

John 3:1-8 Irresistible Grace Part 2: Regeneration

**The Holy Spirit regenerates God's people effectually and freely.**

**1) The necessity of regeneration (3:1-3).**

- a) Nicodemus was a religious leader, well-versed in Israel's Scriptures and the rich heritage of commentary on those Scriptures, yet he could not see truly.
  - i) "A man of the Pharisees"—a strict sect of Judaism devoted to the meticulous application of the Law and Jewish tradition
  - ii) "A ruler of the Jews"—Sanhedrin; experience judging societal issues in light of the Law and tradition
  - iii) "We know . . ."—Nicodemus does not recognize Jesus from the meaning of the "signs," but from the extraordinary nature of the signs; a deduction from the premise that certain miracles require Divine power (cf. John 3:9-13)
  - iv) "Unless one is born again/from above he cannot see the kingdom of God"—Nicodemus does not know what he ought to know, namely, that the reign of God is present in the Person of Jesus Christ. He did not have insight to see God's kingdom standing right in front of him.
- b) Nicodemus was a sincere Pharisee, who was attracted to Jesus. As such, he illustrates the need for all to be born again in order to see the Kingdom of God.
  - i) "born again/from above"—double entendre; first, effect of being made new; second, origin of the power to effect new birth
  - ii) "from above" contrasts with the unstated "from below," that is, from human wisdom and power; no amount of self-help or community support can bring about the needed change because of the SEVERITY OF THE HUMAN CONDITION:
    - (1) Darkness (Eph. 5:8)
    - (2) Dead in sin (Eph. 2:1)
    - (3) Disciples of the Devil (Eph. 2:2)
    - (4) Devoted to lusts of body and mind (Eph. 2:3a)
    - (5) Deserving of God's wrath (Eph. 2:3b)
  - iii) By the gifts of God's common grace to humanity many can change their behavior; but only by the gift of the Holy Spirit to the elect can there be a change of nature.
- c) **Application:**
  - i) Do not despise behavioral change.
  - ii) Do not equate behavioral change with regeneration.
  - iii) Remember, even the well-behaved, like Nicodemus, need regeneration.

**2) The efficacy of the Spirit in regeneration (3:4-6).**

- a) "How can a man be born when he is old?"—Nicodemus interprets regeneration as a "do-over," a second chance to get it right.
- b) "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit"—Jonathan Edwards "divine and supernatural"
- c) "that which is born of the flesh is flesh"—human wisdom and power-to-will cannot overcome the corruption of humanity
- d) "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit"—The Spirit of God effectually births a spiritual nature in regeneration—the life of the Spirit in union with Jesus Christ.
- e) "Water"—gospel means (cf. Ezek. 36:25)
- f) **Application:**
  - i) The Spirit is omnipotent, therefore He can regenerate anyone.
  - ii) This is a greater display of divine power than the original creation because the original creation was out of nothing, the new creation is out of a corrupted being.
  - iii) All praise to God (1 Cor. 4:7).

**3) The sovereignty of the Spirit in regeneration (3:7-8).**

- a) “Do not marvel”—not a new teaching; revealed in the OT (cf. 3:10).
- b) “You”—Plural—that is, Nicodemus and those he represents
- c) “The wind/Spirit blows where it wishes”—man doesn’t control the Spirit (cf. John 1:13)
- d) “you hear its sound”—Like a strong wind, the Spirit’s work of regeneration has noticeable effects (Ezek. 37:1-14).
  - i) Living Hope (1 Pet. 1:3)
  - ii) Covenantal Love (1 Pet. 1:22-23)
  - iii) Saving Faith (John 3:15-18)
- e) **Application:**
  - i) Avoid manipulative evangelism.
  - ii) Avoid tampering with the gospel to make it more “acceptable” to people.
  - iii) Are you bearing the fruit of regeneration?

**Doxology:** “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every Spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.”—Ephesians 1:3