

Regeneration

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What is regeneration according to the Bible?

Answer: Another word for *regeneration* is *rebirth*, related to the biblical phrase “born again.” Our rebirth is distinguished from our first birth, when we were conceived physically and inherited our [sin nature](#). The new birth is a spiritual, holy, and heavenly birth that results in our being made alive spiritually. Man in his natural state is “dead in trespasses and sins” until he is “made alive” (regenerated) by Christ. This happens when he places his faith in Christ (Ephesians 2:1).

Regeneration is a radical change. Just as our physical birth resulted in a new individual entering the earthly realm, our spiritual birth results in a new person entering the heavenly realm (Ephesians 2:6). After regeneration, we begin to see and hear and seek after divine things; we begin to live a life of faith and holiness. Now Christ is formed in the hearts; now we are partakers of the divine nature, having been made new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17). God, not man, is the source of this transformation (Ephesians 2:1, 8). God’s great love and free gift, His rich grace and abundant mercy, are the cause of the rebirth. The mighty power of God—the power that raised Christ from the dead—is displayed in the regeneration and conversion of sinners (Ephesians 1:19–20).

Regeneration is necessary. Sinful human flesh cannot stand in God’s presence. In His conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus said twice that a man must be [born again](#) in order to see the kingdom of God (John 3:3, 7). Regeneration is not optional, for “flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit” (John 3:6). Physical birth fits us for earth; spiritual rebirth fits us for heaven. See Ephesians 2:1; 1 Peter 1:23; John 1:13; 1 John 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18. Regeneration is part of what God does for us at the moment of salvation, along with sealing (Ephesians 1:14), adoption (Galatians 4:5), reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18–20), etc. Regeneration is God’s making a person spiritually alive, as a result of faith in Jesus Christ. Prior to salvation we were not God’s children (John 1:12–13); rather, we were children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3; Romans 5:18–20). Before salvation, we were degenerate; after salvation we are regenerated. The result of regeneration is peace with God (Romans 5:1), new life (Titus 3:5; 2 Corinthians 5:17), and eternal sonship (John 1:12–13; Galatians 3:26). Regeneration begins the process of sanctification wherein we become the people God intends us to be (Romans 8:28–30).

The only means of **regeneration** is by faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross. No amount of good works or keeping of the Law can regenerate the heart. “By works of the law no human being will be justified in [God’s] sight” (Romans 3:20). Only Christ offers a cure for the [total depravity](#) of the human heart. We don’t need renovation or reformation or reorganization; we need rebirth.

Multiple Resources on Regeneration

- [See comments on the New Birth](#) in John 3:3
- Regeneration - collection of articles
- [Regeneration - part 1 by J C Ryle, part 2, part 3;](#)
- [Regeneration by William Plummer;](#)

- [New Birth by Carl B. Hoch, Jr](#)
- [What is baptismal regeneration?](#)
- American Tract Society [Regeneration](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Regeneration](#)
- Baker Evangelical Dictionary [Regeneration](#)
- Charles Buck Dictionary [Regeneration](#)
- CARM Theological Dictionary [Regeneration](#) [Baptismal regeneration](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Regeneration](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Regeneration](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Regeneration](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Regeneration](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Regeneration \(2\)](#) [Regeneration](#)
- Hawker's Poor Man's Dictionary [Regeneration](#)
- Vines' Expository Dictionary [Regeneration](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [Regeneration](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Baptismal Regeneration](#) [Regeneration](#)

Are You Born Again?

J. C. Ryle

Are you born again? This is one of life's most important questions. Jesus Christ said, "Except a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

It is not enough to reply, "I belong to the church; I suppose I'm a Christian." Thousands of nominal Christians show none of the signs of being born again which the Scriptures have given us—many listed in the First Epistle of John.

1. No Habitual Sinning

"No one who is born of God will continue to sin" (1 John 3:9). "We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin" (1 Jn 5:18).

A person who has been born again, or regenerated, does not habitually commit sin. He no longer sins with his heart and will and whole inclination. There was probably a time when he did not think about whether his actions were sinful or not, and he did not always feel grieved after doing evil. There was no quarrel between him and sin; they were friends. But the true Christian--hates sin, flees from it, fights against it, considers it his greatest plague, resents the burden of its presence, mourns when he falls under its influence, and longs to be completely delivered from it. Sin no longer pleases him, nor is it even a matter of indifference to him; it has become a horrible thing which he hates. However, he cannot eliminate its presence within him.

If he said that he had no sin, he would be lying (1 John 1:8). But he can say that he hates sin--and that the great desire of his soul is not to commit sin at all. He cannot prevent bad thoughts from entering his mind, or shortcomings, omissions, and defects from appealing in both his words and his actions. He knows that "we all stumble in many ways" (James 3:2). But he can truly say, in the sight of God, that these things cause him grief and sorrow, and that his whole nature does not consent to them. What would the apostle say about you? Are you born again?

2. Believing in Christ

"Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God" (1 John 5:1).

A man who is born again, or regenerated, believes that Jesus Christ is the only Savior who can pardon his soul--that He is the divine person appointed by God the Father for this very purpose--and besides Him, there is no Savior at all. In himself, he sees nothing but unworthiness. But he has full confidence in Christ, and trusting in Him, he believes that his sins are all forgiven. He believes that, because he has accepted Christ's finished work and death on the cross, he is considered righteous in God's sight, and he may look forward to death and judgment without alarm.

He may have fears and doubts. He may sometimes tell you that he feels as if he had no faith at all. But ask him if he is willing to trust in anything instead of Christ--and see what he will say. Ask him if he will rest his hope of eternal life on his own goodness--his own works, his prayers, his minister, or his church--and listen to his reply. What would the apostle say about you? Are you born again?

3. Practicing Righteousness

"Everyone that does righteousness is born of Him" (1 John 2:29).

The man who is born again, or regenerated, is a holy man. He endeavors to live according to God's will--to do the things that please God--and to avoid the things that God hates. He wishes to continually look to Christ as his example, as well as his Savior--and to prove himself to be Christ's friend, by doing whatever He commands. He knows he is not perfect. He is painfully aware of his indwelling corruption. He finds an evil principle within himself, which is constantly warring against grace and trying to draw him away from God. But he does not consent to it, though he cannot prevent its presence.

Though he may sometimes feel so low that he questions whether or not he is a Christian at all, he will be able to say with John Newton, "I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I want to be, I am not what I hope to be in the eternal world. But still--I am not what I once used to be! By the grace of God I am what I am." What would the apostle say about you? Are you born again?

4. Loving Other Christians

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14).

A man who is born again has a special love for all true disciples of Christ. Like his Father in heaven, he loves all men with a great general love; but he has a special love for those who share his faith in Christ. Like his Lord and Savior, he loves the worst of sinners and could weep over them; but he has a peculiar love for those who are believers. He is never so much at home, as when he is in their company.

He feels they are all members of the same family. They are his fellow soldiers, fighting against the same enemy. They are his fellow travelers, journeying along the same road. He understands them, and they understand him. They may be very different from himself in many ways—in rank, in station and in wealth. But that does not matter. They are his Father's sons and daughters--and he cannot help loving them. What would the apostle say about you? Are you born again?

5. Overcoming the World

"Everyone born of God overcomes the world" (1 John 5:4).

A man who is born again, does not use the world's opinion as his standard of right and wrong. He does not mind going against the world's ways, ideas and customs. What men think or say no longer concerns him. He overcomes the love of the world. He finds no pleasure in things which seem to bring happiness to most people. To him they seem foolish and unworthy of an immortal being.

He loves God's praise more than man's praise. He fears offending God more than offending man. It is unimportant to him whether he is blamed or praised; his first aim is to please God. What would the apostle say about you? Are you born again?

6. Keeping Oneself Pure

"He who is begotten of God keeps himself" (1 John 5:18).

A man who is born again is careful of his own soul. He tries not only to avoid sin--but also to avoid everything which may lead to it. He is careful about the company he keeps. He knows that "bad company corrupts good morals" and that evil is more contagious than good, just as disease is more infectious than health. He is careful about the use of his time; his chief desire is to spend it profitable.

He desires to live like a soldier in an enemy country—to wear his armor continually and to be prepared for temptation. He is diligent to be a watchful, humble, prayerful man. What would the apostle say about you? Are you born again?

These are the six great marks of a born again Christian.

There is a vast difference in the depth and distinctness of these marks in different people. In some they are faint and hardly noticeable. In others they are bold, plain and unmistakable, so anyone may read them. Some of these marks are more visible than others in each individual. Seldom are all equally evident in any one person.

But still, after every allowance, here we find boldly painted--six marks of being born of God.

How should we react to these things? We can logically come to only one conclusion—only those who are born again have these six characteristics, and those who do not have these marks are not born again. This seems to be the conclusion to which the apostle intended us to come. Do you have these characteristics? Are you born again?

Regeneration (I-III)

J. C. Ryle

"Truly, truly, I say to you—Unless a man is **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3

If the Bible is false, as some proud men have dared to say—then we are no better than the beasts which perish, and the best thing a man can do is to eat and drink and live as he pleases. If the Bible is only half true, as some unhappy people strive to make out, there is no certainty about our everlasting souls; Christianity is all doubt and dimness and guesswork, we can never know what we are to believe as necessary to salvation, we can never be sure that we have got hold of the words of eternal life. Give up your Bible, and you have not a square inch of certainty and confidence to stand on: you may think, and you may imagine, and you may have your own opinion—but you cannot show me any satisfactory proof or authority that you are right; you are building merely on your own judgment; you have put out your own eyes, as it were, and, like one in the dark, you do not really know where you are going.

But if, beloved, the Bible be indeed the Word of God Himself and altogether true, and that it is so, can be proved by witnesses without number; if the Bible be indeed true and our only guide to heaven, and this I trust you are all ready to allow; it surely must be the duty of every wise and thinking man to lay to heart each doctrine which it contains, and while he adds nothing to it, to be careful that he takes nothing from it.

Now, I say that on the face of the Bible, when fairly read, there stands out this grand doctrine, that each one of us must, between the cradle and grave—go through a spiritual change, a change of heart—or in other words be born again. And in the text you have heard, the Lord Jesus declares positively, without regeneration no man shall see the kingdom of God.

Sinner, man or woman, mark that! no salvation without this new birth! Christ has done everything for you; He paid the price of our redemption, lived for us, died for us, rose again for us—but all shall avail us nothing, if there be not this work in us: *we must be born again!*

Now, beloved, I desire to speak to you freely and plainly about this new birth—as a thing absolutely necessary to salvation. I shall try to show you from my text two things: *first*, the reason why we must all be born again, and *secondly*, what the expression to be born again means; and the Lord grant that the subject to which I am going to call your attention, may not be listened to and soon forgotten, as a light and indifferent matter—but carried home and thought over, and blessed to the conversion of many souls!

I. Why, then, is this new birth so necessary?

The answer is short and simple. Because of the natural sinfulness of every man's disposition. We are not born into the world with spotless, innocent minds—but corrupt and wicked, and with a will to do that which is evil as soon as we have the power. The Scriptural account is true to the letter—we are all conceived in sin and shaped in iniquity. I need not stop now to tell you how all this came to pass; I need only remind you that in the beginning it was not so. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, were created holy, harmless, undefiled, without spot or stain or blemish about them; and when God rested from His labor on the seventh day, He pronounced them, like all His other works, to be very good. But, alas for us! Adam, by transgression, fell into sin, and lost his first estate. He forfeited the likeness of God in which he had been made. And hence all we, who are his children, come into being with a defiled and sinful nature. We are fallen, and we must needs be raised; we have about us the marks of the old Adam—Adam the first, earthly and carnal—and we must needs be marked with the marks of the Second Adam, the Lord Jesus, which are heavenly and spiritual. Do any of you feel a doubt of this? Consider only what we are by nature.

By nature we do not see Christ's spiritual kingdom upon earth; it is all hidden from our eyes. Men may be sharp and knowing in worldly matters, they may be wise in the things of time—but when they come to spiritual religion, their understandings seem blind, there is a thick veil over their hearts, and they see nothing as they ought to see.

So long as they are in this natural state it is in vain they are told of God's holiness and God's unchangeable justice, His spiritual law and His judgment to come, their own enormous deficiencies, their own peril of destruction—it matters not; it all falls flat and dull upon their ears; they neither feel it nor care for it nor consider it, and in a few hours they are as though they had never heard it. It is to no purpose, while in this condition, that Christ crucified and His precious atonement are set before us; we can see no form nor beauty nor loveliness about Him; we cannot value what He has done, and, as far as we are concerned, the wisdom and the excellence of the Cross, which Apostles gloried in, seems all thrown away.

And why is this? Our hearts need changing! "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." This is the true account of all that weariness and lifelessness and carelessness which we so often see in the worshipers of God's house; this is the secret of that awful indifference about spiritual things which prevails so widely both among rich and poor, and makes the Gospel appear a sealed book. It comes from the heart.

Some always imagine they need learning, some they have no time, some they have very peculiar difficulties which no one else in the world has—but the truth lies far deeper. They all need new hearts! Once give them new natures, and you would hear no more about learning—or time—or difficulty. Every mountain would be levelled and every valley filled up, that the way of God might be prepared.

But again. By nature we do not love the laws of Christ's spiritual kingdom. We do not openly refuse to obey them, we would be angry with anyone who said we had thrown them aside—but we have no love to them and delight in them; it is not our food and drink to do our Father's will. Oh no! by nature we love our own way and our own inclinations—and that is our only law. We bring forth fruit unto ourselves—but not unto God. Our own pleasure and our own profit take up all our attention, and as for Him who made us and redeemed us, too many do not give Him the very scraps of their time. By nature we do not measure ourselves by God's standard: who ever takes the Sermon on the Mount as his rule of character? who ever admires the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, the hungerers and thirsters after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, the men who are persecuted for righteousness' sake? These are all people whom the world despises, they are as nothing by the side of the jovial and light-hearted, the men who love strong drink and are held to sing good songs; and yet these are the people whom Jesus calls blessed.

What natural man judges of sin as Jesus teaches us to judge? How few look on drunkenness and fornication as damnable sins—yet the Bible says they are! How few consider anger without cause, as bad as murder, and lustful looks as bad as adultery—yet Jesus says they are! Where are the men who strive to love their enemies, who bless those who hate them, and pray for those who spitefully use them?—yet this is the rule that Jesus has laid down. And why is all this? You see there must be something radically wrong. By nature we do not lay ourselves out to glorify God with our bodies and spirits—we take no pleasure in speaking to each other about Him. The concerns of this world have a hundred times more of our thoughts; and few indeed are the gatherings where the mention of Christ and heaven would not stop many mouths, and make nearly all look as if the subject was very uncomfortable.

And why is all this? Some talk of bad example having done them harm, and some say they have had a bad education—but the evil is far more deeply seated; that which is born of the flesh is flesh, it comes from the carnal unrenewed mind, and the remedy needed is change of nature. A corrupt tree can only bring forth corrupt fruit; the root of the mischief is the sinfulness of the natural heart.

