

PNEUMATOLOGY (50)

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.

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It is imperative that the believer recognize that in this present age the Holy Spirit indwells every regenerated person. Dr. Chafer captured the significance of this point when he wrote: “To fail to recognize the body of Scripture upon which this distinction in doctrine rests is to misapprehend one of the most essential factors in the Christian’s being, to conceive of the Christian as totally unprepared for the high and holy requirements which are laid upon him, to open the door for the promotion of unscriptural assumptions relative to personal holiness, and to create unwarranted divisions in the Body of Christ. No student should pass over this aspect of truth lightly. No progress can be made in the knowledge of the Holy Spirit’s relation to the believer until this feature in the doctrine of the Spirit is recognized and accepted as declared by the Sacred Text” (Vol. 6, p. 122).

It is a failure to recognize that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer that is the basis for much heretical teaching, belief and activity concerning the work of the Holy Spirit. This foundational doctrine of indwelling has been ignorantly, blatantly and satanically twisted. Many believers are unstable and insecure and inaccurate because they do not grasp the biblical truth that one who has been regenerated by the Spirit is one also indwelt by the Spirit.

To understand this particular work in a deep and systematic way, we will study it by asking and answering eight key questions. Each question will be thoroughly discussed and defended from Scripture:

(Indwelling Question #1) - What is the definition of indwelling?

Indwelling may be understood as the work of the Holy Spirit in which He takes up residence within the believer at the moment of regeneration and abides in him and lives in him forever.
John 14:16-17

(Indwelling Question #2) - What particular dispensation features Spirit indwelling?

Before giving a precise doctrinal answer to this question, it is wise and well for us to carefully observe certain biblical facts:

1) John 7:37-39 - The age in which the Holy Spirit would indwell a believer was an age that would follow Christ’s return to Glory. It may also be observed from these verses that when this time would arrive, all who would believe on Christ would receive the Spirit.

2) John 14:16-17, 26 - This text clearly teaches that as long as Christ was physically here on earth, the Holy Spirit was not “in” the believer.

3) John 16:7 - This text reinforces the truth that in order for the Holy Spirit to come, Christ needed to be in heaven.

4) Romans 7:6 - We seen in this text a great distinction between an age which featured the Law and an age which featured a new dimension of spiritual life.

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5) John 1:17 - John saw a clear distinction between a law age and a grace age. Obviously, the person who initially brought about this distinction was Jesus Christ.

6) Ephesians 3:1-2 - Paul specifically singled out a stewardship or dispensation which he termed "God's Grace."

From these biblical facts, we may conclude that the age in which the Holy Spirit indwells the believer is the biblical age which follows Christ's appearance on earth, after He has returned to Glory, during an age known as the Age of Grace.

In other words, the indwelling of the Spirit of God in every believer is a work peculiar to this Grace Age dispensation.

(Indwelling Question #3) - Who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit?

Although much heresy is propagated on this issue, the biblical facts are very clear that every believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. "All" believers are indwelt by God's Spirit.

This reality may be dogmatically defended from the following passages:

- 1) John 7:37-39 - Christ implied that any who would believe would have the Holy Spirit.
- 2) Romans 5:5 - Paul says that one who is justified has God's Spirit.
- 3) Acts 11:17 - Peter stated that the Holy Spirit was a gift to those who believed.
- 4) I Cor. 2:12 - Paul says that even those carnal or fleshly have God's Spirit (I Cor. 3:1).
- 5) I Cor. 6:19-20 - Paul said even those in terrible sin had God's Spirit (I Cor. 6:18).
- 6) I Cor. 12:13 - Paul wrote that "all" believers received God's Spirit.
- 7) II Cor. 5:1, 5 - Paul taught every believer had God's Spirit, even those whose works weren't good (II Cor. 5:10).
- 8) Gal. 3:2 - This text is clear that the receiving of the Holy Spirit is in direct connection to the moment of saving faith.
- 9) Gal. 4:6 - Dr. Chafer's words on this verse is worth noting: "This determining Scripture is wholly contradicted by the theory that the Spirit is given in answer to personal sanctification. Rather it is because of the fact that believers are sons that the Spirit is given unto them, and this procedure of necessity must include every son" (Vol. 6, p. 129).

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These are passages that clearly demonstrate that every believer is indwelt by the Spirit of God. The Spirit may be grieved, He may be quenched or resisted by the believer, but He will **never** leave the believer (John 14:16).

(Indwelling Question #4) - What is the status of one who does not have the Spirit in him?

This is a very critical question to answer and one that is clearly answerable from God's Word:

- 1) Romans 8:9 - This verse is very clear that a person without the Spirit is not a child of God. If one does not have the Spirit, he does not belong to God's family.
- 2) Jude 19 - Jude is clear that one without the Spirit is ungodly no matter how religious he may appear. In fact, Jude uses strong language in stating that those without the Spirit are heading to condemnation (v. 4) and judgment (v. 15). One without the Spirit is heading to the condemnatory wrath of God.
- 3) I Cor. 2:14 - Paul identifies one without the Spirit as lost, incapable of spiritually discerning the things of God.

From these statements it is very clear from God's Word that if a person does not have God's Spirit, he is not a child of God. Such a one is lost, heading toward the condemnatory wrath of God.

There are many "believers," specifically those who classify themselves as "charismatics," who boldly declare that they came to faith in Jesus Christ at one moment and then received the Spirit of God at a different and later time. I personally had one man tell me he did not receive the Holy Spirit until months after he had believed on Christ. When we analyze such nonsense in light of the revelation of the Word of God, it proves to be heretical. If one does not have the Spirit of God, he is lost, pure and simple. One who does not have the Spirit of God is not saved, regardless of one's experience or testimony or belief. As we will certainly demonstrate in the course of this study, the so-called "charismatic experience" is not of God, nor is it consistent with the Word of God. When such a belief system is studied in light of God's Word, the "charismatic movement" will be shown to be in the category of what the Apostle Peter would classify as "destructive heresies."

(Indwelling Question #5) - Can a sinning believer lose the Holy Spirit?

One passage that very clearly answers this question is I Cor. 6:19. This verse, which is contextually located next to the most serious sin which a believer can ever commit—sexual immorality (6:18)—clearly establishes that God's Spirit is "in" the believer. In fact, it is this reality that should cause the believer to get out of sexual immorality if one is in it and stay away from it if one is not.

Even the worst of sins does not cause the believer to lose the Holy Spirit. When a person is indwelt by God's Spirit, he is indwelt forever.