

PNEUMATOLOGY (46)

When it comes to understanding the final five ministries of the Holy Spirit, each need to be carefully analyzed and all may be carefully categorized. The first four fall under one category and the fifth falls under another.

The first four works of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life must be understood in the following manner:

- 1) They are pneumatological works involved in all who are saved.
- 2) They are pneumatological works that occur at the moment one is saved.
- 3) They are pneumatological works that will never be repeated in one who is saved.
- 4) They are pneumatological works which happen once to the one who is saved.
- 5) They are pneumatological works which guarantee eternal life for one who is saved.

Every one of the first four works of the Holy Spirit meets this doctrinal criteria. In fact, much confusion concerning the work of the Holy Spirit is due to a neglect of understanding these very important issues. Many heretical belief systems concerning the Holy Spirit exist because these very points are neglected. However, a right belief system demands a right understanding of biblical truth, and, as will be seen, to clearly understand the first four works of the Spirit in a believer's life, these five doctrinal points must be admitted for they are most assuredly true and factual in every instance.

However, as we shall see, the final fifth work of the Holy Spirit is not an automatic feature of salvation. In fact, it is possible for a believer to have legitimately been the recipient of the first four works of the Holy Spirit and **not ever** be a recipient of the final one. The final work of the Holy Spirit is unique in that all Christians experience the first four, but not all will experience the fifth. It is actually possible for a person to experience the fifth work for a period of time and then not experience it again. It must be continually renewed and brought in check in the believer.

The five works of the Holy Spirit, which are connected to the believer, in the order in which we will study them are:

- (Work #1)- The pneumatological ministry of regeneration.
- (Work #2)- The pneumatological ministry of indwelling.
- (Work #3)- The pneumatological ministry of baptism.
- (Work #4)- The pneumatological ministry of sealing.
- (Work #5)- The pneumatological ministry of filling.

Work #1 - The work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration.

It is a shame that the concept of being "born again," or the concept of receiving the "new birth," is oft times only viewed as something that is a remedy for human failures and sin, for God, in His infinite Word places a much higher perspective on it than that. He deems it as being a creative work of God in which He actually creates a new life to the extent that the one given life can legitimately be classified as "sons of God."

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The word “regenerate” is one that means to beget life, to give birth to life. It contains the idea of bearing or producing an offspring. It was used in reference to producing a family, race or nation. It was a word which was often used of a father begetting a child and of a mother bearing a child and it was used of the child who had been given life.

The New Testament writer who really emphasizes this word in regard to spiritual life is the Apostle John, and he developed his idea and emphasis from Jesus Christ. John uses this term in many places: John 1:13; 3:3, 5-8; I John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18. Regeneration must be seen as a new birth from God in which He gives spiritual life to one without spiritual life and makes him His own child.

The passage that connects this specific work to the Holy Spirit is John 3:3-8. In this context, the obvious teacher of this doctrine is Jesus Christ. Another passage that clearly connects this work to the Holy Spirit is Titus 3:5. In this context, the teacher was Paul.

The particular word used in Titus 3:5 is one only used one other time in the N.T.— Matt. 19:28. This word is one that speaks of a new birth that includes re-creation, renewal and restoration.

There are certain key observations we may make concerning regeneration:

- 1) Regeneration takes place because of the will of God, not the will of man.
John 1:13; James 1:18
- 2) Regeneration takes place because of the work of the Holy Spirit (John 3:5).
- 3) Regeneration occurs through a presentation of God’s Word (James 1:18).
- 4) Regeneration occurs at the moment a person believes (John 1:12-13).

These are true and critical observations which need to be made concerning the doctrine of regeneration. To further help grasp the doctrine, we may also observe that there are at least three biblical figures or pictures used in connection with it:

(Figure #1) - Regeneration is presented in the context of a new birth.

Obviously, John 3:3-7 is one passage that clearly presents this figure. Regeneration, then, must be understood as a new birth from God.

(Figure #2) - Regeneration is presented in the context of a spiritual resurrection.

The image presented of a believer is that he was once previously dead and by a new birth has now been given life (Eph. 2:1, 5; Rom. 6:13). We may conclude that regeneration also has to do with giving new spiritual life to one spiritually dead. It is used in the context of a spiritual resurrection.

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(Figure #3) - Regeneration is presented in the context of creation or re-creation.