Once more. By nature we are altogether unfit for Christ's kingdom in glory. The **lives** which we are in the habit of leading, and the **practices** we are fond of indulging, and the **tastes** we are always seeking to please, and the **opinions** we hold, are all such as prove we have no natural fitness for the inheritance of the saints in light. They do not follow after holiness in all their walk and conversation. Then what place can they occupy in that blessed abode where there shall enter in nothing that defiles, nor whatever works abomination? How shall they stand in His presence, who charges even His angels with folly, and in whose sight the very heavens are not pure! They do not take pleasure in the exercise of prayer and praise on earth; and how could they enjoy the employments of that glorious habitation, where they rest not day nor night worshiping and crying "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come!"

They do not count it a privilege to draw near to God through Jesus Christ, to walk with Him, to seek close acquaintance with Him; and where would be the comfort to them of dwelling forever in the presence of the Lord God and the Lamb? They do not strive to walk in the steps of holy men of old, they do not take example from the faith and patience of the saints; and with what face then would they join the society of just men made perfect? With what salutation, after a life spent in pleasing the devil and the world, would they greet Abraham and David and the Apostles and all that blessed company who have fought the good fight?

Alas! beloved, an unregenerate man in heaven would be a miserable creature, there would be something in the air he could not breathe, the joys, the affections, the employments would be all wearisome to him, he would find himself as unfitted for the company of the saints, as a beast is unfitted on earth for the company of man. He would be carnally minded, they would be spiritually minded, there would be nothing in common. I know there are vain dreamers who imagine death will work an alteration, that they may die sinners and rise again saints—but it is all a delusion, there is no work nor device nor knowledge in the grave; if we die spiritual we shall rise spiritual, if we die carnal we shall rise carnal, and if we are to be made fit for heaven our natural hearts must be changed now on earth.

In short, beloved, the plain truth is, that by nature men are all dead in trespasses and sins, strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God in the world, prisoners in the hand of Satan, in a state of miserable condemnation, spiritually dark, blind, and dead; and, worst of all, they neither know nor feel it. The cold corpse in the grave does not feel the worms that crawl over it; the sleeping wretch who has drunk poison, does not know that he shall wake no more; and so also the unhappy man who is still unconverted cannot understand that he is in need of anything. But still, every natural man in the sight of God is dead while he lives; his body, soul, and mind are all turned aside from their proper use, which is to glorify God, and so he is looked upon as dead. And this either is the state of every single soul among us at this minute—or else it used to be. There is no middle state; we cannot be half-way, neither dead nor alive; we were dead and have been brought to life—or we are now dead, and the work is yet to be done.

Nor yet is this doctrine for publicans and harlots only: it is for all without exception; it touches high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, old and young, gentle and simple; all are by nature sinful and corrupt, and because they are so, Jesus tells us solemnly not one shall enter into the heavenly rest without being born again.

Beloved, this sounds strong; it seems a hard saying, perhaps. That is not my concern. I am set to preach Christ's Gospel and not my own. Search the Scriptures, and you will see it is true.

II. The second thing for your consideration is the exact meaning and force of that peculiar expression "to be born again."

It is a change by which we once more recover something of the divine nature, and are renewed after the image of God. It is a complete transforming and altering of all the inner man; and nothing can more fully show its completeness and importance than the strong figure under which Jesus describes it: He calls it a NEW BIRTH. We have all been born once as men—but we must see to it we are born again as true Christians. We have been born once of the seed of Adam—woe to us if we are not born the second time of the seed of God! We have been born of the flesh—we must also be born of the Spirit. We are born earthly—we must also be born heavenly. We are born corruptible—we must also be born incorruptible. Our natural birth is as necessary to the life of the body—as our spiritual birth is necessary to the life of the soul.

To be born again is, as it were, to enter upon a new existence, to have a new mind and a new heart, new views, new principles, new tastes, new affections, new likings and new dislikings, new fears, new joys, new sorrows, new love to things once hated, new hatred to things once loved, new thoughts of God and ourselves and the world and the life to come, and the means whereby that life is attained. And it is indeed a true saying that he who has gone through it is a new man, a new creature, for old things are passed away—behold, he can say, all things are become new! It is not so much that our natural powers and faculties are taken away and destroyed; I would rather say that they receive an utterly new bias and direction. It is not that the old metal is cast aside—but it is melted down and refined and remolded, and has a new stamp impressed upon it, and thus, so to speak, becomes a new coin.

This is no external change, like that of Herod, who did many things and then stopped—or of Ahab, who humbled himself and went in sackcloth and walked softly; nor is it a change which can neither be seen nor felt. It is not merely a new name and a new notion—but the implanting of a new principle which will surely bear good fruit. It is opening the eyes of the blind and unstopping the ears of the deaf; it is loosing the tongue of the dumb, and giving hands and feet to the maimed and lame—for he who is born again no longer allows his members to be instruments and servants of unrighteousness—but he gives them unto God, and then only are they properly employed.

To be born again is to become a member of a new family by adoption, even the family of God; it is to feel that God is indeed our Father, and that we are made the very sons and daughters of the Almighty; it is to become the citizen of a new state, to cast aside the bondage of Satan and live as free men in the glorious liberty of Christ's kingdom, giving our King the tribute of our best affection, and believing that He will keep us from all evil. To be born again is a spiritual resurrection, a faint likeness indeed of the great change at last—but still a likeness; for the new birth of a man is a passage from death to life; it is a passage from ignorance of God to a full knowledge of Him, from slavish fear to childlike love, from sleepy carelessness about Him to fervent desire to please Him, from lazy indifference about salvation to burning, earnest zeal; it is a passage from strangeness towards God to heartfelt confidence, from a state of enmity to a state of peace, from worldliness to holiness, from an earthly, sensual, man-pleasing state of mind to the single-eyed mind that is in Christ Jesus. And this it is to be born of the Spirit.

Beloved, time will not allow me to go further with this subject today. I have endeavored to show you generally why we must all be born again, and what the new birth means; and next Sunday, if the Lord wills, I purpose to show you the manner and means by which this new birth usually comes.

It only remains for me now to commend this matter most solemnly to your consciences. Were it a doctrine of only second-rate importance—were it a point a man might leave uncertain and yet be saved, like Church government or election—I would not press it on you so strongly—but it is one of the two great pillars of the gospel. On the one hand stands salvation by free grace for Christ's sake—but on the other stands renewal of the carnal heart by the Spirit. We must be changed as well as forgiven; we must be renewed as well as redeemed.

And I commend this to you all the more because of the times you live in. Men swallow down sermons about Christ's willingness and Christ's power to save, and yet continue in their sins. They seem to forget there must be the Spirit's work within us, as well as Christ's work for us—there must be something written on the table of our hearts. The strong man, Satan, must be cast out of our house, and Jesus must take possession; and we must begin to know the saints' character experimentally on earth—or we shall never be numbered with them in heaven. Christ is indeed a full and sufficient title to heaven—but we must have about us some fitness for that blessed abode.

I will not shrink from telling you that this doctrine cuts every congregation in two; it is the line of separation between the good fish and the bad, the wheat and the tares. There is a natural part in every congregation, and there is a spiritual part; and few indeed are

the churches where we should not be constrained to cry, Lord, here are many called—but very few chosen. The kingdom of God is no mere matter of lips and knees and outward service—it must be within a man, seated in the best place of heart; and I will not hesitate to tell you I fear there are many living members of churches who are exceedingly dead professors.

Examine yourselves, then, I pray you, whether you are born again. Have you good solid reasons for thinking that you have put off the old man which is corrupt, and put on the new man which is created after God in holiness? Are you renewed in the spirit of your minds? Are you bringing forth the fruits of the flesh or the fruits of the Spirit? Are you carnally minded or heavenly minded? Are your affections with the world or with God? Are you natural men or are you spiritual men? Oh! but it were no charity in me to keep back this weighty truth; and it will be no wisdom in you to put off and delay considering it.

Are you born again? Without it no salvation! It is not written that you may not—or yet that you will have some difficulty—but it is written that you cannot without it see the kingdom of God. Consider with yourselves how fearful it will be to be shut out; to see God's kingdom afar off, like the rich man in the parable, and a great gulf between; how terrible to go down to the pit from under the very pulpit, well satisfied with your own condition—but still not born again. There are truly many roads to perdition—but none so melancholy as that which is traveled on by professing Christians—by men and women who have light and knowledge and warning and means and opportunity and yet go smiling on as if sermons and holiness were not meant for them—or as if hell was a bed of roses—or as if God was a liar and could not keep His word.

Are you born again? I do not want to fill your heads—but to move your hearts; it is not a matter of course that all who go to church shall be saved; churches and ministers are meant to rouse you to self-inquiry, to awaken you to a sense of your condition; and next to that grand question, "Have you taken Christ for your Savior?" there comes the second point, "Are you born again?"

Beloved, if you love life, search and see what is your condition. What though you find no tokens for good: better a thousand times to know it now and live, than to know it too late and die eternally!

Praised be God, it is a doctrine bound round with gracious promises: no heart so hard but the Holy Spirit can move it; many a one could set his seal to that, and tell you that he was darkness, darkness that could be felt—but is now light in the Lord. Many of the Corinthians were bad as the worst among you—but they were washed, they were sanctified, they were justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. Many of the Ephesians were as completely dead in sins as any of you—but God quickened them, and raised them up, and created them anew unto good works. Examine yourselves and draw near to God with prayer, and He shall draw near to you—but if you ask not, you shall not have.

As for me, I make my supplication unto God, who can make all things new, that His Spirit may touch your hearts with a deep sense of this truth, for without it my preaching is vain; that there may be a mighty shaking and revival among the dry bones; that you may never rest until you are indeed new men and can say, Verily we *were* dead but we are now alive, we *were* lost but we are now found.

Without this new birth, no man or woman can be saved! You may remember I began to speak of it last Sunday morning, and I endeavored to establish in your minds two main points, which it may be well to recall to your recollection now.

First, then, I showed you the reason WHY this new birth is so absolutely necessary to salvation. It is because of our sinful hearts, our inbred corruption. We are born from the very first with a disposition towards that which is bad; we have no natural readiness to serve God—it is all against the grain; we have no natural insight into the excellence of Christ's spiritual kingdom, no natural love towards His holy laws or desire to obey them, no natural fitness for heaven; an unrenewed man would be miserable in the company of Jesus and the saints. In short, I said, it is not enough that we are born of the flesh once, natural men; we need to be born the second time of God and become spiritual men—or else we shall never taste eternal life.

I then reminded you of the awful carelessness and indifference and deadness and lukewarmness and coldness and slothfulness about religion which does so widely prevail; and I observed that people were always ingenious in framing reasons and making excuses for their own particular neglect of God, always supposing they had some special difficulty to contend with, which no one else had—business—or poverty, trouble—or family—or lack of time—or lack of learning, and the like—always imagining if these difficulties were taken out of the way, that they would be such good Christians; and I then told you that the root of all these difficulties is the natural old heart; and the thing needed is not leisure and ease and money and learning—but a new heart and a new principle

within.

Secondly, I went on to set before you the NATURE and character of this new birth I showed that it was a change not outward only—but inward; not in name only—but in spirit and in truth. It is a change so thorough, so searching, so radical, so complete, that he who has gone through it may be called born again, for he is to all intents and purposes a new man! He was darkness—but he is now light; he was blind—but he can now see; he was sleeping—but he is now awake; he was dead—but he now lives; he was earthly-minded—but he is now heavenly-minded; he was carnal—but he is now spiritual; he was worldly—but he is now godly; he once loved corruptible things best—but he now loves incorruptible things best; he did set his chief affections on that which is mortal—he now sets his heart on that which is immortal.

Lastly, I pressed upon you all the immense, the surpassing importance of this doctrine, and I do so now again. I urged you, everyone, to remember—and I repeat it now—it shall avail us nothing that Christ Jesus has brought in righteousness for us, if there be not also the work of the Holy Spirit within us; that it shall profit us nothing to say we are redeemed, if there is not also good evidence that we have been indeed renewed.

I shall now go on, according to my promise, to set before you the first great cause of this new birth, and the means and the manner in which it comes; and I once more pray God that the subject may not be carelessly put aside—but thought over and made useful to all your souls.

I. The first great CAUSE of this new birth.

This new birth, then, this great spiritual change—whence does it come—and how does it begin? Can any man give it to himself when he pleases? Can any change his own heart? No! the thing is impossible. We can no more quicken and impart life to our souls than we can to our bodies; we can no more rise and become new men in our own strength than wash away sins by our own performances. It is impossible! The natural man is as helpless as Lazarus was when he lay still and cold and motionless in the tomb. We may remove the stone, as it were, and expose the sad work of death—but we can do no more. There must be a power far mightier than any power of earth in exercise before the natural man can awake and arise and come forth as a new creature. And to do all this is the special office of the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus promised to send. It is He who quickens; it is He who gives life. The Spirit alone can make the seed we scatter bear fruit; the Spirit alone can lay the first foundation of that holy kingdom, which we want to see established in your hearts. It is the Spirit who must move over these waste and barren souls before they can become the garden of the Lord. It is the Spirit who must open the darkened windows of our conscience before the true light can shine in upon those chambers within us. And so, he who is born again is born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man—but of God; for the Spirit is very God.

Beloved, this is a very humbling and solemn truth. The conversion of a sinner can never be that light, off-hand affair that some do seem to think about it. This great change which must come over us can never be a thing so entirely within our reach and grasp that we may put off the old Adam like a cloak, and put on the new man, just when and where we please. Oh—but it is a work that cannot possibly be done without the hand of God! The same Power which first created heaven and earth, and called the fair world around us into being—the same Power alone can create in us new hearts, and renew in us right minds—the same Power alone can convert the natural man into the spiritual.

Yes! you may dream of death-bed repentance, and say, By-and-by we will turn and become Christians—but you know not what you are saying: the softening of the hard heart, and the entrance upon new ways, and the taking up of new principles, is no such easy matter as you seem to imagine—it is work that can only be begun by divine power—and who shall say, that you may not put it off too long?

It is not the plainest and clearest preaching, however lovely it may sound, which can cause men to be born again. Paul may plant and Apollos may water—but the Spirit alone can give the increase! We may raise up congregations fair and formal, and sinews and flesh and skin may cover the dry bones, but they are no better than dead—until the Spirit breathes upon them. Not all the wisdom of Solomon, not all the faith of Abraham, not all the prophecies of Isaiah, not all the eloquence of Apostles, could avail to convert one single soul—without the operation of the Holy Spirit. "Not by might, nor by power—but by my Spirit, says the Lord almighty." And therefore I call this a solemn truth. I know the Spirit is promised to all who ask—but I tremble lest men should loiter and put off their souls' concerns so long, that the Spirit may be grieved—and leave them in their sins.

And still, beloved, solemn as this truth may be to sinners, it is full of consolation to believers; it is full of sweet and unspeakable comfort to all who feel in themselves the holy workings of a new and spiritual nature. These can say with rejoicing, "It is not our right hand nor our arm which has brought us on the way towards Zion; the Lord Himself was on our side; it was He who raised us from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, and surely He will never let us go. Once we were sleeping and dead in trespasses—but the Spirit awakened us and opened our eyes. We caught a sight of the punishment prepared for the ungodly; we heard a voice saying, 'Come unto Me, and I will give you rest,' and we could sleep no longer. And surely we may hope that He, who graciously

began the work of grace, will also carry it forward; He laid the foundation, and He will not let it decay; He began, and He will bring His handiwork to perfection."

So much for the great Cause and Giver of the New Birth—the Holy Spirit.

