

# Regeneration

*Regeneration*

By David Simpson

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** Titus 1; John 3  
**Preached on:** Sunday, May 26, 2013

**Providence Church**  
104 Foust Carney Rd.  
Powell, TN 37849

**Website:** [www.providenceundergrace.com](http://www.providenceundergrace.com)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/provincetoday](http://www.sermonaudio.com/provincetoday)

This message was recorded May 26, 2013. The speaker is David Simpson.

Please open to the book of James and in the first chapter you'll find your place for our reading. We'll start at verse 12 and Dr. John B. will lead us.

“12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. 13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: 14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. 15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. 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.”

Let's take our Bibles again and let's have a few thoughts and let's start again in John 3. When Jesus said in chapter 3:7, “You must be born again,” the word that he used here is one word and it means “to be born from above.” You must be born from above and so he obviously is telling us that there is a physical birth that is natural and there is a spiritual birth that is most unnatural and that birth is from above. So I've asked: what is the definition of regeneration? And what is the need of regeneration? And what is the relationship of the Holy Spirit to regeneration? That's what we're talking about.

I pointed out to you that the coming of the Spirit of God to awaken and to regenerate is promised in the Old Testament, illustrated and typified in the Old Testament and then this is where we were and I said that this tells us that this is a sovereign act of God. Just as he controls the wind, he controls spiritual birth. He doesn't relinquish the control of the wind to man; he doesn't relinquish spiritual birth to men. He is sovereign over both. That's what we're being told in this illustration about the wind.

Let's move a little further. Turn with me to the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter and I want you to see something that Jesus said in verse 63 of John 6. I want you to not read the first line and I know that goes a little against your grain to do that but we'll come back to it. Let's suppose you didn't have the first line there and it started with "the flesh profits nothing." In other words, there's nothing that can come from natural birth; nothing good can come from the natural mind, natural affections, the natural will. Nothing. Not a little bit, not something, nothing. No good can come from the will of man, the flesh of man. If you go back then, to the first part of that, "it is the spirit that quickens." So, he lays all of the responsibility for quickening, for regeneration, upon the Spirit of God. "The spirit that quickens, the flesh profits nothing, the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."

But he also knew that there were those who would not believe. If you go back up here to verse 59, "These things he spoke in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples," so-called disciples they were. It doesn't mean the 11 disciples but it means others who called themselves disciples. You go back and read earlier this was the crowd that wanted the fish and the bread. They called themselves disciples.

"Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying." Now, it wasn't hard to understand, it was hard to follow, it was hard to obey. And by "hard" it means that it was impossible, that's what "hard" means. It was impossible for them to bow to it. "Who can hear it?" And then in verse 61, "Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them," then he says that.

Then go down to verse 64, "For Jesus knew from the beginning." What beginning? Well, from the beginning of the world, from the beginning of his coming in to be flesh, from the beginning of his ministry at 30 years of age, from the beginning of that day, from that beginning of his dealing with those people. He "knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him." He knew them and they couldn't change it. He knew it. But it is the spirit that is life-giving. He's promised, he's illustrated and typified, his relationship to regeneration is that it is sovereign and his relationship is that he the one who gives life. It doesn't arise from man himself.

Then I want you to look at another thing. Go with me over to the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter of John still. What is the relationship of the Holy Spirit to regeneration? Number 5, I would say to you revelation. Jesus called him the Spirit of truth in verse 13 of chapter 16, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come," and what Jesus is talking about is the coming that is going to follow his death, his burial, his resurrection, his ascension, 50 days later the Spirit of God would come at the day of Pentecost. "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come," what will he do? "He will guide you into all truth." That is the work of the Spirit, to guide us into truth.

