

Doctrine #69: Regeneration

This is Part 5: Redemption | Doctrine 23: Regeneration

From the 99 Essentials Booklet

Regeneration takes place at the beginning of the Christian life and is the miraculous transformation, or the new birth, that takes place within an individual through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-8; Titus 3:5). It is the divine side of conversion (a person turning to Christ in repentance and faith), being the work of God within a person's life that causes him or her to be born again, a work that human effort is unable to produce.

From the Bible

John 3:3–8 (NKJV)

3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Titus 3:5 (NKJV)

5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

1 Peter 1:23 (NKJV)

23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,

Ephesians 4:24 (NKJV)

24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

Colossians 3:9–10 (NKJV)

9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,
10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV)

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Romans 7:7–12 (NKJV)

7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."

8 But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead.

9 I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

10 And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death.

11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.

12 Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

Key Thoughts

Regeneration and *Born Again*, look very different in English. However, in Greek they are the same root word: one has the prefix *re-* added to it and the other has the word *again* added after it. Together, they look at the same event--our salvation--from two different perspectives:

1. Born Again views our salvation as the beginning of something that has never been before.
2. Regeneration views our salvation as a fundamental change to something that is ongoing.

Both are accurate. The being that comes into existence at our salvation has never been before, it is a new creation. Yet, we existed before our salvation and were fundamentally changed from something old to something new.

Additional Thought

In addition to the key thoughts, this doctrine and the verses used open a back-door conversation about the salvation of children. When do children become accountable for their own sins? When can children get saved? And, do children actually go to Hell when they die? These are emotionally charged questions with sometimes unnecessarily complex answers.

In Romans 5, Paul describes a time when he lived in innocence, without the knowledge of sin. This is a time that we would say a person is "safe". Not "saved" but the net effect if they were to die is the same: they go to Heaven.

Paul continues to describe a time when he became aware of sin. This was the point at which he could knowingly choose between right and wrong. He chose wrong and his spirit died. This is the point at which Paul was accountable for his own sin. It is the point at which any child is accountable for their own sin.

This "age of accountability" is different for every child. Interestingly, children who grow up in church typically reach it sooner because they are being taught about sin from a very young age. This is also the age at which a child can be saved.

Children can genuinely be saved. If that were not so, Jesus would not have said, "Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." Luke 18:17 (NKJV). Attempts to study the conversion age of people bear this out as well: typically, more than half of the people who ever get saved, get saved as children (some studies place that number as high as 70+%!)

Sadly, if children can genuinely be saved, that means they can also genuinely die in their sins. This is not popular or comfortable, but that does not make it untrue.