II. The MEANS through which the new birth is ordinarily conveyed and comes, and the different ways and manners in which it generally shows itself and produces its wonderful effects.

Now, with respect to the means which the Holy Spirit does ordinarily use, I would not have you for one minute suppose that I wish to limit or set bounds to the Holy One of Israel. I do not for an instant deny that some have been born again without any outward visible machinery having been used—by a sort of secret impulse which cannot be well explained—but I do say that, generally speaking, the Holy Spirit, in giving to a man that blessed thing the new birth, is pleased to work upon his heart more or less by means which our eyes can see and which our minds can understand.

I would not, then, have you ignorant that a man is seldom born again of the Spirit, without the preaching of the Gospel having something to do in the change. This is a special instrument for turning men from darkness to light, and many a one can testify that it was through sermons he was first touched, and brought to the knowledge of the truth. It was Peter's preaching which first touched the men of Jerusalem after our Lord's death, insomuch that they were pricked to the heart and said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" It was the command which Jesus gave to the apostles before his ascension, they were "to preach unto the people and to testify." It was a cause of joy to Paul, that Christ was preached at Rome: "I therein rejoice," he says, "and will rejoice." It was his own declaration about himself, "Christ Jesus sent me not to baptize—but to preach the Gospel." No means is so blessed in all the experience of Christ's Church as the plain preaching of the Gospel; no sign so sure of decay and rottenness in a Church as the neglect of preaching; for there is no ordinance in which the Holy Spirit is so particularly present, none by which sinners are so often converted and brought back to God. Faith comes by hearing; and how shall men believe—unless they hear? Therefore it is that we press upon you so continually to be diligent in hearing Christ preached; for none are so unlikely to be born again as those who will not listen to the truth.

And seldom too is a man born of the Spirit without the Bible having something to do in the process. The Bible was written by men who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, and he who reads it seriously and attentively—or hears it read, is seeking acquaintance with God in God's own way. You would find few indeed among the Lord's true people who would not tell you that the starting-point in their spiritual life was some saying or doctrine in Scripture; some part or portion, pressed home upon their consciences by an unseen, secret power, was among the first things which stirred them up to think and examine their ways; some plain declaration flashed across their minds and made them say, "If this be true I shall certainly be lost." Therefore it is we tell you over and over again, Search the Scriptures, search the Scriptures; they are the sword of the Spirit, they are the weapon by which the devil is often driven out; and he who leaves his Bible unread does plainly not wish to be born again.

Once more. Never are men born of the Spirit without Prayer. I believe there would not be found a single case of a person who had been quickened and made a new creature without God having been entreated of and inquired of before. Either he has prayed for himself—or some one has prayed for him: so Stephen died praying for his murderers, and by-and-by Saul was converted. The Lord loves to be sought after by His guilty creatures; and they who will not ask for the Holy Spirit to come down upon them, have no right to expect in themselves any real change.

Such, then, beloved, are the means through which this new birth is *generally* given. I say generally, because it is not for me to set bounds to the operations of God; I know men may be startled by sicknesses and accidents and the like—but still I repeat that preaching, the Bible and prayer are the channels through which the Spirit *ordinarily* works. And I say further that in all my life and reading I never heard of a man who diligently, humbly, heartily and earnestly made use of these means, who did not sooner or later find within himself new habits and principles. I never heard of a man steadily persevering in their use, who did not sooner or later feel that sin and he must part company—who did not, in short, become a real child of God, a new creature.

III. So much for the means through which the Spirit generally conveys this new birth. There is yet one point to be considered this morning; and that is the particular MANNER in which this mighty spiritual change does first touch a person and begin.

Now, on this point I remark, there are great diversities of operations; there is a vast variety in the methods by which the Spirit works, and hence it is that we can never say He is tied down to show himself in one particular way; we must never condemn a person and tell him he is a graceless unconverted sinner because his experience may happen to differ widely from our own.

I would have you note, then, there is great diversity in the time and age at which this change begins. Some few have the grace of God in them when very young; they cannot so much as remember the time when they were without a deep sense of their natural corruption and a lively faith in Christ, and an earnest desire and endeavor to live close to God: such were Isaac and Samuel and Josiah and Jeremiah, and John the Baptist and Timothy. Blessed and happy are these souls; their memories are not saddened by

the recollection of years wasted in carelessness and sin; their imaginations are not defiled and stained with the remembrance of youthful wickedness.

But again. Many, perhaps the greater part of true Christians in our day, are never born of the Spirit until they come to age and have reached years of maturity. These were once walking after the course of this world, perhaps serving divers lusts and pleasures, perhaps decent outwardly and yet only regarding religion as a thing for Sundays, not as a concern of the hearts. But by some means or other God stops them in their career and turns their hearts back again, and they take up the cross. And bitter indeed is their repentance, and great is their wonder that they could have lived so long in such a fashion, and warm is the love they feel towards Him who has so graciously forgiven them all iniquity.

Once more. Some few, some very few, are first brought unto God and born again in the advance and in old age. Oh! but it is fearful to see how few. There are not many who ever arrive at what is called old age; and of these I believe a very insignificant part indeed are ever brought to a saving change. And little wonder if we consider how deeply rooted a thing is habit, how hard it is for those who are accustomed to do evil, to learn to do good. O brethren beloved, youth is the time to seek the Lord! I know that with God nothing is impossible; I know that He can touch the rock that has long been unmoved, if He pleases, and make the water flow—but still we very seldom hear of old men or women being converted: grey hairs are the time for burning the oil of grace and not for buying it, and therefore I say, pray you that your flight be not in the winter of life.

IV. The next thing I would have you note is the *great diversity in the ways* by which the Spirit, so to speak, does strike the first blow in producing this new birth.

Some are awakened suddenly, by mighty providences and interpositions of God; they despise other warnings, and then the Lord comes in and violently shakes them out of sleep, and plucks them like brands from the burning. And this is often done by unexpected mercies—by extraordinary afflictions and troubles, by sicknesses, by accidents, by placing a man in some great danger and peril; and thousands, I am certain, will tell us in heaven, "It is good for us that we were tried and distressed; 'before I was afflicted I went astray—but now have I kept Your word.'" This was the case with Paul: he was struck to the earth blinded, while going to Damascus to persecute, and he rose up a humbled and a wiser man. This was the case with Jonah: when he fled from the Lord's command, he was awakened by a storm while sleeping on board the ship. This was the case with Manasseh, king of Judah: he was taken prisoner and laid in chains at Babylon, and in his affliction he sought the Lord. This was the case with the jailer at Philippi: he was roused by the earthquake, and came and fell down saying, What shall I do to be saved?" This is the case spoken of by Elihu in the thirty-third chapter of Job. And here is the reason why we ought to feel so anxious about a man, when God has laid His hand upon him and afflicted him. I always feel about such a person, "There is one whom the Lord is trying to convert: will it or will it not be all in vain?"

Again. Some are awakened suddenly, by very little and trifling things. God often raises up Christ's kingdom in a man's heart by a seed so small and insignificant, that all who see it are obliged to confess, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes." A single text of Scripture sometimes; a few lines in a book taken up by accident; a chance expression or word dropped in conversation, and never perhaps meant by him who spoke it to do so much: each of these seeming trifles has been known to pierce men's hearts like an arrow, after sermons and ordinances have been used without appearing to avail. I have heard of one who could trace up the beginning of his conversion to the saying of a perfect stranger: he was profanely asking God to damn his soul, when the stranger stopped him and said it were better to pray that it might be blessed than damned; and that little word found its way to his heart. Oh, how careful should we be over our lips! Who knows what good might be done if we only strove more to speak a word in season?

Once more. Some are born of the Spirit gradually and insensibly. They hardly know at the period what is going on within them; they can hardly recollect any particular circumstances attending their conversion—or fix any particular time—but they do know this, that somehow or other they have gone through a great change, they do know that once they were careless about religion, and now they hold it chief in their affections: once they were blind and now they see. This seems to have been the case with Lydia at Philippi; the Lord gently opened her heart, so that she attended to the things spoken by Paul. This is what Elijah saw in the wilderness; there was the whirlwind and the earthquake and the fire, and after all there was something else—a still small voice. And here is one reason why we sometimes hope and trust that many among the hearers in our congregations may still prove children of God. We try to think that some of you feel more than you seem to do, and that the time is near when you will indeed come out and be separate, and not be ashamed to confess Christ before men.

There is one more diversity I would very shortly notice. Remember there is diversity in the FEELINGS which the Spirit first excites: each feeling is moved sooner or later—but they are not moved always in the same order. The new birth shows itself in some by causing exceeding fear—they are filled with a strong sense of God's holiness, and they tremble because they have broken His law continually. Others begin with sorrow—they can never mourn enough over their past wickedness and ingratitude. Others begin with love—they are full of affection towards Him who died for them, and no sacrifice seems too great to make for His sake. But all

these works one and the same Spirit—in this man He touches one string, and in that another—but sooner or later all are blended in harmony together, and when the new creation has fully taken place, fear and sorrow and love may all be found at once.

Beloved, time will not allow me to go further with this subject today. I have endeavored to show you this morning who is the Worker, the CAUSE of the new birth: it is not man—but God the Holy Spirit. What are the MEANS through which He generally conveys it: preaching, the Bible, and prayer. And lastly I have shown you there are many DIVERSITIES in His operations: with some He begins when very young, with some in full years, with some few in old age. On some He comes down suddenly and on some gradually, in some He first moves one sort of feelings and in some another—but whatever be His operation, without the Spirit none can be born again.

And now, in CONCLUSION, tell me not that you mean to wait lazily and idly, and if the Lord gives you this blessed change—that is well; and if not—that you cannot help it. God does not deal with you as if you were machines or stones; He deals with you as those who can read and hear and pray, and this is the way in which He would have you wait upon Him.

Never was doctrine so surrounded with promises and encouragements and invitations as this. Hear what Jeremiah says: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." Again: "They shall be my people, and I will be their God: and I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me forever." Then what Ezekiel says: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." Then lastly what the Lord Jesus says: "Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find: everyone that asks receives. Your Heavenly Father shall give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him." And this is what we want you to do: until you pray for yourselves in earnest, we know there will be little good done; and if any prayerless man shall say in the day of judgment "I could not come to Christ," the answer will be, "You did not try."

Then quench not the Spirit, grieve not the Spirit, resist not the Spirit; His grace has been purchased for you: strive and labor and pray that you may indeed receive it. And then God has covenanted and engaged that He shall come down like rain on the dry ground—like water to wash away your soul's defilement, like fire to burn away the dross and filth of sin, and the hardest heart among you shall become soft and willing as a weaned child.

We have reached the last point in our inquiry about the new Birth—I mean the MARKS and EVIDENCES by which it may be known—the marks by which a man may find out whether he has himself been born again or not. To set before you the character of those who are indeed new creatures—to warn you against certain common mistakes respecting this doctrine—to wind up the whole subject by appealing to your consciences—this is the work which I propose to take in hand this morning.

Now this point may be last in order—but it certainly is not least in importance. It is the touchstone of our condition; it decides whether we are natural men or spiritual men; whether we are yet dead in trespasses—or have been quickened and brought to see the kingdom of God.

Many there are who take it for granted they have been born again—they do not exactly know why—but it is a sort of thing they never doubted. Others there are who despise all such sifting inquiry—they are sure they are in the right way, they are confident they shall be saved, and as for marks, it is low and legal to talk about them, it is bringing men into bondage. But, beloved, whatever men may say, you may be certain Christ's people are a peculiar people, not only peculiar in their talk—but peculiar in their life and conduct, and they may be distinguished from the unconverted around them; you may be certain there are stamps and marks and characters about God's handiwork by which it may always be known; and he who has got no evidences to show—well well suspect that he is not in the right way.

Now, about these marks I can of course only speak very shortly and very generally, for time will not allow me to do more—but I would first say one word by way of caution. Remember, then, I would not have you suppose that all children of God do feel alike—or that these marks should be equally strong and plain in every case. The work of grace on man's heart is gradual: first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. It is like leaven: the whole lump is not leavened at once. It is as in the birth of an infant into the world: first it feels, then moves and cries, and sees and hears and knows, and thinks and loves, and walks and talks and acts for itself. Each of these things comes gradually, and in order—but we do not wait for all before we say this is a living soul. And just so is everyone that is born of the Spirit. He may not, at first, find in himself all the marks of God—but he has the seed of them all about him; and some he knows by experience, and all, in the course of time, shall be known distinctly.

But this at least you may be sure of: wherever there is no fruit of the Spirit, there is no work of the Spirit; and if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. O that this question might stir up everyone of you to search and try his ways! God is not a man that he should lie; He would not have given you the Bible if you could be saved without it; and here is a doctrine on which eternal life depends: "No salvation without the new birth."

I. First, then, and foremost, I would have you write down in your memories a mark which John mentions in his first epistle:

"Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother." (1 John 3:8-10⁺)

Observe, I would not for one minute have you suppose that God's children are perfect, and without spot or stain or defilement in themselves. Do not go away and say I told you they were pure as angels and never made a slip or stumble. The same John in the same Epistle declares: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. . . . If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

But I do say that in the matter of breaking God's commandments, everyone that is born again is quite a new man. He no longer takes a light and cool and easy view of sin; he no longer judges of it with the world's judgment; he no longer thinks a little swearing—or a little Sabbath-breaking—or a little fornication—or a little drinking—or a little covetousness, small and trifling matters—but he looks on every sort of sin against God or man as exceeding abominable and damnable in the Lord's sight, and, as far as in him lies, he hates it and abhors it, and desires to be rid of it root and branch, with his whole heart and mind and soul and strength.

He who is born again has had the eyes of his understanding opened, and the Ten Commandments appear to him in an entirely new light. He feels amazed that he could have lived so long careless and indifferent about transgressions, and he looks back on the days gone by with shame and sorrow and grief. As for his daily conduct, he allows himself in no known sin; he makes no compromise with his old habits and his old principles; he gives them up unsparingly, though it cost him pain, though the world think him over-precise and a fool—but he is a new man, and will have nothing more to do with the accursed thing—sin. I do not say but that he comes short, and finds his old nature continually opposing him—and this, too, when no eye can see it but his own—but then he mourns and repents bitterly over his own weakness. And this at least he has about him: he is at war, in reality, with the devil and all his works, and strives constantly to be free.

And do you call that no change? Look abroad on this world, this evil-doing world: mark how little men generally think about sin; how seldom they judge of it as the Bible does; how easy they suppose the way to heaven—and judge you whether this mark be not exceeding rare. But for all this God will not be mocked, and men may rest assured that until they are convinced of the awful guilt and the awful power and the awful consequences of sin, and, being convinced, flee from it and give it up, they are most certainly not born again.

II. The second mark I would have you note is "faith in Christ," and here again I speak in the words of John in his first epistle:

"Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." (1 John 5:1⁺)

I do not mean by this a general vague sort of belief that Jesus Christ once lived on earth and died—a sort of faith which the very devils possess. I mean, rather, that feeling which comes over a man when he is really convinced of his own guilt and unworthiness, and sees that Christ alone can be his Savior; when he becomes convinced he is in a way to be lost, and must have some righteousness better than his own, and joyfully embraces that righteousness which Jesus holds out to all who will believe. He who has got this saving faith discovers a fitness and suitableness and comfort in the doctrine of Christ crucified for sinners which once he never knew; he is no longer ashamed to confess himself by nature poor and blind and naked, and to take Christ for his only hope of salvation.