We are always totally dependent upon the Holy Spirit to guide us into truth as I study from one thing to the next. As soon as I'm finished today, I'll start getting ready for my broadcast, I'll probably study a couple of hours tonight. I'll probably study 3-4 hours tomorrow and maybe I'll get it done tomorrow. I may not get it done until Tuesday. I

study the words, I look at what he said, I read what other people say but I know that I'm always dependent upon the Spirit of God to guide me and I pray that he will guide me in my thoughts, in my heart and mind, that he'll guide me to know what to say, to understand and how to communicate his word. I'll move from that to writing a couple of articles and I'll come back to getting ready for a message to preach to you again. Always, I'm dependent upon the Spirit of truth to guide me.

Go with me over to the book of 1 Corinthians. Look at what he said in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter. This isn't new to any of you but he talks about the gospel, he calls it the wisdom of God. The gospel is the wisdom of God that's in a mystery, he called it, in verse 7. At verse 10 he said, "But God hath revealed," and it says "them" but it means the words of truth, the wisdom of God, "unto us by his Spirit." He is the one who must guide us into all truth.

Look at what he said in verse 14, "But the natural man," what is the natural man? That is the man who is not born from above, that man who has not been born again, he's in the natural estate of life. All of those things that I talked about: he's dead, he's darkened, he's ignorant. All of those things that we looked at: he's spiritually disabled, "he receiveth not," he embraces not, "the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually understood."

So, there is no sense in beating down those who preach a false gospel because they can't see. They can't understand. They can't discern. They don't understand how sovereignty and salvation fits together. They can't see it. It's God who must show us. It is spiritually understood. The Spirit of God is the one who is God's agent, the agent of revelation to the heart. If the Holy Spirit ever regenerates, then the truth is that we will come to know, we will come to see, we will come to understand the gospel and then follow after the gospel.

Now let me talk with you about what is the relationship of the Holy Spirit to God's word. What is the relationship of the Holy Spirit to God's word? I want you to turn with me to, if you would please, to the book of James where we were a little while ago. Before you turn to the book of James, why don't you start on your way across there, across those pages, stop with me in Ephesians and I want you to look in the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter from verse 3 where he begins talking about what God purposed from the foundation of the world and the blessings that were purposed for his people from the foundation of the world in heavenly places he calls it.

In verse 4, he's chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world. By "in Christ" it means "in connection with Christ." Now, to separate Christ from his glorious, sinless, bodily self and from his finished, completed, sacrificial, efficacious work is grave and great error. To say that our salvation is apart from him actually becoming flesh and actually accomplishing his work, is the total opposite of everything we see in the Scriptures. So, he "has chosen us in him," his glorious person, his finished work, "before the foundation of the world." Notice this a little word of purpose, "that we should be," not that we were but that we should be, "holy," a word I think he's talking about sanctified, "and without blame before him in love." That's justification. "Having

predestinated us,” or in love having predestinated us, “into the adoption of children by Jesus Christ.”

I’m not going to read all of this but he goes on and he continues on talking. If you go with me down to verse 13, he lays out the gospel in a very orderly and beautiful way. Verse 13, “In whom ye also trusted,” now notice this, “after that ye heard the word of truth.” God declared as he is, man declared for what he is, salvation declared as it is. “After you heard the word of truth.” Not from a preacher who lied on God even though he didn’t mean to. He might have been sincere and wonderful but he didn’t know the truth. “After you heard the word of truth the gospel of your salvation,” the gospel that he had just laid out. Did he tell you about God’s election? Did he tell you about God’s eternal purpose to save? Did he tell you about the efficacious nature of God’s word in his gospel? “After you heard the word of truth.”

