

REGENERATION AND SANCTIFICATION DEFINED

The doctrine of regeneration. Many Christians in the contemporary church treat conversion to Christ and regeneration as one and the same experience. They are used as interchangeable terms, but although the two events are closely related, there is a clear distinction between them: One can be converted and not regenerated, but no one can be regenerated without being converted. Regeneration is not the initial act of renewal when one is first converted to Christ, but extends to the resultant process throughout the entirety of the Christian walk. It is a continuing work of the Holy Spirit renewing and transforming the lives of Christians as they surrender themselves to the Lordship of Christ and the authority of His word after their conversion (CP Tit 3:3-8).

Regeneration involves the complete transformation of a Christian's moral nature – a complete change of heart which expresses the change from the person they were to the person they become in Christ (CP 2Cor 5:17; Ga 6:15; Col 3:1-10). The literal meaning of regeneration is being *born again* (CP Jn 3:3-8). Being born again expresses the change wrought in the lives of Christians by the Holy Spirit after their conversion to Christ. They undergo a Spiritual rebirth – dying to sin and living righteous lives in Christ (CP Ro 6:17-23; 2Pe 1:1-4). The power to do this comes from God (CP Jn 1:12-13; Jas 1:18 with Jn 3:16; Ro 3:20-30; 2Cor 5:14-21; Eph 2:1-10; He 7:25; 1Pe 1:13, 23). *Renewing of the Holy Spirit* in Tit 3:5 refers to the constant impartation of Divine life by the Holy Spirit into the lives of regenerated Christians, transforming their nature from one that emulated the corruption of the world to one that reflects the character of God (CP Tit 3:5 also 2Pe 1:3-4 with 2Cor 3:18).

But Christians cannot be just passive bystanders in their Spiritual rebirth. They are to seek, find and follow God as prescribed in scripture (CP Ro 12:1-2). *This is your reasonable service* in V 1 (KJV), means that in light of God's mercies, it logically follows – *reasonable* is derived from the Greek word for logic, **logikos** – that Christians owe God their highest form of service. They are no longer to be conformed to a world system without God, but transformed by a renewed mind committed to the ideals of the Kingdom of God. Their thoughts, affections, purposes, and desires must be centred on Heavenly and eternal things, not the things of this evil, temporal, and transient age (CP Mt 6:19-21, 24; Ro 13:12-14; Col 3:1-10; Jas 1:27; 4:7-12; 1Jn 2:15-17). Sadly, a great many professing Christians do not properly understand that being truly born again or regenerated requires more than merely confessing Christ as saviour. Unless they are totally consecrated to the service of God and completely yielded to the authority of His Word, they will forfeit their place in his Eternal Kingdom (CP Ps 119:9; Mt 7:21-27; Ro 2:13; Jas 1:19-27). Being converted to Christ and confessing Him as Saviour is merely the first step in sinners being born again and spiritually regenerated (CP Eph 4:17-32).

This makes the result of regeneration apparent. Paul is admonishing Christians here to give up their old way of life – *the old man* – and demonstrate their new life in Christ – *the new man* (CP Col 3:1-3). This highlights the process of regeneration: upon their

conversion to Christ Christians spiritually entered into His death and resurrection. His was a physical resurrection out from among the physically dead. Theirs was a spiritual resurrection out from among the spiritually dead and from a state of spiritual death, into that of spiritual life (CP Eph 2:1-7). *Quickened* in V 1 and 5 here (KJV), means to cause to live, to make alive. It is used in the sense of being raised from death to life with Christ. In their unsaved state Christians were spiritually dead in their trespasses and sins, but upon being converted, they were made alive by the Holy Spirit to a renewed life in Christ. They died to their former sin nature and now have the nature of Christ “...for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (CP also Eph 5:14 with Ro 6:2-4, 6-7, 11-13).

Conversion to Christ does not mean the eradication of the sin nature – it can still assert itself over the new nature of God in Christians if they allow it. But it cannot assert itself in regenerated Christians under Grace walking in the Spirit (CP Ro 6:5, 14-18; 8:1-3; 2Cor 10:3-5; Ga 5:16-18, 24-25; Eph 6:11-18; Jas 4:5-10; 1Jn 5:4, 18). Regenerated Christians under Grace walking in the Spirit can, and still do sin spontaneously, but they are no longer habitual sinners (CP 1Jn 1:6-10 with Ro 6:1-2; 1Jn 3:3-9).