Before a man is born of the Spirit there seems no particular loveliness about the Redeemer—but after that blessed change has taken place, He appears the very chief in ten thousand. There is no honor so great but Jesus is worthy of it. There is no love so strong but on Jesus it is well bestowed. There is no spiritual necessity so great but Jesus can relieve it. There is no sin so black but Jesus' blood can wash it away. Before the new birth a man can bow at Christ's name, and sometimes wonder at Christ's miracles—but that is all. Once born again, a man sees a fullness and a completeness and a sufficiency in Christ of things necessary to salvation, so that he feels as if he could never think upon Him enough. To cast the burden of sin on Jesus, to glory in the cross on which He died, to keep continually in sight His blood, His righteousness, His intercession, His mediation; to go continually to Him for peace and forgiveness, to rest entirely on Him for full and free salvation; to make Jesus, in short, all in all in their hopes of heaven—this is the most notable mark of all true children of God—they live by faith in Christ, in Christ their happiness is bound up.

It is the spiritual law of God which brings them to this: time was when they were ready to think well of themselves; the law strips off their miserable garments of self-righteousness, exposes their exceeding guilt and rottenness, cuts down to the ground their fancied notions of justification by their own works, and so leads them to Christ as their only wisdom and redemption; and then, when they have laid hold on Christ and taken Him for their Savior, they begin to find that rest which before they had sought in vain.

Such are two first marks of the Spirit's work—a deep conviction of sin and forsaking of it. And a lively faith in Christ crucified as the only hope of forgiveness. These are marks which the world perhaps may not see—but marks without which no man or woman was ever yet made a new creature. These are the two foundations of the Christian's character, the pillars, as it were, of the kingdom of God; they are hidden roots which others can only judge of by the fruit—but they who have them do generally know it, and can feel the witness in themselves.

III. The third mark of the new birth is "holiness."

What says the apostle John again? "You know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of him." (1 John 2:29+) "And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure." (1 John 3:3+)

The true children of God delight in making the law their rule of life; it dwells in their minds, and is written upon their hearts, and it is their food and drink to do their Father's will. They know nothing of that spirit of bondage which false Christians complain of; it is their pleasure to glorify God with their bodies and souls, which are His; they hunger and thirst after tempers and dispositions like their Lord's. They do not rest content with sleepy wishing and hoping—but they strive to be holy in their whole life—in thought, in word, and in deed; it is their daily heart's prayer, "Lord what will You have us to do?" and it is their daily grief and lamentation that they come so short and are such unprofitable servants. Beloved, remember where there is no holiness of life there cannot be much work of the Holy Spirit.

IV. The fourth mark of the new birth is spiritual-mindedness

We learn this from Paul's words to the Colossians:

"If then you were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:1-3+)

He who is born again thinks first about the things which are eternal; he no longer gives up the best of his heart to this perishable world's concerns. He looks on earth as a place of pilgrimage, he looks on heaven as his home. And even as a child remembers with delight its absent parents, and hopes to be one day with them, so does the Christian think of his God and long for that day when he shall stand in His presence and go no more out. He cares not for the pleasures and amusements of the world around him. He minds not the things of the flesh—but the things of the Spirit. He feels that he has a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens, and he earnestly desires to be there. "Lord," he says, "whom have I in heaven but You? and there is nothing on earth that I desire beside You."

V. The fifth mark of the new birth is victory over the world

Hear what John says:

"Whoever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4+)

What is the natural man? A wretched slave to the opinion of this world. What the world says is right he follows and approves; what the world says is wrong he renounces and condemns also. How shall I do what my neighbors do not do? What will men say of me if I become more strict than they? This is the natural man's argument. But from all this, he who is born again is free. He no longer is led by the praise or the blame, the laughter or the frown, of the world. He no longer thinks that the sort of religion which everybody about him professes must necessarily be right. He no longer considers "What will the world say?" but "What does God command?" Oh, it is a glorious change when a man thinks nothing of the difficulty of confessing Christ before men, in the hope that Christ will confess him and own him before the holy angels! The 'fear of the world' is a terrible snare; with many thousands it far outweighs the fear of God. There are men who would care more for the laughter of a company of friends than they would for the testimony of half the Bible. From all this the spiritual man is free. **He is no longer like a dead fish floating with the stream of earthly opinion**; he is ever pressing upwards, looking unto Jesus in spite of all opposition He has overcome the world.

VI. The sixth mark of the new birth is "meekness."

This is what David meant when he said, in Psalm 131:

"My soul is even as a weaned child." This is what our Lord has in view when He tells us we "must be converted and become as little children."

Pride is the besetting sin of all natural men, and it comes out in a hundred different ways. It was pride by which the angels fell and became devils. It is pride which brings many a sinner to the pit—he knows he is in the wrong about religion—but he is too proud to bend his neck and act up to what he knows. It is pride which may always be seen about false professors: they are always saying—We are the men, and we are alone in the right, and ours is the sure way to heaven; and by-and-by they fall and go to their own place and are heard no more of. But he who is born again is clothed with humility; he has a very child-like and contrite and broken spirit; he has a deep sense of his own weakness and sinfulness, and great fear of a fall. You never hear him professing confidence in himself and boasting of his own attainments—he is far more ready to doubt about his own salvation altogether and call himself "chief of sinners." He has no time to find fault with others—or be a busybody about his neighbors. It is enough for him to keep up the

conflict with his own deceitful heart, the old Adam within. No enemy so bitter to him as his own inbred corruption.

Whenever I see a man passing his time in picking holes in other Churches, and talking about everyone's soul except his own, I always feel in my own mind, "There is no work of the Spirit there." And it is just this humility and sense of weakness which makes God's children men of prayer. They feel their own needs and their danger, and they are constrained to go continually with supplication to Him who has given them the Spirit of adoption, crying, Abba Father, help us and deliver us from evil.

VII. The seventh mark of the new birth is a great delight in all means of grace This is what Peter speaks of in his first Epistle:

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow." (1 Peter 2:2⁺)

This was the mind of David when he said, "A day in Your courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

And oh, what a difference there is between nature and grace in this matter! The natural man has often a form of godliness: he does not neglect the ordinances of religion—but somehow or other the weather—or his health—or the distance, contrives to be a great hindrance to him, and far too often it happens that the hours he spends in church or over his Bible are the duller in his life.

But when a man is born again, he begins to find a reality about means which once he did not feel: the Sabbath no longer seems a dull, wearisome day, in which he knows not how to spend his time decently; he now calls it a delight and a privilege, holy of the Lord and honorable. The difficulties which once kept him from God's house now seem to have vanished away: dinner and weather and the like never detain him at home, and he is no longer glad of an excuse not to go. Sermons appear a thousand times more interesting than they used to do; and he would no more be inattentive or willingly go to sleep under them, than a prisoner would upon his trial. And, above all, the Bible looks to him like a new book. Time was when it was very dry reading to his mind—perhaps it lay in a corner dusty and seldom read—but now it is searched and examined as the very bread of life; many are the texts and passages which seem just written for his own case; and many are the days that he feels disposed to say with David, "The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver."

VIII. The eighth and last mark of the new birth is "love towards others."

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God, and knows God.

He who doesn't love doesn't know God, for God is love." (1 John 4:7-8⁺)

He who is born of the Spirit loves his neighbor as himself; he knows nothing of the selfishness and uncharitableness and ill-nature of this world. He loves his neighbor's property as his own; he would not injure it, nor stand by and see it injured. He loves his neighbor's person as his own, and he would count no trouble ill bestowed if he could help or assist him. He loves his neighbor's character as his own, and you will not hear him speak a word against it—or allow it to be blackened by falsehoods if he can defend it. He loves his neighbor's soul as his own, and he will not allow him to turn his back on God without endeavoring to stop him by saying, "Oh, do not so!" Oh what a happy place would earth be if there was more love! Oh that men would only believe that the gospel secures the greatest comfort in the life that now is, as well as in the life to come!

And such, beloved, are the marks by which the new birth in a man's soul may generally be discovered. I have been obliged to speak of them very concisely, although each one of them deserves a sermon. I commend to your especial attention the two first: conviction and forsaking of sin, and faith in Christ; they are marks on which each must be his own judge. "Have I ever truly repented? Have I really closed with Christ and taken Him for my only Savior and Lord?" Let these questions be uppermost in your mind if you would know whether you are born again or not. The six last marks: holiness, spiritual-mindedness, victory over the world, meekness, delight in means of grace, and love—have this peculiarity about them, that a man's family and neighbors do often see more clearly whether he has them than he does himself—but they all flow out of the two first, and therefore I once more urge the two first on your especial notice.

And now, brethren beloved, in concluding this course of sermons, I desire to speak one word to the consciences of all who have heard them: old or young, rich or poor, careless or thoughtful, you are all equally concerned.

For three Sunday mornings you have heard this new birth set before you—have you ever thought upon your own state and looked within? What of your own hearts? Are you living or dead, natural or spiritual, born again or not? Are your bodies temples of the Holy Spirit? Are your habits and characters the habits and characters of renewed creatures? Oh, search and see what there is within you: the language of the text is plain—no new birth, no kingdom of God!

I know there is nothing popular or agreeable about this doctrine; it strikes at the root of all compromising half-and-half religion, and still it is true. Many would like much to escape the punishment of sin, who will not strive to be free from its power; they wish to be justified but not to be sanctified; they desire much to have God's favor—but they care little for God's image and likeness; their talk is of pardon—but not of purity; they think much about God's willingness to forgive—but little about His warning that we be renewed.

But this is leaving out of sight, half the work which Christ died to perform: He died that we might become holy as well as happy, He purchased grace to sanctify as well as grace to redeem; and now forgiveness of sin and change of heart must never be separated. "What God has joined together, let no man presume to put asunder." The foundation of God stands firm: "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him."

Beloved, it is easy work to live unto ourselves and take no trouble about religion; the world approves it, and says we shall probably do well at last—but if ever we are to be saved there is another life, and that too on this side the grave, we must live unto God. It is easy to be natural men—we give no offence, and the devil comforts us by saying, as he did to Eve, "You shall not surely die!" But the devil was a liar from the beginning. So long as we are natural men, we are dead already, and we must rise to newness of life. And what know you of the movements of the Spirit? I ask not so much whether you can say which way He came into your hearts—but I do ask whether you can find any real footsteps or traces or tokens of His presence—for "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him."

Be not deceived and led away by false opinions. Head-knowledge is not the new birth: a man may know all mysteries like Balaam, and think his eyes are opened; or preach and work miracles and be an Apostle like Judas Iscariot, yet never be born again. Church-membership is not the new birth; many do sit in churches and chapels who shall have no seat in Christ's kingdom; they are not Israel who have the circumcision of the flesh outwardly, they are the true Israel who have the circumcision of the heart, which is inward. There were many Jews in the New Testament days who said, "We have Abraham for our father, and we have the temple among us and that is enough," but Jesus showed them that they only are Abraham's children who have the faith of Abraham and do Abraham's works.

And neither is water-baptism the new birth: it is the sign and seal, and when used with faith and prayer we have a right to look also for the baptism of the Holy Spirit—but to say that every man who has been baptized has been born again is contrary to Scripture and plain fact. Was not Simon Magus baptized? Yes—but Peter told him after his baptism that he was in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, his heart not right in the sight of God. "I would not have you ignorant," says Paul to the Corinthians, that all our Fathers were baptized, . . . but with many of them God was not well pleased. "Baptism," writes Peter, "does indeed save us"—but what baptism? "not the putting away of the filth of the body, not the washing of water—but the answer of a pure conscience," a conscience made pure by the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Beloved, let no man lead you astray in this matter; let no man make you believe that a baptized drunkard or fornicator or blasphemer or worldling has been born of the Spirit; he has not the marks of the new birth, and he cannot have been born again; he is living in sin and carelessness, and John has given us his character, "he who practices sin is of the devil." Remember, the outward seal is nothing without the inward writing on the heart. No evidence can be depended on, except a new life and a new character and a new creature; and to say that men who lack biblical evidences are born again, is an unreasonable and unscriptural stretch of charity.

And now, in conclusion, if any one of you has reason to think that he still lacks this one thing needful, I entreat that man not to stifle his convictions or nip them in the bud. Do not go away like Cain and silence the voice of conscience by rushing into the vanities of the world; nor dream, like Felix, that you will have a more convenient season than the present. But remember I tell you this day there are two things which make a death-bed especially uncomfortable: first, purposes and promises not performed; and second, convictions slighted and not improved. And if any of you has satisfactory grounds for thinking that he has really tasted something of that saving and necessary change we have considered, I charge that man not to stand still, not to loiter, not to linger, not to look behind him; I warn him that none are in so dangerous a way as those who have become cool and cold and indifferent after real and warm concern about salvation; I urge him to press forward more and more towards the knowledge of Christ, and to remember it is a special mark of God's children that as they grow in age they grow in grace, and feel their sins more deeply and love their Lord and Savior more sincerely.

SAVING FAITH

J C Ryle

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—JOHN 3:16

IN this verse, beloved, we have one of those "heavenly things," which our Lord had just spoken of to Nicodemus. Blessed indeed are the lips which spake it, and blessed are the hearts which can receive it! In this verse we find a treasury of the most precious truth, a mine of inexhaustible matter, a well of ever-flowing waters; and when we consider the simple words in which our Lord has here brought together the whole body of divinity, we must willingly confess, with those who heard Him preach, "Never man spake like this man." Listen, I pray you, once more—"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him

should not perish, but have everlasting life.” There is hardly an expression that a child could not easily explain, and yet there are doctrines here which the wisest upon earth must humbly receive, if they would enter into the kingdom of heaven and sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. We learn in it, what philosophers of old could never clear up—the history of God’s dealing with mankind, and the terms which He offers for their acceptance. Here is life, and here is death; here you have the deserts of man, and here you have the free grace of God; here you see what all may expect who follow their own course, and here also the way, the truth, and the life is directly pointed out.

And at this particular season of the year, when we are about so soon to commemorate the mysterious birth of Him who in mercy to our sins consented to take our nature on Him and be born of a virgin, even Christ Jesus, we cannot, I think, do better than examine the things which are herein contained. May the Eternal Spirit, through whom He offered Himself, the great Teacher whom He promised to send, be amongst us: may He rouse the careless, fix the inattentive, and make the subject profitable to all.

Now I conceive the chief things to be noticed in this verse are:

- I. The state of the world, that is, of all mankind.
- II. The love of God.
- III. The gift of His Son.
- IV. The means whereby we enjoy this gift.
- V. And the promise attached to those who believe.

I. First, then, let us inquire what the word of God has taught us respecting the world and the world’s character. Now, the testimony of Scripture upon this head is so clear and explicit, that he who runs may read, “The whole world,” says St. John, “lieth in wickedness.” Our first father, Adam, was indeed created in the image of God, pure and sinless; but in one day he fell from his high estate by eating the forbidden fruit, he broke God’s express command and became at once a sinful creature; and now all we his children have by inheritance from him a wicked and a corrupt nature, a nature which clings to us from the moment of our birth, and which we show daily in our lives and conversation. In a word, we learn that from the hour of the fall our character has been established, that we are a sinful, a very sinful world.