Go with me to the book of James now. We read it a little while ago. I’ll admit, I had bypassed this verse until the gospel was brought to my mind and heart up in my 30s. Verse 18, just mark it down, James 1:18, “Of his own will.” Why does he say “of his own will?” He said, “because it’s not of your will.” It’s of his own will “begat,” you know what the word “begat” means, that means “to bring to life,” new birth he’s talking about, regeneration, quickened. “Of his own will begat he us,” but notice this, “with the word of truth,” not apart from the word of truth, “with the word of truth,” not the word of lies, not the word of deception. There are some who think that what we need to do is preach to the world a real soft message about God’s sovereignty. Let them come in and then on the backside we’ll have classes and teach them the doctrines of grace, as they put it. No. From the beginning, from the outset, in the fabric of the message declare God as he is. “Of his own will begat he us in connection with the word of truth.”

One other place. Go with me to the letter of 1 Peter 1:23, “Being born again, not of corruptible seed.” What does he mean not of corruptible seed? Well, corruptible seed is what I am, that’s my mortal body. You read my article this week on the mortal body. In our mortal body the Scripture tells us reigns sin. That’s what he means by corruptible seed. Being born again, not of anything arising from corruptible seed, from our body, from our mind, from our will, our affections. Nothing having to do with that. “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible.” God himself. The word of God. The gospel “which lives and abides for ever.”

Then he quotes from the Old Testament to prove his point that it is in connection with the gospel. So, at the end of this chapter he says, “And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” Regeneration is a mystery. Here’s what I’m going to say to you: it’s a mystery, it’s in the heart, it’s secret, it’s the work of God. If God regenerates prior to the hearing of the gospel, that’s a hypothetical question that we don’t know how to answer and the Scriptures do not deal in hypotheticals. Scriptures deal in realities and the reality is that spiritual birth comes in connection with the hearing of the word of truth. Not apart from it. Not years apart. Not experiences apart. But in connection with it.

For me and I can go back to myself because I'm an easy example, I first heard of some of these things when I was in college so I was just a young guy. But I didn't depart from my false religion until I was 38, 20 years later. There was a growing experience but I wasn't born again during that time. I was in darkness. I loved darkness. I followed after darkness. I preached darkness. I led people in darkness. I didn't know anything but darkness. I couldn't see how it fit together but I was way up there. I came here and I was 38 and it was close to that time, I don't know when, I cannot put a time upon it, it's a secret work of God, I don't try to. But neither am I going to cling to my past and say I know because of such and such an experience or such and such of what I did or thought or said. No. I was in darkness otherwise I wouldn't have gone along with all that mess.

Only when God, in his own sovereign will, chooses to convert. If the Holy Spirit ever regenerates a person from the gospel, I will say this to you: the effectual call never occurs apart from the gospel. Remember I said to you in the beginning that regeneration is a part of the effectual call but there is more to it. The effectual call involves what God does providentially, the prevenient grace, the regeneration, his providence, that brings us to the point of actual repentance. Repentance is the change of the mind, faith to believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ. How can you believe if you haven't heard, the Scripture says. You're going to tell me that you were regenerated way back yonder and you still believe in lies about God? No. No, it's in connection with the hearing of the word of Truth. And when we hear that word of truth and there is repentance in the mind and heart and we believe upon Christ and where there is repentance there is faith and where there is faith there is repentance. That's what the Scripture teaches.

And conversion is a change of life. Conversion follows upon it. God doesn't enlighten, call or convert apart from the gospel. The gospel of sovereign grace must be heard, it must be understood, it must be believed. How can we repent if we don't know the truth? How can we believe if we don't know the truth? We must not cling to our old professions under false religion and free-will religion is what I'm saying to you. We must let it go. We must not try to put new wine into an old wineskin, Jesus said. Don't try to wear your old garb. Just let it go and say, "This is where I am now. This is what I see, it's what I understand. I didn't see it before. I do now." That's all you need.

Here's the summation of this: Paul said at the end of the second chapter of 2 Timothy, "If God peradventure," providentially he means, "will give them repentance unto the acknowledging of the truth," I ask you is there any other kind of repentance? I mean, really, does the Bible ever speak of repentance unto the acknowledging of lies? No. Repentance unto the acknowledging of the truth. Everywhere we look in the Scriptures, it's always the same thing over and over and over again. The same thing.