To sum up here, among many other things, regeneration involves a transition from an old life of sin to a new life of loving obedience to Christ (CP 2Cor 5:17; Ga 6:15; Eph 4:21-24; Col 3:10); those who have been truly born again are set free from sin's bondage (CP Jn 8:36 with Ro 6:14-23); they do not habitually sin (CP 1Jn 3:3-9). They live righteous lives (CP 1Jn 2:29), love other Christians (CP Jn 13:34-35 with 1Jn 3:10; 4:7), and do not love the world (CP 1Jn 2:15-17). If Christians have made Christ their way of life it will very plainly show (CP Ga 6:15). Those who continue in sin and giving themselves to the corrupt world's lifestyle, no matter what they confess with their lips, demonstrate that they are still unregenerate and therefore will forfeit their place in God's Eternal Kingdom (CP Jn 3:3-5).

The doctrine of sanctification. *Sanctification* means consecration – a separation of someone or something unto God; **from** a profane, secular and carnal use **to** a sacred, religious and Spiritual use. It refers to persons, places, days and seasons, objects used for worship, and other things in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament in the main, it is vitally linked to the salvation experience and stresses the personal dimension of Holiness. Like regeneration, sanctification is not momentary or instantaneous, but a lifelong process which must be lived out daily through Christians' total consecration to the service of God and complete yieldedness to the authority of His word. It begins when repentant sinners are converted to Christ and become Christians. They are born again by the Holy Spirit who makes real in their salvation experience that for which Christ died for them – it is based on His sacrificial death. They are *sanctified* and thereafter referred to as *saints* (CP Ac 20:32; 1Cor 1:2, 30; 6:11; Php 1:1; Col 1:2, 12-14; He 10:14; 1Pe 1:2).

This study will concentrate on the moral / spiritual obligations assumed in the salvation experience – the

progressive conformation of born again Christians into the image of Christ; the process by which their life is made morally Holy. Some of the scriptures that will be used here are also used in the doctrine of regeneration because both processes are interwoven with repentant sinners' conversion to Christ and becoming born again (CP Ro 12:1; Eph 4:1; Col 3:1-4; 1Th 5:10). Ro 12:1 is arguably the most outstanding passage of scripture in the New Testament exhorting Christians to set themselves apart wholly unto God and to be totally consecrated to His service. The word *therefore* reaches back to the previous chapters in which the mercies of God were explained – the justification of sinners, and future glorification of Christians. Paul uses these mercies as the basis for exhorting Christians to henceforth live Holy and righteous lives unto God. “*To present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God*”, means that Christians' physical bodies, put at the disposal of God, are to be Holy, both in the sense of being set apart for God's use, and of being free from sinful practices (CP Ro 6:8-13, 19, 22; 2Cor 5:14-16; 6:16-17:1; Ga 2:20; 5:16; Eph 4:20-24; Php 3:13-14; 1Pe 1:13-16; 2:9-12).

Sanctification is accomplished through God's word (CP Jn 17:17), but Christians are held individually responsible for obeying it (CP Php 2:12). The words *work out* mean “to carry out to its ultimate conclusion”. *Your own salvation* refers to the salvation of individual Christians. *With fear and trembling* refers to the attitude with which Christians are to pursue their sanctification. It involves a healthy fear of offending God and a dread of sinning against Him, and of the consequences that may follow (CP 1Pe 1:17 with 2Pe 1:1-11). As truly sanctified Christians are merely sojourners or pilgrims in this present world as strangers in a foreign land, without rights as citizens because their citizenship is in

Heaven, they must discipline themselves not to succumb to self-serving passions and desires that could damn their souls for eternity (CP 2Pe 1:12 with Ro 8:13; 13:14; Ga 5:24; Tit 2:11-12; 1Pe 4:1-4).

Let us look at one more scripture before bringing this study to a close (CP 1Cor 7:14). *Sanctified* here does not refer to salvation. It is used in a metaphorical sense of an unbeliever through marriage being brought under the sanctifying influence of the believing spouse. The unbeliever benefits from the Spiritual influence and Divine favour of the believing partner, and while ever there is contact between them there is hope that the unbelieving partner will turn to faith in Jesus Christ, although there is no assurance that this will happen (CP V 15-16). Children of the marriage are also included in the Spiritual influence and Divine favour in the life of the believing parent.

(Ro 6-8 and Ga 5 is the most extended teaching in scripture on the outworking of regeneration and sanctification, and readers are encouraged to study those scriptures indepth to better understand these doctrines. See also author's study *Romans 6 – A Study on God's Empowering of Believers through Jesus Christ to overcome Sin* in his book, **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**; *The Work of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament Church, The Doctrine of Grace, and Christians – Beware of Failing God's Grace and Forfeiting your Salvation*, in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**; *What Being Born Again Means*, and *Lordship of Jesus* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**, and his comments on *Jn 3:3, Eph 4:25* and *Tit 3:5* etc, in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**).