Beloved, does this appear a hard saying? do you think such a statement too strong? Away with the flattering thought!—We see it proved in Scripture, for every book of the Old Testament history tells the melancholy story of man’s disobedience and man’s unbelief in things pertaining to God. We read there of fearful judgments, such as the flood and the destruction of Sodom, yet men disregarded them,—of gracious mercies, such as the calling and protection of Israel, but men soon forgot them,—of inspired teachers and revelations from heaven, such as the law of Moses, and men did not obey them,—of special warnings, such as the voice of the prophets, and yet men did not believe them. Yes, beloved, we are a sinful world! Think not to say within yourselves, “It may be so, but this happened in days of old; the world is better now.” It will not avail you. We have read it in Scripture, but we see it also around us, and you will find at this time, even under your own eyes, convincing proof that the charge is literally true. Let any, for instance, examine the columns of a county newspaper, and he will see there within a month enough to make his ears tingle. I speak as unto wise men,—judge ye what I say: will he not see accounts of nearly every sin which is abominable in the sight of God? Will he not read of anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, theft, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, emulations, variance, strife, seditions, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: “of the which,” says the apostle (Gal. 5:21), “I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” And if such things take place in a land which is blessed with so much light and knowledge as our own, how much more should we find in countries where there is neither one nor the other! If men do these things in a green tree, oh, what shall they do in a dry?

Can you still doubt? I will go further. We see proof in ourselves. Let the best among you search his own heart; let him honestly cast up the number of evil thoughts and unholy ideas which pass through his imagination even in one single day—thoughts, I mean, which are known only to himself and the all-seeing God—and let him tell us whether it be not a most humiliating and soul-condemning calculation. Yes, dear friends, whether you will receive it or no, we are indeed a sinful world. It may be an humbling truth, but Scripture says it, and experience confirms it; and therefore we tell you that the world spoken of in our text is a world which lieth in wickedness, a corrupt world, a world which our great Maker and Preserver might have left to deserved destruction, and in so doing would have acted with perfect justice, because He has given us laws and they have been broken, promises and they have been despised, warnings and they have not been believed.

II. Such is the world of which we form a part, and such is its character. And now let us hear what the feeling is with which God has been pleased to regard His guilty creatures. We were all under condemnation, without hope, without excuse; and what could stay the execution of the sentence? It was the love of God. “God,” says our text, “so loved the world.” He might have poured on us the vials of His wrath, as He did on the angels who kept not their first estate; but no! He spared us, “God loved the world.” Justice demanded our punishment, holiness required we should be swept off the earth; but “God loved the world.” Praised be His name, we had not to do with man’s judgment, which may not show mercy, when a crime is proved; we were in the hands of One whose ways are not as our ways and whose thoughts are not as our thoughts, and hence, “God so loved the world.” May we not well say with the

Apostle, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Rom. 11:33). Consider, I pray you, this incomprehensible goodness! Do not many in this world think it no harm to remember injuries, and sometimes to resent them? Do we not find it hard to love those who have given us some slight offence? or if we do profess to love them, do we make any endeavour to promote their happiness? Such, alas! is too seldom our practice; there is but little real affection in these hard hearts; but we are not dealt with according to our own ways, for the God of holiness has loved the sinful world, which has continually dishonoured and denied Him. Oh! beloved, let us dwell much on such expressions as these, for they are more precious than rubies; let us bear them continually in mind, for they will not fail us in the day of trial, when temptation is strong and faith weak; let us write them on our hearts and in our memories, and we shall find them a strong consolation in the hour of death and on the bed of sickness. God is indeed love, and God loved the world.

III. Let us next inquire in what way it pleased God to manifest this love. We had all sinned. Who then could put away this sin and present us clean and spotless before His throne? We had all failed utterly of keeping His holy laws. Wherewithal then could we be clothed for the wedding-feast of our Master? Beloved, here is wisdom! This is the very point which the learned of this world could never understand. How, they have asked, can perfect justice and perfect mercy be reconciled? How can God justify His sinful creature, and yet be that Holy One whose law must needs be fulfilled? But all is explained in this simple verse, if ye can receive it; and thus it was—"He gave His only-begotten Son." Observe the magnitude of this gift—"His only-begotten Son." Can anything give you a more tender idea of God's love? Observe again the expression "He gave": not because we had merited anything, for it was a free gift; not for our deservings, for it was all of grace. "By grace are ye saved," says Paul to the Ephesians. "The gift of God is eternal life," says the same apostle to the Romans.

And for what purpose was His Son given? Beloved, He was given to atone for our guilt, by the sacrifice and death of Himself, as a lamb without spot and blemish; and by so doing He made a full, perfect, and sufficient oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. He was given to bear our iniquities and carry our transgressions upon the accursed tree, the cross; for being innocent Himself He was for our sakes accounted guilty, that we for His sake might be accounted pure. Nor is this all: He was given to fulfil the demands of that law which we have broken; and He did fulfil them. He "was tempted in all points," says St. Paul, "like as we are, and yet without sin": the prince of this world had nothing in Him, and thus He brought in an everlasting righteousness, which like a pure white raiment is unto all and upon all them that believe. (2 Cor. 5:21.)

IV. It would be easy to dwell upon this delightful branch of our subject, beloved, but we must pass on. How then are the benefits of this gift made our own? What are the means through which it is applied to our souls? What is the hand by which we lay hold on this remedy?

Here again our text supplies an answer. It is FAITH. Whosoever believeth (not with the head, remember: but with the heart), and believing comes to Christ with a confession of his own unrighteousness, and accepts Him as his only hope of salvation—is saved by Faith.

Consider now the beautiful simplicity of this way of life: we do not see written on the gate, Whosoever has prepared himself by long repentance—whosoever has begun to lead a new life—whosoever has done so many good works—whosoever has attended church so many times—whosoever has given so much in charity—these shall enter in here, and none else. No, dear friends; such announcements would frighten many a weary sinner, and these are fruits you will thankfully bring forth a hundredfold after you have entered: the only thing required of those who seek admission is faith, and he that approaches in simple childlike faith shall never be rejected. Hear how St. Paul speaks on this point (Rom. 10:5 to 10). And, lest any one should suppose that God is a respecter of persons, that there is one way for the rich and another for the poor, one for the learned, another for the unlearned, he adds these comfortable words: "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." But remember also—and I solemnly warn every one of this—there is no other way than the way of faith. God has not left each man to choose his own road to heaven, or his own path for coming unto Christ, but He has appointed one and no more, and no man shall enter into life except by this.

"If ye will not believe," says Isaiah, "surely ye shall not be established." "If ye believe not," says our Lord, "that I am He, ye shall die in your sins." And hence we may learn this most important lesson, that although God so loved the world that He gave for it His only-begotten Son, still the benefits of that gift can never be obtained by those who will not believe.

V. It remains for us in the last place to consider the promises and consequences which our text holds forth to the faithful. We read that "whosoever believeth shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

And is not this a promise the most acceptable to our nature that a gracious God could have devised? We know there is nothing the unconverted fear so much as death: people of the highest animal courage, who would shrink from no danger and encounter any difficulty, have been seen to tremble and turn pale at the approach of some pain or complaint which seems likely to bring their frail bodies to the grave. And why should this be so?—pain is not very bitter, and life with its cares and anxieties is not so very sweet as to account for it! No, beloved, the reason is this. Conscience tells every unconverted person, whether he likes to confess it or not,

that after death shall come the judgment; conscience tells him that all shall be judged according to their works,—that he cannot abide this fiery trial, because he has sinned and not sought reconciliation, and he feels that he may one day have his part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone. Hence it is that he thinks death a most unpleasant subject, and with all his pride of life stands in cowardly fear of his last day; and hence you may understand how blessed these words should be to a sinner's ear, that "Whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

Observe now the contents of this promise; look narrowly into it, for it will stand a close examination. The believer shall not perish; this earthly tabernacle may indeed be dissolved, and laid in the grave and see corruption, but the true sting of that death is sin, and this his Saviour has taken on Him and put away. He shall not perish in the day of judgment; the second death can have no power over him; hell has no claims upon him, and then the words of our blessed Master shall be found a truth. "This is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:40). "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die" (John 11:25, 26).

And more than this: the believer shall have everlasting life. He shall be raised body and soul at our Lord's second coming. He shall have part in that first resurrection, which belongs only to the saints, and finally shall dwell for ever in that blessed place where "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

And now, beloved, judge for yourselves whether it be not true, that our text contains a treasury of precious and most consoling doctrines, and he that can hear it without feeling its value may indeed tremble for the safety of his immortal soul. Believer, let it be thy care to carry home these comfortable words on which we have dwelt, and meditate upon them as thy daily food throughout the week which is now before thee. Let them be ever in thy mind, and prepare thee for that holy sacrament which Jesus has mercifully ordained; let them add strength to thy faith and growth to thy sanctification; let them increase thy humility and thy thankfulness, thy zeal for God's glory, and thy desire to show forth His praise, thy love towards Christ and thy love towards thy brethren; for surely, dear friends, if God so loved us, it is a small matter if we love our fellow-sinners.

And you too, dear brethren, who have dared hitherto, like Gallio, to care for none of these things, you also are appealed to in this text. Learn then now, if you have not learned it yet, that this single verse, if there were no other, would be sufficient to condemn you in the last day, because it leaves you without excuse for remaining in your sins. You have deserved nothing but wrath; and yet, behold, here is God willing to save, loving, giving, promising all things. Oh! remember how great must be your guilt if you reject so great salvation. You are the very world that God has so loved; for your sakes He gave His only-begotten Son, and even now, at this minute, He is inviting you, by me, His minister, to accept the mercy which He freely offers, to be reconciled with Him who will one day be the Judge of all. (Isaiah 55:1, 2; 1:18; Acts 16:31.)

Come then, I entreat you, to your Father, in the name of Christ, for through Him we have boldness and access with confidence. Resist the attempts of the world, the flesh and the devil to detain you; resist even your best friend, if he would keep you back from God and tell you there will be a more convenient season than to-day. "As though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:20, 21).

May God the Holy Ghost bless the words which we have spoken to the everlasting benefit of all your souls.

Are you Regenerate?

J.C. Ryle

Reader, I wish to speak to you about Regeneration, or being born again.

The subject is a most important one at any time. Those words of our Lord Jesus Christ to Nicodemus are very solemn, "Unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3+) The world has gone through many changes since those words were spoken. Eighteen hundred years have passed away. Empires and kingdoms have risen and fallen. Great men and wise men have lived, labored, written, and died. But there stands the rule of the Lord Jesus unaltered and unchanged. And there it will stand, until heaven and earth shall pass away—"Unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

But the subject is one which is doubly important in the present day. Things have happened which have drawn special attention to it. Men's minds are full of it, and men's eyes are fixed on it. Regeneration is discussed in newspapers. Regeneration is talked of in private society. Regeneration is argued about in courts of law. Surely it is a time when every true Christian should examine himself upon the subject, and make sure that his views are sound. It is a time when we should not halt between two opinions. We should try

to know what we hold. We should be ready to give a reason for our belief. When the truth is assailed, those who love truth should grasp it more firmly than ever. Oh, for a greater spirit of decision throughout the land! Oh, for a more hearty determination to be always on the Lord's side!

Reader, I invite you to listen to me, while I try to bring this disputed question before you. I feel deeply that I can tell you nothing new. I know I can say nothing which has not been better said by better men than myself. But every additional witness may be of use in a disputed cause. And if I can only throw a little Scripture light on the subject of Regeneration, and make it plain to plain readers of the Bible, I shall thank God, and be abundantly satisfied. What are the opinions of men to you or me? He who judges us is the Lord! One point has to be ascertained, and only one. "What do the Scripture of truth say?"

Now I propose to attempt three things--

- I. Firstly, to explain what Regeneration, or being born again, means.
- II. Secondly, to show the necessity of Regeneration.
- III. Thirdly, to point out the marks and evidences of Regeneration.

If the Lord God shall enable me to make these three points clear to you, I believe I shall have done your soul a great service.

I. Let me then, first of all, explain what Regeneration, or being born again, means.

Regeneration means, that change of heart and nature which a man goes through when he becomes a true Christian.

I think there can be no question that there is an immense difference among those who profess and call themselves Christians. Beyond all dispute, there are always two classes in the outward Church--the class of those who are Christians in name and form only, and the class of those who are Christians in deed and in truth. All were not Israel who were called Israel, and all are not Christians who are called Christians. "In the visible Church," says an article of the Church of England, "the evil be ever mingled with the good."

Some, as the Thirty-nine Articles say, are "wicked and void of a lively faith." Others, as another article says, "are made like the image of God's only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, and walk piously in good works." Some worship God as a mere form--and some in spirit and in truth. Some give their hearts to God--and some give them to the world. Some believe the Bible, and live as if they believed it--others do not. Some feel their sins, and mourn over them--others do not. Some love Christ, trust in Him, and serve Him--others do not. In short, as Scripture says, some walk in the narrow way--some in the broad way; some are the good fish of the Gospel net--some are the bad fish; some are the wheat in Christ's field--some are the tares.

I think no man with his eyes open can fail to see all this, both in the Bible, and in the world around him. Whatever he may think about the subject I am writing of, he cannot possibly deny that this difference exists.

Now what is the explanation of the difference? I answer unhesitatingly-- Regeneration, or being born again. I answer, that true Christians are what they are, because they are Regenerate; and formal Christians are what they are, because they are not Regenerate. The heart of the true Christian has been changed. The heart of the Christian in name only, has not been changed. The change of heart makes the whole difference.

This change of heart is spoken of continually in the Bible, under various emblems and figures--

Ezekiel calls it, "a taking away the stony heart, and giving an heart of flesh;"--"a giving a new heart, and putting within us a new spirit." (Ezekiel 11:19⁺; Ezekiel 36:26⁺)

The apostle John sometimes calls it, being "born of God," sometimes, being "born again," sometimes, being "born of the Spirit." (John 1:13⁺; John 3:3-6⁺)

The apostle Peter, in the Acts, calls it "repenting and being converted." (Acts 3:19⁺)

The Epistle to the Romans speaks of it as a "being alive from the dead." (Ro 6:13⁺)

The second Epistle to the Corinthians calls it "being a new creature--old things have passed away, and all things become new." (2 Cor. 5:17⁺)

The Epistle to the Ephesians speaks of it as a resurrection together with Christ--"You has He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1⁺); as "a putting off the old man, which is corrupt--being renewed in the spirit of our minds--and putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Eph 4:22, 24⁺)

The Epistle to the Colossians calls it a "putting off the old man with his deeds, and putting on the new man, which is renewed in

knowledge after the image of Him that created him." (Col. 3:9, 10⁺).

The Epistle to Titus calls it, "the washing of Regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." (Titus 3:5⁺)

The first Epistle of Peter speaks of it as "a being called out of darkness into God's marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9⁺) And the second Epistle as "being made partakers of the divine nature." (2 Peter 1:4⁺)

The first Epistle of John calls it a "passing from death to life." (1 John 3:14⁺)

All these expressions come to the same thing in the end. They are all the same truths only viewed from different sides. And all have one and the same meaning. They describe a great radical change of heart and nature--a thorough alteration and transformation of the whole inner man--a participation in the resurrection life of Christ--or, to borrow the words of the Church of England Catechism, "a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness."

