

Lesson for August 9,2009

Our Spiritual Assets

Regeneration and Eternal Life

Regeneration (John 3:1-16)

Regeneration, a theological term for being “born again,” is the term for when God creates a human spirit in the believer at salvation. “Born again” is a poor translation of the Greek and leads one to think that the human spirit already exists and is simply being regenerated. The Greek words for *born again* help us to fully understand the meaning: *born* is “gennao” in Greek, which means “to bear or to bring forth a child;” *again* is “another” in Greek, which means “anew or from above.” The word regenerate in English can mean to be restored, to reform, to bring into existence again, *but* it can also mean to be made anew. However, the Greek word for *regeneration* is “palingenesia” and means a new birth. Regeneration is a new birth, a spiritual birth from above (from God). It is the “new creation” of II Corinthians 5:17, which is better translated “a new spiritual species.” It is a brand new nature, something that did not exist prior to faith in Christ. (John 3:1-8; I Thessalonians 5:23; Titus 3:5; Ephesians 2:1,5)

A New Nature (II Corinthians 5:14-21)

It is the human spirit that provides the believer with the ability to have a relationship with God, to learn, to understand and to apply Bible doctrine and to produce divine good (service to God). (Romans 1:9; 8:16; Job 32:8) An unbeliever does not possess a human spirit and is, therefore, *unable* to have a relationship with God, to understand spiritual things or to produce divine good. (I Corinthians 2:14) It is the human spirit that the Holy Spirit teaches and this becomes the positive influence in your soul. Divine Viewpoint Thinking is the result of this influence and overrules Human Viewpoint Thinking when properly applied. The soul of man has the potential to be corrupted since it contains free will. The human spirit, on the other hand, does not contain free will and, therefore, has no potential for corruption. The creation of the human spirit also sets up a battle in the soul. This battle, between the sin nature and the new spiritual nature, is for the control of the soul. (Galatians 5:16-17; I John 3:9)

The Work of Christ
(I Peter 2:24)

It is the work of Christ that secures forever our relationship with God and provides the potential for regeneration for every human being. It is still a matter of personal volition (free will) whether a person chooses to believe in Christ or whether a person rejects Christ. God does not force anyone to believe in Christ.

On the Cross Jesus died twice. First, He died spiritually as the full and complete payment for the sin of all mankind. Because the penalty for sin is spiritual death or separation from God, someone had to pay this penalty. Only a perfect, sinless person could have accomplished this for another, having no sin of His own to pay for. This person had to have the ability to pay, the willingness to pay and had to be related to the person for whom he is paying the penalty. This had to be done in order to meet the requirements of the "Kinsman Redeemer" under Jewish law. Remember that Christ fulfilled the Law perfectly (even in His death). (Romans 6:23; Leviticus 25:27, 48; Jeremiah 50:34; Matthew 5:17)

Christ's second death on the Cross was physical. He rose again to conquer death and the grave. Since we are in union with Christ, we too will conquer physical death and the grave. When Christ was resurrected, He became the "firstfruits" of all believers. This means that He was the first to receive a resurrection body and we will also receive a resurrection body because of our relationship with Him. (I Corinthians 15:12-20, 51-57)

A new birth is possible only as the result of what Christ accomplished on the Cross. God the Father designed the plan of salvation, Jesus Christ carried out that plan and God the Holy Spirit reveals that plan. Jesus Christ was a willing sacrifice and joyfully went to the Cross because He knew what He was going to accomplish for you and me. Never did His resolve to execute the Father's plan waiver for even a millisecond. (James 1:18; I Peter 2:24; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 12:1-2)

Regeneration is much more than simply being "born again." Regeneration sets up numerous potentials for the believer. But as with everything in the Christian Way of Life, they are only potentials. You must make the decision to act upon those potentials!

Eternal Life

The soul of every human being will live forever. The question is *where* will it live? The answer, of course, is found in God's Word.

The Bible declares that the soul that sins will surely die and that we all die in Adam. (Ezekiel 18:20; I Corinthians 15:22) So there is a seeming contradiction - since the soul of man lives forever - unless you understand that there is more than one kind of death in the Bible. There are actually seven different kinds of deaths. It is, therefore, important that we identify to which death these passages are referring. The seven deaths are physical death, spiritual death, temporal death, second death, positional death, operational death and sexual death.

1. Physical death – soul and/or spirit leaving the body. Philippians 1:21; II Corinthians 5:8; Luke 17:22; James 2:26
2. Spiritual death – separation from God without the ability within yourself to do anything about it. Ephesians 2:1; Romans 5:12, 6:23
3. Temporal death – the believer temporarily out of fellowship with God. Romans 8:6,13; Ephesians 5:14; I Timothy 5:6; James 1:15; Revelation 3:1; I John 3:14; Luke 15:24,32
4. Second death – perpetuation of spiritual death into eternity for the unbeliever. Revelation 20:12-15
5. Positional death – the believer being “dead with Christ” in identification with His deaths (spiritual and physical) due to our union with Him. Romans 6:1-14; Colossians 2:12, 3:3
6. Operational death – lack of divine production in the believer's life. James 2:26
7. Sexual death – the inability to procreate. Romans 4:17-21; Hebrews 11:12

If “the soul that sins will surely die” and “we all die in Adam” refers to physical death, we would all be dead. So this is not referring to physical death. This death is not the second death since that occurs in eternity, it's not sexual death and it's not positional death since we are not identifying with Christ. So it must be either spiritual death, temporal death or operational death. Which one? Since these passages refer to *all* mankind, it cannot be operational or temporal death (those refer only to believers). It is, therefore, spiritual death (separation from God). And as stated, spiritual death is parlayed into the second death in eternity for those who fail to take the salvation solution of faith in Christ. So the seeming contradiction is solved and we see that those who reject Jesus Christ as Savior will exist forever *separated from God*. Those who choose God's salvation solution of faith in Christ will live forever *with God*.

The Life of God

Eternal life is God's life (one of His attributes) imputed to the human spirit (its home) at the moment of salvation. This imputation of eternal life occurs simultaneously with the imputation of the human spirit. Though we possess eternal life the very moment we trust Christ as Savior, we do not use it until we enter the eternal state. Eternal life has more to do with eternity than life on earth and it is the life of God that creates the capacity to receive and appreciate eternal rewards. Since it is God that imputes eternal life to the believer, it is a matter of grace. Therefore, eternal life is not deserved nor can it be earned. This means that anyone who has believed in Christ for salvation (regardless of their current spiritual status) possesses eternal life. It also means that the believer is secure in Christ *forever*. (John 5:25-26; 11:25-26; 14:6; I John 5:11-13)

Another result of the imputation of eternal life to the believer is the guarantee of a resurrection body. Theologically we call this Ultimate Sanctification and it will occur at the Rapture of the Church. This resurrection body is said to be like that of Christ's resurrection body. This means the believer will no longer possess a sin nature, and therefore he is no longer able to produce human good. In our resurrection bodies we will be able to produce *only* divine good. The imputation of eternal life assures the believer of an eternal relationship with God. (Philippians 3:21; I Thessalonians 4:13-17; I Corinthians 15:51-57; I John 3:2)

Eternal life means living in a state of eternal peace and happiness for every believer regardless of his eternal rewards. Some believers will reign over cities and some will not, but we all will live in magnificent mansions. Though our motivation for the execution of the Christian Way of Life is always our personal love for God, knowing that there are degrees of reward should also motivate our advance to spiritual maturity. In God's system of reward and blessing, the believer must never forget that proper motivation and proper protocol are the keys to successfully appropriating them. A right thing must always be done in a right way in order to be right.