Passages such as II Corinthians 5:17 and Ephesians 4:24 certainly convey this image. Obviously, regeneration is pictured in these figures as a work of God in which He gives new spiritual life to one previously spiritually dead. As the Word of God is presented, God, through the person of the Holy Spirit, does His creative work of giving life to the individual. As Dr. Walvoord said, "Regeneration meets the need created by the presence of spiritual death. ... There is no visible method or process discernible. By its nature it is supernatural and therefore its explanation is beyond human understanding. ... The important fact, never to be forgotten in the doctrine of regeneration, is that the believer in Christ has received eternal life." Dr. Walvoord goes on to say that regeneration "is...the very heart of salvation" (Chafer, Vol. 6, pp. 116-117)

Dr. Walvoord further states, "It (regeneration) reaches the essential problem of absence of eternal life without which no soul can spend eternity in the presence of God. Regeneration supplies this lack of eternal life. It is a smashing blow to all philosophies which hold that man has inherent capacities of saving himself. Regeneration is wholly of God. No possible human effort however noble can supply eternal life. The proper doctrine of regeneration gives to God all the glory and power due His name, and at the same time it displays His abundant provision for a race dead in sin" (*Ibid.*, p. 117).

Regeneration may be understood as the work of God in which He gives spiritual life to one spiritually dead. Once God has given a person this life, he is guaranteed everlasting life. Regeneration is not something that is felt, it is something that is a fact which should lead to producing fruit (Eph. 2:10; I John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4).

Two key theological areas which need to be analyzed in connection with this doctrine are:
1) How does regeneration relate to saving faith? 2) How does regeneration relate to personal experience?

Theological Area #1 - Regeneration as it relates to saving faith.

Serious students of the Bible have always done their best to carefully understand doctrines with as much precision as possible. When the doctrine of regeneration is studied, careful consideration demands an investigation as to how and when this doctrine connects or relates to saving faith.

There are some theologians who suggest that regeneration occurs when the human will somehow partially recognize the need for regeneration. Other theologians believe that regeneration occurs after one has been chosen to believe (i.e. Floyd Barackman, p. 153). Still, other theologians suggest that faith and regeneration occur at the same moment, and both are a gift of God (i.e. Charles Ryrie, p. 326).

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In N.T. salvation, the only charge given to the lost person in order to gain everlasting life is the charge to believe. From a human perspective, this is the only prerequisite given for receiving everlasting life. Although we learn that saving faith is in fact a gift of God (Eph. 2:8-9), we also see that this message is presented from an angle of human responsibility (Acts 16:30-31; John 3:16).

Regeneration, on the other hand, is clearly presented as a divine act of God, not in any way connected to human will or effort (John 1:13; 3:8; James 1:18). As Dr. Walvoord said, "In the act of regeneration, ...the human will is entirely passive. There is no cooperation possible. The nature of the work of regeneration forbids any possible human assistance" (Vol. 6, p. 118).

A good illustration of this can be seen when comparing physical birth to spiritual birth. In the physical birth of a new baby, the baby is born and given life totally apart from his will, volition or help. He is conceived without any knowledge on his part and he is born the same way. When all is analyzed on the subject of natural birth, the baby is just a passive recipient of the gift of life. Regeneration, the gift of spiritual life works much the same way. Apart from his will, volition or help and apart from his knowledge or feeling, the new babe in Christ actually is the passive recipient of the gift of spiritual life. When it comes to regeneration, the human will has absolutely nothing to do with it; however, when it comes to saving faith the human will has the responsibility to believe.

When regeneration is analyzed as being a total work of God, and when saving faith is seen as a gift of God (Eph. 2:8), it seems logical that saving faith and regeneration are part of one divine package, which occurs at the moment of salvation. There is a moment when, in the mind of God, a person is transformed from being a child of darkness into a child of light, a child of damnation into a child of everlasting life. This moment, in God's mind, is the moment of regeneration in which He imparts new spiritual life to one spiritually dead. This moment occurs at the instant of salvation.

Theological Area #2 - Regeneration as it relates to personal experience .

Here is a critical doctrinal matter that needs to be clearly and carefully understood. Since regeneration is an instantaneous work of God, apart from any human action or emotion, it is only accurate to assume that there is nothing immediately experienced or reasoned from a human perspective. In other words, as Dr. Walvoord says, "...experience proceeds from the accomplished regeneration" (*Ibid.*, p. 118).

There is a popular, misunderstood notion that in order for one to be truly saved, he/she must "feel" different. There are many who look for some feeling as a sign of a true salvation experience. However, this doctrine of regeneration totally contradicts such human logic. Again Dr. Walvoord has done an excellent job on this issue: "While the regenerated soul may become immediately conscious of new life, the act of regeneration itself is not subject to experience or analysis, being the supernatural instantaneous act of God" (*Ibid.*, pp. 118-119).