This change of heart in a true Christian is so complete, that no word could be chosen more fitting to express it than that word, "Regeneration," or "new birth." Doubtless it is no outward, bodily alteration--but undoubtedly it is an entire alteration of the inner man. It adds no new faculties to a man's mind--but it certainly gives an entirely new bent and bias to all his old ones. His will is so new, his tastes so new, his opinions so now, his views of sin, the world, the Bible, and Christ so new, that he is to all intents and purposes a new man. The change seems to bring a new being into existence. It may well be called being born again.

This change is not always given to believers at the same time in their lives. A vast multitude of people it is to be feared, go down to the grave without having been born again at all.

This change of heart does not always begin in the same way. With some, like the apostle Paul, and the jailor at Philippi, it is a sudden and violent change, attended with much distress of mind. With others, like Lydia of Thyatira, it is more gentle and gradual--their winter becomes spring almost without their knowing how. With some the change is brought about by the Spirit working through afflictions or providential visitations. With others, and probably the greater number of true Christians, the Word of God, preached or written, is the means of effecting it.*

* "The preaching of the Word is the great means which God has appointed for Regeneration--'faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.' (Ro 10:17⁺.) When God first created man, it is said that 'He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,' but when God new creates man, He breathes into his ears. This is the Word that raises the dead, calling them out of the grave--this is that Word that opens the eyes of the blind, that turns the heart of the disobedient and rebellious. And though wicked and profane men scoff at preaching, and count all ministers' words, and God's words too--but so much wind, yet they are such wind, believe it, as is able to tear rocks and rend mountains; such winds, as if ever they are saved, must shake and overturn the foundations of all their carnal confidence and presumption. Be exhorted, therefore, more to prize and more to frequent the preaching of the Word."--Hopkins. 1670.

This change is one which can only be known and discerned by its effects. Its beginnings are a hidden and secret thing. We cannot see them. Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us this most plainly--"The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof--but cannot tell whence it comes or where it goes; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8⁺) Would you know if you are Regenerate? You must try the question, by examining what you know of the effects of Regeneration. Those effects are always the same. The ways by which true Christians are led, in passing through their great change, are certainly various. But the state of heart and soul into which they are brought at last, is always the same. Ask them what they think of sin, Christ, holiness, the world, the Bible, and prayer, and you will find them all of one mind.

This change is one which no man can give to himself, nor yet to another. It would be as reasonable to expect the dead to raise themselves, or to require an artist to give a marble statue life. The sons of God are "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man--but of God." (John 1:13⁺) Sometimes the change is ascribed to God the Father--"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has begotten us again unto a living hope." (1 Peter 1:3⁺) Sometimes it is ascribed to God the Son--"The Son quickens whom He will." (John 3:21⁺) "If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone that does righteousness is born of Him." (1 John 2:29⁺) Sometimes it is ascribed to the Spirit--and He, in fact, is the great agent by whom it is always effected--"That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." (John 3:6⁺) But man has no power to work the change. It is something far, far beyond his reach. "The condition of man after the fall of Adam," says the tenth Article of the Church of England, "is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God." No minister on earth can convey grace to any one of his congregation at his discretion. He may preach as truly and faithfully as Paul or Apollos--but God must give the increase. (1 Cor. 3:6.) He may baptize with water in the name of the Trinity--but unless the Holy Spirit accompanies and blesses the ordinance, there is no death unto sin, and no new birth unto righteousness. Jesus alone, the great Head of the Church, can baptize with the Holy Spirit. Blessed and happy are they, who have the inward baptism, as well as the outward.*

* "The Scripture teaches, that no more than a child can beget itself, or a dead man quicken himself, or a nonentity create itself;

no more can any carnal man regenerate himself, or work true saving grace in his own soul."--Hopkins. 1670.

"There are two kinds of baptism, and both necessary--the one interior, which is the cleansing of the heart, the drawing of the Father, the operation of the Holy Spirit--and this baptism is in man when he believes and trusts that Christ is the only method of his salvation."--Hooper. 1547.

"It is on all parts gladly confessed, that there may be, in divers cases, life by virtue of inward baptism, where outward is not found."--Hooper. 1592.

"There is a baptism of the Spirit as of water."--Jeremy Taylor. 1660.

Reader, I lay before you the foregoing account of Regeneration. I say it is that change of heart which is the distinguishing mark of a true Christian man--the invariable companion of a justifying faith in Christ--the inseparable consequence of vital union with him. and the root and beginning of inward sanctification. I ask you to ponder it well before you go any further. It is of the utmost importance that your views should be clear upon this point--what Regeneration really is.

I know well that many will not allow that Regeneration is what I have described it to be. They will think the statement I have made, by way of definition, much too strong. Some hold that Regeneration only means admission into a state of ecclesiastical privileges--being made a member of the Church--but does not mean a change of heart. Some tell us that a Regenerate man has a certain power within him which enables him to repent and believe if he thinks fit--but that he still needs a further change in order to make him a true Christian. Some say there is a difference between Regeneration and being born again. Others say there is a difference between being born again and conversion.

To all this I have one simple reply--and that is, I can find no such Regeneration spoken of anywhere in the Bible. A Regeneration which only means admission into a state of ecclesiastical privileges may be ancient and primitive, for anything I know. But something more than this is needed. A few plain texts of Scripture are needed; and these texts have yet to be found.

Such a notion of Regeneration is utterly inconsistent with that which John gives us in his first epistle. It renders it necessary to invent the awkward theory that there are two Regenerations, and is thus eminently calculated to confuse the minds of unlearned people, and introduce false doctrine. It is a notion which seems not to answer to the solemnity with which our Lord introduces the subject to Nicodemus. When He said, "Verily, verily, unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," did He only mean, unless a man be admitted to a state of ecclesiastical privilege? Surely He meant more than this. Such a Regeneration a man might have, like Simon Magus, and yet never be saved. Such a Regeneration He might never have, like the penitent thief, and yet see the kingdom of God. Surely He must have meant a change of heart. As to the notion that there is any distinction between being Regenerate and being born again, it is one which will not bear examination. It is the general opinion of all who know Greek, that the two expressions mean one and the same thing.

To me indeed there seems to be much confusion of ideas, and indistinctness of apprehension in men's minds on this simple point--what Regeneration really is--and all arising from not simply adhering to the Word of God. That a man is admitted into a state of great privilege when he is made a member of a pure Church of Christ, I do not for an instant deny. That he is in a far better and more advantageous position for his soul, than if he did not belong to the Church, I make no question. That a wide door is set open before his soul, which is not set before the poor heathen, I can most clearly see. But I do not see that the Bible ever calls this Regeneration. And I cannot find a single text in Scripture which warrants the assumption that it is so. It is very important in theology to distinguish things that differ. Church privileges are one thing. Regeneration is another. I, for one, dare not confound them.

I am quite aware that great and good men have clung to that low view of Regeneration, to which I have adverted.* But when a doctrine of the everlasting Gospel is at stake, I can call no man master. The words of the old philosopher are never to be forgotten--"I love Plato, I love Socrates--but I love truth better than either." I say unhesitatingly, that those who hold the view that there are two Regenerations, can bring forward no plain text in proof of it. I firmly believe that no plain reader of the Bible only, would ever find this view there for himself; and that goes very far to make me suspect it is an idea of man's invention. The only Regeneration that I can see in Scripture is, not a change of state--but a change of heart. That is the view, I once more assert, which the Church Catechism takes when it speaks of the "death unto sin, and new birth unto righteousness," and on that view I take my stand.

* For instance, Bishop Davenant and Bishop Hopkins frequently speak of "a sacramental Regeneration," when they are handling the subject of baptism, as a thing entirely distinct from spiritual Regeneration. The general tenor of their writings is to speak of the godly as the regenerate, and the ungodly as the unregenerate. But with every feeling of respect for two such good men, the question yet remains--What Scripture warrant have we for saying there are two Regenerations? I answer unhesitatingly--We have none at all.

Reader, the doctrine before you is one of vital importance. This is no matter of names, and words, and forms, about which I am writing, and you are reading. It is a thing that you and I must feel and know by experience, each for himself, if we are to be saved.

Try, I beseech you, to become acquainted with it. Let not the din and smoke of controversy draw off your attention from your own heart. Is that heart changed? Alas, it is poor work to wrangle, and argue, and dispute about Regeneration, if after all we know nothing about it within.

Reader, Regeneration, or new birth, is the distinguishing mark of every true Christian. Now just consider what I say. Are you Regenerate, or are you not?

II. Let me show you, in the second place, the NECESSITY there is for our being Regenerated, or born again.

That there is such a necessity is most plain from our Lord Jesus Christ's words in the third chapter of John's Gospel. Nothing can be more clear and positive than His language to Nicodemus--"Unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born again." (John 3:7+)

The reason of this necessity is the exceeding sinfulness and corruption of our natural hearts. The words of Paul to the Corinthians are literally accurate--"The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him." (1 Cor. 2:14+) Just as rivers flow downward, and sparks fly upward, and stones fall to the ground, so does a man's heart naturally incline to what is evil. We love our soul's enemies--we dislike our soul's friends. We call good evil, and we call evil good. We take pleasure in ungodliness, we take no pleasure in Christ. We not only commit sin--but we also love sin. We not only need to be cleansed from the guilt of sin--but we also need to be delivered from its power. The natural tone, bias, and current, of our minds, must be completely altered. The image of God, which sin has blotted out, must be restored. The disorder and confusion which reigns within us must be put down. The first things must no longer be last, and the last first. The Spirit must let in the light on our hearts, put everything in its right place, and create all things new.

It ought always to be remembered that there are two distinct things which the Lord Jesus Christ does for every sinner whom He undertakes to save. He washes him from his sins in His own blood, and gives him a free pardon--this is his justification. He puts the Holy Spirit into his heart, and makes him an entire new man--this is his Regeneration.

The two things are both absolutely necessary to salvation. The change of heart is as necessary as the pardon; and the pardon is as necessary as the change. Without the pardon we have no right or title to heaven. Without the change we would not be fit and ready to enjoy heaven, even if we got there.

The two things are never separate. They are never found apart. Every justified man is also a Regenerate man, and every Regenerate man is also a justified man. When the Lord Jesus Christ gives a man remission of sins, He also gives him repentance. When He grants peace with God, He also grants power to become a son of God. There are two great standing maxims of the glorious Gospel, which ought never to be forgotten. One is, "He who believes not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16.) The other is, "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." (Ro 8:9+)

Reader, the man who denies the universal necessity of Regeneration, can know very little of the heart's corruption. He is blind indeed who fancies that pardon is all we need in order to get to heaven, and does not see that pardon without a change of heart would be a useless gift. Blessed be God that both are freely offered to us in Christ's Gospel, and that Jesus is able and willing to give the one as well as the other.

Surely you must be aware that the vast majority of people in the world see nothing, feel nothing, and know nothing in religion as they ought. How and why is this, is not the present question. I only put it to your conscience--is it not the fact?

Tell them of the sinfulness of many things which they are doing continually--and what is generally the reply? "They see no harm."

Tell them of the awful peril in which their souls are--of the shortness of time--the nearness of eternity--the uncertainty of life--the reality of judgment. "They feel no danger."

Tell them of their need of a Savior--mighty, loving, and divine, and of the impossibility of being saved from hell, except by faith in Him. It all falls flat and dead on their ears. "They see no such great barrier between themselves and heaven."

Tell them of holiness, and the high standard of living which the Bible requires. They cannot comprehend the need of such strictness. "They see no use in being so very good."

There are thousands and tens of thousands of such people on every side of us. They will hear these things all their lives. They will even attend the ministry of the most striking preachers, and listen to the most powerful appeals to their consciences. And yet, when you come to visit them on their deathbeds, they are like men and women who never heard these things at all. They know nothing of the leading doctrines of the Gospel by experience. They can render no reason whatever of their own hope.

And why is all this? What is the explanation--what is the cause of such a state of things? It all comes from this--that man naturally has no sense of spiritual things. In vain the sun of righteousness shines before him--the eyes of his soul are blind, and cannot see.

In vain the music of Christ's invitations sounds around him--the ears of his soul are deaf and cannot hear it. In vain the wrath of God against sin is set forth--the perceptions of his soul are stopped up--like the sleeping traveler, he does not perceive the coming storm. In vain the bread and water of life are offered to him--his soul is neither hungry for the one, nor thirsty for the other. In vain he is advised to flee to the Great Physician--his soul is unconscious of its disease--why should he go? In vain you put a price into his hand to buy wisdom--the mind of his soul wanders; he is like the lunatic who calls straws a crown, and dust diamonds--he says, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Ah, reader, there is nothing so sad as the utter corruption of our nature! There is nothing so painful as the anatomy of a dead soul.

Now what does such a man need? He needs to be born again, and made a new creature. He needs a complete putting off the old man, and a complete putting on the new. We do not live our natural life until we are born into the world; and we do not live our spiritual life until we are born of the Spirit.

But, reader, you must furthermore be aware that the vast majority of people are utterly unfit to enjoy heaven in their present state. I lay it before you as a great fact. Is it not so?

Look at the masses of men and women gathered together in our cities and towns, and observe them well. They are all dying creatures--all immortal beings--all going to the judgment seat of Christ--all certain to live forever in heaven or in hell. But where is the slightest evidence that most of them are in the least degree fit and ready for heaven?

Look at the greater part of those who are called Christians, in every part throughout the land. Take any parish you please in town or country. Take that which you know best. What are the tastes and pleasures of the majority of people who live there? What do they like best, when they have a choice? What do they enjoy most, when they can have their own way? Observe the manner in which they spend their Sundays. Mark how little delight they seem to feel in the Bible and prayer. Take notice of the low and earthly notions of pleasure and happiness, which everywhere prevail, among young and old, among rich and poor. Mark well these things, and then think quietly over this question--"What would these people do in heaven?"

You and I, it may be said, know little about heaven. Our notions of heaven may be very dim and indistinct. But at all events, I suppose we are agreed in thinking that heaven is a very holy place--that God is there--and Christ is there--and saints and angels are there--that sin is not there in any shape--and that nothing is said, thought, or done, which God does not like. Only let this be granted, and then I think there can be no doubt the great majority of professing Christians are as little fit for heaven as a bird for swimming beneath the sea, or a fish for living upon dry land.

And what is it they need in order to make them fit to enjoy heaven? They need to be Regenerated or born again. It is not a little changing and outward amendment they require. It is not merely the putting a restraint on raging passions, and the quieting of unruly affections. All this is not enough. Old age--the lack of opportunity for indulgence--the fear of man, may produce all this. The tiger is still a tiger, even when he is chained; and the serpent is still a serpent, even when he lies motionless and coiled up. The alteration needed is far greater and deeper. They must have a new nature put within them. They must be made new creatures. The fountain-head must be purified. The root must be set right. Each one needs a new heart and a new will. The change required is not that of the snake, when he casts his skin and yet remains a reptile still. It is the change of the caterpillar, when he dies and his crawling life ceases--but from his body rises the butterfly--a new animal, with a new nature. All this, and nothing less, is required.