I've asked: what's the definition, what's the need, what's the relationship to the Holy Spirit, what's the relationship to the gospel. Let me talk about some examples, what are some examples of regeneration. You know, actually we don't have any. That seems funny, doesn't it? We don't have any. What we do have are examples of the effectual call but we don't actually have examples of regeneration. We do have examples of the effectual call. For example, the Ethiopian eunuch. Do you want to go back and look at it?

Acts 8, go back with me to Acts 8. Here's what you find about this story: here is a right man in the right place, he's reading the right things out of the Scriptures, God gives him the right man to give him the right message. That's what this is all about. All of this has to do with the effectual call of this man.

This Ethiopian eunuch, a black man, had been from Ethiopia, he had come up to Jerusalem and he, no doubt, was a Jewish proselyte and he had been up to Jerusalem for, I don't know if it was Passover or exactly what it was, but some important time of a Jewish festival but it wasn't all fitting together what he was seeing about what was being said in their Judaism. He was seeing something different and so on his way back, he's got Isaiah 53 open. My, what a place to read. Is that just by chance? Oh no, come on now. People get with it. He understood. He needed to be reading about the one that the Bible was telling him was going to come and why he would come.

So, he's reading Isaiah 53. Philip is away and the Spirit of God catches him up, brings him out to the desert. They come smack together out in the desert and Philip goes to him in verse 30, and he said to him, "Understand what you read?" Remember what I said to you before? It must be heard, it must be understood, it must be believed. "Do you understand?" He didn't ask him, "Did you read it? Do you understand it?" And the man was honest and he said in verse 31, "How can I except some man should guide me?" So, Philip went up with him and he sat down next to him and he began to read about the death of Christ in Isaiah 53:7 and Philip preached the gospel to him, it says in verse 35, "preached unto him Jesus," all the gospel, all that pertained to him, exactly who he was. And this man then, from that, said, "Here's water. What prohibits me from being baptized?" And he baptized him.

Now, where is regeneration in there? We can't see it, can we? We're not told that he's regenerated. What we do see is his call. We see the effectual call of grace to the heart and the soul of this man.

Go with me across the page there to chapter 9. Here is Saul of Tarsus, otherwise known as Paul to us, and he's a Jew and he hates Christians and he's going into their houses and dragging them out. I think that what is going on here is that as he is doing this to these people that they are preaching the gospel to him. They are telling him who Christ is and he's bothered by it. He's really bothered by this but he's still doing it because he's still in darkness. All of a sudden in verse 3, there is a shining light out of heaven that he saw that fell to the earth and a voice said to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Verse 5, "Who are you Lord?" That's out of respect. He said, "I'm Jesus whom you persecute. It is hard for you to fight against the pricks." What does he mean? Well, this is a picture of oxen pulling a cart and they would take a sharp stick and they would poke it into the backside of the poor old oxen, "Keep on going, boy. Keep on going. Keep on working."

Now, that's what he compares to what is happening in the soul, the mind, the conscience of this man. "It's hard for you to fight against what's happening inside of you." And then it goes on and I won't read the whole story to you but God provides a man to come and preach the gospel to him, Ananias, and he preached the gospel to him and then Saul is

baptized, he believes and ultimately, history is written about what happened to this man. We don't actually see his regeneration, do we?

But he talks about what regeneration is but how does he frame what he said? Go with me to the book of Galatians. How does Paul frame what to tell about what happened to him? Look at Galatians, the first chapter. He doesn't talk about regeneration but he does say in the first chapter of Galatians in verse 15, "But when it pleased God." Now, when it pleased God is what we're reading back there in Acts 9, "who separated me from my mother's womb." That's his way of speaking of his election. And what did he do? "He called me by his grace." He doesn't mention regeneration. Calling. Calling. God effectually called him out of where he was. God effectually brought him to Jesus Christ. God effectually brought him so that he repented and believed and was converted and trusted Christ for his life. Well, we could go on but those are two, to me, good examples.

