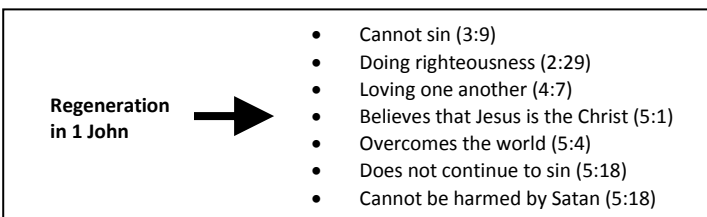
(b) Key Bible texts

John 3:5, "Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.'"

Ezekiel 36:25-26, "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."

- "born of water" = cleansing & dealing with the past
- "born of the Spirit" = divine re-birth

(c) The significance of regeneration: it is the source of all saving grace *in us*



2. OUR RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL: AN INTRODUCTION

- (a) Regeneration always produces repentance and faith
- (b) We repent and believe – God does not
- (c) Repentance and faith cannot be separated (e.g. Mark 1:14-15)
- (d) Repentance and faith are necessary, but not meritorious

3. SAVING FAITH

- (a) How does faith save? It is an “instrument”

Instrumental cause (not meritorious cause)

The Saviour saves! “As one has aptly and truly stated the case, it is not faith that saves but faith in Jesus Christ; strictly speaking, it is not even faith in Christ that saves but Christ that saves through faith.”

(John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, p112)

- (b) What is faith?

- (i) **Knowledge**

Romans 10:17, “Faith is of hearing, & hearing of the word of Christ.”

- (ii) **Assent**

But: James 2:19, “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-- and shudder.”

- (iii) **Trust... in Christ**

“Faith is knowledge passing into conviction, and it is conviction passing into confidence. Faith cannot stop short of self-commitment to Christ, a transference of reliance upon ourselves and all human resources to reliance upon Christ alone for salvation. It is a receiving and resting upon him. It is here that the most characteristic act of faith appears; it is engagement of person to person, the engagement of the sinner as lost to the person of the Saviour able and willing to save... Faith is trust in a person... The specific character of faith is that it looks away from itself and finds its whole interest and object in Christ. He is the absorbing preoccupation of faith.”

(John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, p111)

Galatians 2:20, “The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

4. REPENTANCE

(a) What is repentance?

“Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavour after new obedience.” (*Westminster Shorter Catechism*)

= TURNING, e.g. 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10, “for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,¹⁰ and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead-- Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.”

(b) The necessity of repentance: there is no saving faith without repentance

(c) The Gospel is the Gospel of repentance: some Bible texts

Luke 24:46-47, “He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

Acts 2:37-38, “When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”³⁸ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 5:31, “God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.”

Acts 20:21, “I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.”

Hebrews 6:1, “Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God,”

“Repentance reminds us that if the faith we profess is a faith that allows us to walk in the ways of this present evil world, in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, in the fellowship of the works of darkness, then our faith is but mockery and deception. True faith is suffused with penitence. And just as faith is not only a momentary act but an abiding attitude of trust and confidence directed to the Saviour, so repentance results in constant contrition.”

(John Murray, *Redemption accomplished and applied*, p116)

5. APPLICATIONS

- (a) Born again? – so praise God!
- (b) Born again? – so keep on repenting and believing!

6. HOMEWORK

For reflection:

- Read, pray and worship in the light of some Bible texts we've looked at today.
- Read the hymn below and think about its words.

Next session: justification by faith – please read Romans 3:19-4:6 and 4:20-5:1

Born by the Holy Spirit's breath,
loosed from the law of sin and death,
now cleared in Christ from every claim
no judgement stands against our name.

2. In us the Spirit makes his home
that we in him may overcome;
Christ's risen life, in all its powers,
its all-prevailing strength, is ours.

3. Sons, then, and heirs of God most high,
we by his Spirit 'Father' cry;
that Spirit with our spirit shares
to frame and breathe our wordless prayers.

4. One is his love, his purpose one:
to form the likeness of his Son
in all who, called and justified,
shall reign in glory at his side.

5. Nor death nor life, nor powers unseen,
nor height nor depth can come between;
we know through peril, pain and sword,
the love of God in Christ our Lord.