The plain truth is, the vast proportion of professing Christians in the churches have nothing whatever of Christianity, except the name. The reality of Christianity, the graces, the experience, the faith, the hopes, the life, the conflict, the tastes, the hungering and thirsting after righteousness--all these are things of which they know nothing at all. They need to be converted as truly as any among the heathen to whom Paul preached, and to be turned from idols, and renewed in the spirit of their minds, as really, if not as literally. And one main part of the message which should be continually delivered to the greater portion of every congregation on earth, is this--"You must be born again." I write this down deliberately. I know it will sound dreadful and uncharitable in many ears. But I ask anyone to take the New Testament in his hand and see what it says is Christianity, and compare that with the ways of professing Christians, and then deny the truth of what I have written, if he can.

And now let everyone who reads these pages remember this grand principle of Scriptural religion--"No salvation without Regeneration--no spiritual life without a new birth--no heaven without a new heart."

Think not for a moment that the subject of this tract is a mere matter of controversy--an empty question for learned men to argue about--but not one that concerns you. Away with such an idea forever! It concerns you deeply. It touches your own eternal interests. It is a thing that you must know for yourself, feel for yourself, and experience for yourself, if you would ever be saved. No man, woman, or child, will ever enter heaven without having been born again.*

* "Make sure to yourselves this great change. It is no notion that I have now preached unto you. Your natures and your lives must be changed, or, believe it, you will be found at the last day under the wrath of God. For God will not change or alter the Word

that is gone out of His mouth. He has said it--Christ, who is the truth and Word of God, has pronounced it--that without the new birth, or Regeneration, no man shall inherit the kingdom of God."--Hopkins. 1670.

And think not for one moment that this Regeneration is a change which people may go through after they are dead, though they never went through it while they were alive. Away with such a notion forever! Now or never is the only time to be saved. Now, in this world of toil and labor--of money--getting and business--now you must be prepared for heaven, if you are ever to be prepared at all. Now is the only time to be justified, now the only time to be sanctified, and now the only time to be born again. So sure as the Bible is true, the man who dies without these three things, will only rise again at the last day to be lost forever.

You may be saved, and reach heaven without many things which men reckon of great importance--without riches, without learning, without books, without worldly comforts, without health, without house, without land, without friends--but without Regeneration you will never be saved at all. Without your natural birth you would never have lived, and moved on earth; without a new birth you will never live and move in heaven. I bless God that the saints in glory will be a multitude that no man can number. I comfort myself with the thought that, after all, there will be "a great multitude" in heaven. But this I know and am persuaded of from God's Word, that of all who reach heaven, there will not be one single individual who has not been born again.*

* "Regeneration, or the new birth, is of absolute necessity unto eternal life. There is no other change simply necessary--but only this. If you are poor, you may so continue, and yet be saved. If you are despised, you may so continue, and yet be saved. If you are unlearned, you may so continue, and yet be saved. Only one change is necessary. If you are wicked and ungodly and continued so, Christ, who has the keys of heaven, who shuts and no man opens, has Himself doomed you, that you shall never enter into the kingdom of God."--Hopkins. 1670.

"Are you born again?" I say to everyone whose eye is upon this page. Once more I repeat what I have already said, "No salvation without a new birth."

III. Let me, in the third place, point out the MARKS of being Regenerate, or born again.

It is a most important thing to have clear and distinct views on this part of the subject we are considering. You have seen what Regeneration is, and why it is necessary to salvation. The next step is to find out the signs and evidences by which a man may know whether he is born again or not--whether his heart has been changed by the Holy Spirit, or whether his change is yet to come.

Now these signs and evidences are laid down plainly for us in Scripture. God has not left us in ignorance on this point. He foresaw how some would torture themselves with doubts and questionings, and would never believe it was well with their souls. He foresaw how others would take it for granted they were Regenerate who had no right to do so at all. He has therefore mercifully provided us with a test and gauge of our spiritual condition, in the First Epistle general of John. There He has written for our learning, what the Regenerate man is, and what the Regenerate man does--his ways, his habits, his manner of life, his faith, his experience. Everyone who wishes to possess the key to a right understanding of this subject, should thoroughly study this First Epistle of John.

Reader, I invite your particular attention to these marks and evidences of Regeneration, while I try to set them before you in order. Forget everything else in this volume, if you will--but do not forget this part of it. I might easily mention other evidences besides those I am about to mention. But I will not do so. I would rather confine myself to the First Epistle of John, because of the peculiar explicitness of its statements about the man that is born of God. He that has an ear, let him hear what the beloved Apostle says about the marks of Regeneration.

1. First of all, John says, "No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God." "We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning." (1 John 3:9+; 1 Jn 5:18+.)

A Regenerate man does not commit sin as a habit. He no longer sins with his heart and will, and whole inclination, as an unregenerate man does. There was probably a time when he did not think whether his actions were sinful or not, and never felt grieved after doing evil. There was no quarrel between him and sin--they were friends. Now he hates sin, flees from it, fights against it, counts it his greatest plague, groans under the burden of its presence, mourns when he falls under its influence, and longs to be delivered from it altogether. In one word, sin no longer pleases him, nor is even a matter of indifference--it has become the abominable thing which he hates. He cannot prevent it dwelling within him. "If he said he had no sin, there would be no truth in him" (1 John 1:8+)--but he can say that he keenly abhors it, and the great desire of his soul is not to commit sin at all. He cannot prevent bad thoughts arising within him, and shortcomings, omissions, and defects appearing, both in his words and actions. He knows, as James says, that "In many things we offend all." (James 3:2+) But he can say truly, and as in the sight of God, that these things are a daily grief and sorrow to him, and that his whole nature does not consent unto them, as that of the unregenerate man does. Reader, I place this mark before you. What would the Apostle say about you? Are you born of God?*

* "The interpretation of this place that I judge to be the most natural and unforced, is this--'No one born of God makes a practice

of sinning;' that is, he does not sin in that malignant manner in which the children of the devil do--he does not make a trade of sin, nor live in the constant and allowed practice of it. There is a great difference between regenerate and unregenerate people in the very sins that they commit. All indeed sin--but a child of God cannot sin--that is, though he does sin, yet he cannot sin after such a manner as wicked and unregenerate men do."--Hopkins. 1670.

2. Secondly. John says, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." (1 John 5:1⁺)

A Regenerate man believes that Jesus Christ is the only Savior by whom his soul can be pardoned and redeemed; that He is the divine person appointed and anointed by God the Father for this very purpose, and that beside Him there is no Savior at all. In himself he sees nothing but unworthiness--but in Christ he sees ground for the fullest confidence, and trusting in Him, he believes that his sins are all forgiven and his iniquities all put away. He believes that for the sake of Christ's finished work and death upon the cross, he is reckoned righteous in God's sight, and may look forward to death and judgment without alarm. He may have his doubts and fears. He may sometimes tell you he feels as if he had no faith at all. But ask him whether he is willing to trust in anything instead of Christ, and see what he will say. Ask him whether he will rest his hopes of eternal life on his own goodness, his own amendments, his prayers, his minister, his doings in Church and out of Church, either in whole or in part, and see what he will reply. Ask him whether he will give up Christ, and place his confidence in any other way of salvation. Depend upon it he would say, that though he does feel weak and bad, he would not give up Christ for all the world. Depend upon it--he would say he found a preciousness in Christ, a suitableness to his own soul in Christ, that he found no where else, and that he must cling to Him.

Reader, I place this mark also before you. What would the Apostle say about you? Are you born of God?

3. Thirdly. John says, "Everyone that does righteousness is born of Him." (1 John 2:29⁺)

The Regenerate man is a holy man. He endeavors to live according to God's will, to do the things that please God, to avoid the things that God hates. His aim and desire is to love God with heart and soul, and mind and strength, and to love his neighbor as himself. His wish is to be continually looking to Christ as his example as well as his Savior, and to show himself Christ's friend by doing whatever Christ commands. No doubt he is not perfect. None will tell you that sooner than himself. He groans under the burden of indwelling corruption cleaving to him. He finds an evil principle within him constantly warring against grace, and trying to draw him away from God. But he does not consent to it, though he cannot prevent its presence. In spite of all short-comings, the average bent and bias of his ways is holy--his doings holy--his tastes holy--and his habits holy. In spite of all his swerving and turning aside, like a ship going against a contrary wind, the general course of his life is in one direction--toward God and for God. And though he may sometimes feel so low that he questions whether he is a Christian at all, in his calmer moments he will generally be able to say, with old John Newton, "I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I want to be, I am not what I hope to be in another world--but still I am not what I once used to be, and by the grace of God I am what I am."*

* "Let none conclude that they have no grace, because they have many imperfections in their obedience. Your grace may be very weak and imperfect, and yet you may be truly born again to God, and be a genuine son and heir of heaven."--Hopkins. 1670.

Reader, I place this mark also before you. What would the Apostle say about you? Are you born of God?

4. Fourthly. John says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." (1 John 3:14⁺)

A Regenerate man has a special LOVE for all true disciples of Christ. Like his Father in heaven, he loves all men with a genuine general love--but he has a special love for those who are of one mind with himself. Like his Lord and Savior, he loves the worst of sinners, and could weep over them--but he has a peculiar love for those who are believers. He is never so much at home as when he is in their company. He is never so happy as when he is among the saints and the excellent of the earth. Others may value learning, or cleverness, or agreeableness, or riches, or rank--in the society they choose. The Regenerate man values grace. Those who have most grace, and are most like Christ, are those he loves most. He feels that they are members of the same family with himself, his brethren, his sisters, children of the same Father. He feels that they are fellow-soldiers fighting under the same captain, warring against the same enemy. He feels that they are his fellow-travelers, journeying along the same road, tried by the same difficulties, and soon about to rest with him in the same eternal home. He understands them, and they understand him. There is a kind of spiritual brotherhood between them. He and they may be very different in many ways--in rank, in station, in wealth. What does it matter? They are Jesus Christ's people. They are his Father's sons and daughters. Then he cannot help loving them.

Reader, I place this mark also before you. What would the Apostle say about you? Are you born of God?

5. Fifthly. John says, "Whoever is born of God overcomes the world." (1 John 5:4⁺)

A Regenerate man does not make the WORLD'S opinion his rule of right and wrong. He goes against the stream of the world's ways, notions, and customs. "What will men say?" is no longer a turning point with him. He overcomes the love of the world. He

finds no pleasure in things which most around him call happiness. He cannot enjoy their enjoyments--they weary him; they appear to him vain, unprofitable, and unworthy of an immortal being. He overcomes the fear of the world. He is content to do many things which all around him think unnecessary, to say the least. They find fault with him--it does not move him. They ridicule him--he does not give way. He loves the praise of God more than the praise of man. He fears offending Him more than giving offence to man. He has counted the cost. He has taken his stand. It is a small thing with him now whether he is blamed or praised. His eye is upon Him who is invisible. He is resolved to follow Jesus wherever he goes. It may be necessary in this following to come out from the world and be separate. The Regenerate man will not shrink from doing so. Tell him that he is unlike other people, that his views are not the views of society generally, and that he is making himself singular and peculiar--you will not shake him. He is no longer the servant of fashion and custom. To please the world is quite a secondary consideration with him. His first aim is to please God.

Reader, I place this mark also before you. What would the Apostle say about you? Are you born of God?

6. Sixthly. John says, "He who was born of God keeps himself." (1 John 5:18⁴)

A Regenerate man is very careful of his own soul. He endeavors not only to keep clear of sin--but also to keep clear of everything which may lead to it. He is careful about the company he keeps. He feels that evil communications corrupt the heart, and that evil is far more catching than good, just as disease is more infectious than health. He is careful about the employment of his time--his chief desire about it is to spend it profitably. He is careful about the books he reads--he fears getting his mind poisoned by mischievous writings. He is careful about the friendships he forms--it is not enough for him that people are kind, and amiable, and good-natured--all this is very well--but will they do good to his soul? He is careful over his own daily habits and behavior--he tries to recollect that his own heart is deceitful, and that the world is full of wickedness, that the devil is always laboring to do him harm, and therefore he would sincerely be always on his guard. He desires to live like a soldier in an enemy's country, to wear his armor continually, and to be prepared for temptation. He finds by experience that his soul is ever among enemies, and he studies to be a watchful, humble, prayerful man.

Reader, I place this mark also before you. What would the Apostle say of you? Are you born of God?

Such are the six great marks of Regeneration, which God has given for our learning. Let everyone who has gone so far with me, read them over with attention, and lay them to heart. I believe they were written with the view to settle the great question of the present day, and intended to prevent disputes. Once more then, I ask the reader to mark and consider them.

I know there is a vast difference in the depth and distinctness of these marks among those who are Regenerate. In some people they are faint, dim, feeble, and hardly to be discerned. You almost need a microscope to make them out. In others they are bold, sharp, clear, plain, and unmistakable, so that he who runs may read them. Some of these marks are more visible in some people, and others are more visible in others. It seldom happens that all are equally manifest in one and the same soul. All this I am quite ready to allow.

But still, after every allowance, here we find boldly painted the six marks of being born of God. Here are certain positive things laid down by John, as parts of the Regenerate man's character, as plainly and distinctly as the features of a man's face. Here is an inspired Apostle writing one of the last general Epistles to the Church of Christ, telling us that a man born of God--

(EDITORIAL COMMENT - LET ME QUALIFY RYLE'S POINTS. HE ALLUDES TO THIS IN THE PRECEDING EXPLANATIONS SO THIS IS IN A SENSE REITERATION. CLEARLY RYLE IS NOT SAYING ONE NEVER SINS, FOR WE ALL SIN EVERY DAY. WHAT HE IS SAYING IS THAT THE BENT OF OUR LIFE IS TOWARD HOLINESS AND NOT TOWARD SIN. IN OTHER WORDS, OUR HABITUAL PRACTICE IS NOT TO COMMIT SIN. THAT PRACTICE DOES NECESSITATE SOME ACT OF OUR WILL, BUT BELOVED, EVEN THAT ACT IS ENERGIZED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD IN US. THIS MYSTERIOUS INTERACTION OF OUR WILL AND GOD'S POWER IS SEEN IN Phil 2:12-13 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out ([present imperative See discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey this command](#)) your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for (term of explanation) it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." The NLT gives a helpful paraphrase -" For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him." (Phi 2:13NLT) THE POINT IS THAT WE WOULD NOT HAVE A HOLY DESIRE (TO NOT COMMIT SIN) NOR A HOLY POWER (TO ENABLE US NOT TO COMMIT SIN) UNLESS WE HAD A SUPERNATURAL SOURCE, THE HOLY SPIRIT.). (See [commentary on Phil 2:12](#) and [commentary on Phil 2:13](#)).**

- does not commit sin;
- believes that Jesus is the Christ;
- does righteousness;
- loves the brethren;

- overcomes the world;
- and keeps himself.

And more than once in the very same Epistle when these marks are mentioned, the Apostle tells us that he who has not this or that mark, is "not of God." I ask the reader to observe all this.

Now what shall we say to these things? What they can say who hold that Regeneration is only an admission to outward Church privileges, I am sure I do not know. For myself I say boldly, I can only come to one conclusion. That conclusion is, that those people only are regenerate who have these six marks about them, and that all men and women who have not these marks, are not regenerate, are not born again. And I firmly believe that this is the conclusion to which the Apostle wished us to come.