Let me talk about one more thing and then I'm going to stop. Go back with me to our text in the book of Titus. I've asked what is the definition of regeneration, what is the need of regeneration, what is the relationship to the Holy Spirit, what is the relationship to the gospel, what are some examples and now what is the relationship to justification? Regeneration and renewing are two things that he mentions here. Then down in verse 7 he uses the word "justified." Justification has to do with acceptance before God, regeneration has to do with fellowship with God. Justification occurred at the cross, regeneration occurs in the soul. Justification is for us, regeneration is in us.

Those who try to connect the imputation of righteousness with regeneration often come to this verse, however, this verse is not talking about that at all. These are references out of the Old Testament, this washing here, and when he talks about washing it could either be with water or it could be with oil but it always has to do with the Spirit of God. This washing of the Holy Spirit of God is exactly what Jesus speaks of in John 7, verse 37, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Now, how do you get thirsty? Natural men aren't thirsty. Natural men are not thirsty for Jesus Christ. They are satisfied. They're not thirsty. They're not hungry. They're not thirsty. They're perfectly happy to go this morning and they'll feel really good when they have all their memorial services and when they have their free-will religion and they have people make decisions. They're perfectly happy. They're not thirsty.

"But if any man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. He that believes on me as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." That's what Jesus said. And then John, later on, interpreted this to his Gentile constituency saying this, "But this spoke he of the Spirit which they that believe on him would receive," embrace, "for the Holy Spirit was not yet given," he's talking about at Pentecost because Jesus was not yet glorified. It's the Spirit of God that he's talking about.

Regeneration is the initial entrance of the Spirit of God to awaken and impart the spiritual life. Renewing that he's talking about here, is the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. Christ saved us from sin, the Spirit saves us from darkness in our understanding, rebellion in our will and the carnality of our affections. Christ separated us from our sin, the Holy

Spirit separates from the love of our sin and aversion to Christ and to his salvation. Christ saved us by his righteousness, the Holy Spirit saves us from our self-righteousness. Washing and renewal. Regeneration and renewal. Therefore, salvation is not amending our old nature or reforming our ways, salvation is an actual expiation of sin and imputing of righteousness. The work of Christ was finished at the cross but the work of the Holy Spirit is a present work and will endure until the very end of this age. He comes in to his people in regeneration but he also abides in them. That's why Paul says, "Know you not that you are the temple of the Spirit of God because he abides in you?" In a tabernacle, it was moved but in the temple, it stayed still. So, the Spirit of God comes to abide in us and to stay in us.

One more thing in verse 7, words are important now, "being justified by his grace." The word "being" is one of those point action verbs, it's an aorist tense verb, it's called. It's a point action. It's their way of speaking of a past completed act. It's also passive which means they weren't involved in it, weren't involved in the act of being justified. So, it's literally having been justified or having been declared righteous. Regeneration is the revelation of this justified state, justification is the state of being righteous before God. One took place at the cross, the other takes place in time and life. Regeneration is for revelation and the enjoyment, the happiness, the sheer pleasure of knowing that in Jesus Christ and only in him, we are right with God. Nothing I do is going to change that. Nothing I do is going to make me more justified than I was at his declaration in time and experience but time and experience is what makes it a pleasure in this time.

One more thing, one more verse and then I'll stop. "For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might," or would on a just ground, "bring us to God," and he did that, "being put to death in the flesh," the Lord Jesus Christ was, "but quickened by the Spirit." He was quickened by the Spirit, resurrection out of death and he also quickens us out of death and to life. So, regeneration is the entrance of the Spirit of God in us to awaken us. Quickened to come to Christ and quickened to rest in Christ.

Well, these are some thoughts for you. I hope it's a blessing to you, it was to me to think about it.