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There are many who look for some feeling or something experiential to happen when they believe. Unfortunately, this thinking has been promoted by evangelists and preachers who do not have a clear understanding of “sound doctrine.” A fruitful life, personal development and the experience of Christianity are all things which occur as a result of regeneration, not at the moment of it. Since regeneration is an act of God, wrought apart from human emotion, intellect or will, it is not experience by human emotion, intellect or will. It is true that one may sense a change has taken place, but the change is only experienced as one develops in the aftermath of regeneration.

Again we use physical birth as our example. When a new babe is born, there are some new potentials which exist at the moment of birth. For example, the new babe has a potential to move differently, make sounds differently, breathe differently and eat differently. Sometimes, a newborn struggles with one or more of these potentials, but that does not negate the reality of his new physical life. The babe is not in any way aware of what is going on. He has no idea as to the changes that have instantly occurred at his birth. As he grows and develops, he begins to understand more and more about himself and his life.

So it is with the spiritual birth. When a new babe is born, there are some new potentials that exist, some new capacities. The new babe has a new capacity for spiritual food and growth. Most times the new babe will sense something new has taken place, but he will have no idea as to what changes have instantly occurred. As he grows and develops, he will begin to experience and enjoy a new life. Regeneration is not, in itself, an experience; it is something that is experienced as one matures. To demand that new babes in Christ “feel” different is to demand something which is not consistent with the doctrine of regeneration. It is a fact, not a feeling.

One matter associated with the doctrine of regeneration is the matter of “infant death.” If a person makes salvation an act of man, then any baby who dies, who has not made a choice to believe on Jesus Christ, is one destined for eternal condemnation. However, if regeneration is an act of God, then God can work in the soul of a baby and give him everlasting life.

We have already concluded that in the normal situation, regeneration occurs at the moment of salvation, or at the moment of saving faith. However, when a baby dies, it presents a problem for the theologian because the baby has not reached an age in which it has the ability to believe on Jesus Christ and be saved. If we believe that saving faith and everlasting life are gifts of God, then we may also conclude that God can give this life even to a baby. We must always remember regeneration is an act of God’s will, **not** man’s will. Therefore, God can impart new life to whomever He will, even to a baby. Dr. Walvoord believes that normal regeneration would be given by God when a person believes, but infant regeneration would be given by God at the moment a baby dies. This would explain how no sheep can ever be missed or lost in the saving program of God, including sheep who are infants. Always remember regeneration is not of the will of man. Nothing man can do can cause one to be born again. No human act, even the most religious (i.e. baptism, confession, communion, membership) can cause one to be born again because being born again is solely and completely the work of God.

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As we have demonstrated, regeneration occurs at the moment of salvation, which occurs at the moment one believes. It would be well for us to doctrinally understand “saving faith.”

The word “faith” is a word that refers to what one believes, what one trusts and what one places his confidence in. In the matter of salvation, the issue of faith is the issue of what one believes will make him eternally right with God.

There are at least four different types of faith found in the N.T.:

Faith Type #1 - There is intellectual or historical faith.

This is the faith in which one intellectually understands and believes something as a result of knowledge, education, tradition or training (Acts 26:27-28; James 2:19). This is a very logical and rational and humanistic type of faith, but it is not saving faith.

Faith Type #2 - There is miraculous faith.

This is a faith that believes in miracles and the paranormal and may have even participated or experienced certain miraculous things (Matt. 7:22-23; John 3:2; Acts 14:8-9). One with this type of faith may or may not be really saved. There are many unsaved people who believe in the miraculous.

Faith Type #3 - There is temporary or emotional faith.

This is a faith that is very emotional in its response to truth, but it is not lasting nor is it saving (Luke 8:13). Many people go to some service and have some religious emotional experience which they equate with saving faith. This is a dangerous, devilish tactic to deceive one from a true relationship with Jesus Christ.

Faith Type #4 - There is saving faith.

This is a faith that totally relies upon Jesus Christ and His righteousness and righteous work on Calvary as the only means of being right with God and as the only means of having everlasting life. Although the intellect, emotion and will are involved, this is a major work of the Spirit of God in which one totally relies upon Jesus Christ and the truth of the Gospel for salvation.

It is obviously at the moment of this fourth type of faith when regeneration occurs, for when one is convicted of sin, of judgment and of righteousness and totally casts faith upon Jesus Christ, he is “born again.” (For an excellent discussion of “faith,” see Dr. Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, pp. 326-327.)

Work #2 - The work of the Holy Spirit in indwelling.

Building upon the previous doctrine of regeneration, we now come to the critical pneumatological doctrine of indwelling.