Reader, have you these marks? I know not what your opinions may be on this much-disputed subject of Regeneration. I know not on which side you may rank yourself. But once for all I warn you, if you find nothing in yourself answering to the marks I have been speaking of, you have reason indeed to be afraid. Without these marks it is vain to fancy you are Scripturally regenerate. The witness of the Apostle John is clear and express, that you are not. There must be a certain family likeness between God and His children. Without it you are none of His. There must be some visible evidence of the Spirit being within you, as plain as the stamp upon gold and silver, however small. Without this evidence you are only boasting of a false faith. Show me your faith without your works, said the Apostle James, when he wrote against those who are content with a dead faith. Show me your Regeneration without its fruits, is an argument that ought to be pressed home on many a conscience in the present day.

Reader, if you have NOT these marks, awake to a sense of your danger. Arise from your sleep of indifference and unconcern. Know the immense peril of hell and eternal misery in which you stand. Begin to use diligently every means by which God is ordinarily pleased to give grace to men's hearts, when they have not received it in their youth. Be diligent in hearing the Gospel preached. Be diligent in reading the Bible. Be diligent, above all, in prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

If you take this course, I have every hope for you. None ever sought the Lord Jesus Christ in simplicity and sincerity--and sought in vain.

If, on the contrary, you refuse to take this course, and will continue as you are, I have little hope for you, and many fears. If the Bible be true, you are not yet born again. You will not use the most likely means to obtain this mighty blessing. What can I say but this, "the Lord have mercy upon your soul!"

Reader, if you HAVE these marks I have been speaking of, be advised, and strive every year to make them more clear and plain. Let your repentance be a growing habit--your faith an increasing faith--your holiness a progressive holiness--your victory over the world a more decided victory--your love to the brethren a more hearty love--your watchfulness over yourself a more jealous watchfulness. Take this advice, and you will never repent of it. This is the way to be useful and happy in your religion. This is the way to put to silence the opposition of the enemies of truth. Let others, if they will, have Regeneration on their tongues, and nowhere else. Let it be your care to have it shining forth in your life, and to feel it in your heart.

Reader, I commend what I have been saying to your serious consideration. I believe that I have told you nothing but what is God's truth. You live in a day of gross darkness on the subject of Regeneration. Thousands are darkening God's counsel by confounding baptism and Regeneration. Beware of this. Keep the two subjects separate in your mind. Get clear views about Regeneration first of all, and then you are not likely to fall into mistakes about baptism. And when you have got clear views hold them fast--and never let them go!

Have I Been Born Again?

James Smith

A more important question cannot engage my attention, or employ my time; for Jesus has said, "Truly, truly, I say unto you — unless a man is born again — he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). As, therefore, I wish to be a subject of God's kingdom on earth, and in Heaven; and as I cannot without a new birth — let me carefully examine myself, and endeavor to ascertain if I have been born again. I frequently fear I have not, because . . .

- my heart is so depraved,
- my sinful passions are so strong,
- my walk is so uneven, and
- Satan so often gets the mastery of me.

My fears are very painful, they weaken my faith, agitate my mind, and disturb my plans. But I would rather fear — if I am right; than live in calm and serenity — if I am wrong. Lord, search me. Lord, help me to examine myself. Lord, decide the doubtful case for me. Lord, set me right, and then keep me right.

Those who are born again are . . .

- convinced of sin,
- concerned about sin,
- flee to Jesus to be saved from sin,
- and have their hearts set against sin.

How is it with me? I see and feel every day that I am a sinner; sin often fills me with the deepest concern; I do look to Jesus as the only sacrifice for sin, and cry to him to save me from the guilt, power, love, and consequence of sin; and I feel, at least at times, hatred to sin, to all sin.

But, alas, I feel that sin has still great power in my heart, it works in my imagination, conscience, will, and affections; it appears in my looks, words, and conduct. It is too strong for me, I cannot subdue it, or free myself from it. Never did the Publican's prayer suit anyone better than it does me at this moment, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

Some sins I always hate — but there are some sins to which I feel my heart secretly inclining. My whole soul is not set against all sin in myself, at least not at all times; and, in consequence of this, I often doubt, fear, and give way to unbelief. Oh, how painful the suspicion which now arises in my heart, "If I should find out at last that after all my profession, after all my religious enjoyments, and after I have preached to others — that I am not born again, and therefore am a castaway!" The supposition is dreadful, the doubt seems to pierce one's very vitals. O Jesus, you search the thoughts and the heart; oh, let me know if I am born again!

Those who are born again, pray without ceasing. They have . . .

- such a feeling sense of their necessities,
- such a view of the Redeemer's fullness, and
- feel a principle working within them, which urges them to approach the throne of grace.

How is it with me? I cannot live without prayer. I pray at set times, and I pray in almost all places, and at almost all times. But my prayers are often so short, so lifeless, so powerless — that though I use no form, they appear to be no better than form. Pray I must — but I am often impelled by fear, led by a sense of duty, and go to it in a mere customary manner. Prayer is often a task, a burden, and sometimes it is even wearisome. Can I be born again? But if I am not — would I pray at all? At least, would it seem to be natural to me to pray? Would I approach the Lord, as I often do, without ceremony — and commence telling him my tale of woe, and asking his blessing and intervention, without any introduction? Do the unconverted do this? Where the life of God is not in the soul — is this, can this be the case? Holy and ever blessed Spirit, you know my real case, my true condition, reveal it to me. If I am regenerate — banish my doubts, disperse my fears, inspire me with confidence, and bear your own witness with my heart, "that I am born of God."

Those who are born again love the saints, all the saints; and the loving John has written, "We know that we have passed from death unto life — because we love the brethren." Well, I do love many of the saints — but do I love all that I know? I love those who are with me, and are kind to me; but do I love those who differ from me, and who treat me unkindly? Do I love a saint in rags? Do I love a believer in sickness and destitution? Do I love the poor, illiterate, uncultivated, more repulsive, of the people of God? Do I love saints because they are saints, and just in proportion to their resemblance to the Lord Jesus Christ? Alas, I sometimes fear that I love something in them besides the image of Christ, and love them for something, also, besides their saintship. How difficult I find it to love some of them at all. How I can dwell upon their faults, and speak of their failings. I feel jealous of some, and I envy others. Would this be the case if my heart was sound in God's statutes? Then I am so changeable towards them, sometimes I love them so warmly, and feel as if nothing was too good to give them, or too arduous to undertake for them; but at another time I have nothing to bestow, nor any inclination to serve them. Oh, heart-searching God, examine me, I beg you, and let me know — am I, or am I not, born again!

Those who are born again love the Savior. This is often my brightest evidence. I do find Jesus precious. There is music in his name. There is adaptation in his mercy, merit, and word, to my circumstances. I love to hear him exalted, and to exalt him myself. I never feel as if I could think highly enough of him, or speak of him so as to show forth half his excellencies. But, then, do I love him for what he is in himself, and for what he has done for others? Or is mine only selfish love, arising from a persuasion that I am a favorite, that he has saved me from Hell, and will bring me to Heaven?

Besides which, my love is so fluctuating, at times I seem to love many inferior things more than him; my heart is as hard as a stone,

my affections are as cold as winter, and I can perceive little if any difference between myself and the worldling, or those who are clearly only mere professors. Though at other times I find my heart warm at the mention of his name, and glow when his praises are sung. Oh, that the love of Jesus did so . . .

- fill my heart,
- inflame my affections,
- regulate my actions, and
- consecrate my life —
- that it would be impossible for me to doubt whether I loved him sincerely, constantly, and consistently — or not!

I sometimes think that if I have not loved Jesus — I never have loved anyone; if I do not love him now — I love no one. But I want certainty.

- Eternity is so solemn.
- Hell is so dreadful.
- Heaven is so glorious.
- Death is so near.
- Delusions are so powerful.
- Mistakes are so common.

Therefore I want the indubitable proof, the unquestionable evidence, the living, abiding witness within and without me — that I am born of God. Oh, holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three persons in One God, I beseech you to decide for me, and register that decision by the finger of the Holy Spirit upon my conscience — am I born again?

Reader, I have opened my heart to you. I have told you my case. I have unfolded my concern. I have showed you my desire. I have confessed my imperfections. I have made known my anxieties.

How is it with you? Do you ever feel thus? Have you any sympathy with me in my hopes and fears, my desires and doubtings, my pains and pleasures? It is a solemn, most solemn subject — for if we are not born again. . .

- we cannot be saved,
- Heaven will be barred against us,
- hope will fly from us,
- despair will brood over us,
- the burning lake will receive us,
- indescribable torments will be awarded to us,
- devils and damned souls will be our miserable companions,
- God will be our enemy, our irreconcilable enemy forever and ever!

Oh, let us, then, while we have the opportunity, search our own hearts, cry to the Lord for mercy, nor rest satisfied until we can say, "We are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever!"

Am I Born Again?

James Smith

The new birth is the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul, by which we are created anew in Christ Jesus, become new creatures, and are fitted for a place in God's church on earth, and God's service in heaven. It is of the greatest importance, for "except a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." It is something more than spiritual convictions or impressions; for many have been convinced, and impressed — who have never been regenerated. Many are born of God, who fear they are not; and many imagine they have experienced this change, who never have. Let us therefore seriously inquire, "How am I to know whether I am born again?"

This great change is often produced imperceptibly, though in some instances it is sudden and striking. We are not therefore to pry curiously, to find out when it was produced — but only to seek for proof whether we have experienced it or not.

First, let us look at our desires, our habitual desires — for desire is the appetite of the new man. If we desire above all things else —

a saving interest in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to be made holy in heart and life — that is one proof. Our Savior has said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." And the Psalmist long before that testified, "He will fulfill the desire of those who fear him, he also will hear their cry, and will save them." But by desires, we do not mean mere cold, powerless wishes; such are only the desires of the slothful — which end in death. The desires we intend, are like the appetite of the hungry man, which will not let him rest without food, or be put off with anything but food.

The desires which spring from a spiritual nature are fixed on their object, and will not let the person rest until the object is attained. The soul expresses its desires in prayer, manifests its desires in reading the Scriptures, hearing the gospel, and making use of all means to secure a saving interest in Christ; and to enjoy the sanctifying influences and operations of the Holy Spirit.

Second, let us look at our prayers, for prayer is the breath of the new-born soul: hence it was said of Saul of Tarsus, to prove his conversion, "Behold, he prays!" Many say prayers, or go through the form of prayer from habit; but there is a time in the experience of every soul that is born of God, when it first begins to pray in real earnest. Then prayer is like the cry of the child for food; or the call for help, of one in great danger. The cry is for the pardon of sin, acceptance with God, or a present salvation. The prayer is from the heart, it rises and ascends as naturally as a sense of hunger leads us to seek food, we feel that we must pray; nor will having set times for prayer satisfy — but the soul will cry unto God in business, or while walking by the way; nor will it cease crying until it is heard and answered. Delays may discourage, and temptations for a time may cool our ardor; but the pinching sense of need, and the deep-seated desire, will set us going again, and we shall cry, and cry again, until God says unto the soul, "I am your salvation!"

Third, let us look at our faith, for faith is the confidence of the divine nature, hence John says, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." The Holy Spirit also leads those who are born again, to receive the testimony of God concerning his Son. Which testimony is, that he is the only Savior, the Son of God, and his unspeakable gift. Receiving this testimony into the heart, we look to him for salvation, we personally apply to be saved by him, we exercise confidence in him, and commit our souls to him. In doing this we may be exercised at times with many fears, we may be tried by distressing doubts, and the suggestions of Satan may fill us with gloom and sadness; but again and again the effort will be made, the cry for help will ascend to heaven, and at length we shall make the full surrender, and trust in Christ alone. No one can be said really to believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God — who does not receive him as God's gift, apply to him to be saved by him, and render to him the obedience of the heart and life. Now he who believes on Jesus, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation — but is passed from death unto life.

Fourth, let us look at our love, for love is the beating of the heart of the new man in Christ. By nature, we love what is natural; and being carnal, we love what is carnal. By the new birth we become spiritual, and therefore we love spiritual things and spiritual people. The Apostle bears witness to this when he says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." We love them, because they are spiritual, because they resemble Christ, because in our estimation they are the excellent of the earth. If we love the saints, as saints; and because they are saints, it is clear that we love the Savior — for we would not love the likeness, if we did not love the original. "Everyone who loves the father — loves his child as well." If our love goes forth in desires after Christ; if our love sighs to resemble and be united to the saints; if our love leads us to prefer the Lord's people to all other people, and their company to all other society — then it is spiritual love, and can only flow from a spiritual nature.

Those who are born of God — love the house of God, the ordinances of God, the word of God, the people of God, and the ways of God; and when they do not feel their hearts going out after these, or their affections set upon them — they are not satisfied or happy. Hear the Apostle John, "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loves, is born of God, and knows God."

Fifth, let us look at our hope, for hope is the expectation of the new creature. It is an expectation of good things promised, simply on the ground of the divine promises; especially of the heavenly inheritance, of the free grace of God, through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence Peter writes, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into a priceless inheritance — an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay!"

The heart, when the man is born again, is set upon being like Christ, and where Christ is; and the heart being set upon it — this becomes the grand object of pursuit. In time, as faith embraces the promises — hope springs up; by degrees hope acquires strength, and the soul lives in hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began. This hope bears the soul up — when trouble swells like a sea; this hope bears the soul on — when opposition and temptations try to obscure the path. It is a good hope through grace, and therefore saves us from indulging despondency, giving way to despair, or sinking amidst our conflicts and trials.

Finally, let us look at our lives — for the life is the fruit of the incorruptible seed of which the regenerated are begotten, and which lives and abides forever. If we love sin, indulge sin, or live in sin — we are not, cannot be born of God; for in the new birth, God stamps his own likeness upon us; and imparts a holy nature to us, as we read, "that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." Therefore the Apostle John declares, "No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on

sinning, because he has been born of God." This does not mean that he is perfectly holy, or that he never sins at all; but it means, that his heart is set against sin, he is delivered from the power and authority of sin, and he cannot live in the practice of sin. He wants to be holy. He strives to live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in the present world. Sin is not his element, he cannot follow it as his trade, or indulge in it as his pleasure.

If then your desires go after spiritual things — if you pray from the heart — if you believe that Jesus is the Son of God — if you love all who love God — if you hope in God's mercy through Christ — and if striving to avoid sin, you seek to live in holiness, and righteousness before God and man — then unquestionably you are born of God.

But in addition to all we have said, there is the distinct, inward witness of the Holy Spirit, in the heart, for "the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God." Rest not, until you have obtained that blessing. Do not encourage doubts or fears. Do not give way to the distressing injections, and insinuations of Satan. Hold fast by any one evidence that you have, even if it is but one. But be not satisfied, until you have obtained the full assurance of hope. Seek the witness, the sealing, and the pledge of the Spirit in your heart, as a gift from God, to enable you to glorify his grace.

Reader, after reading the above, what conclusion do you come to? Are you born again? Or, are you still in doubt upon the point? Make sure work of it, in order to which be much in prayer, keep close to the word, honor the Holy Spirit; and if uncertainty still remains, consult a godly minister, lay your heart open to him, and ask his advice and prayers. But if you are obliged to come to the conclusion that you are still in your natural condition, give up all searching for evidences, and as a poor, lost, and ruined sinner — come to the Lord Jesus Christ, just as you are, and just as if you had never attempted to come before, and cast your guilty soul on him. You need not perish. You have no reason, no right, because you have no warrant to despair.

Jesus calls you to him, arise and go as the poor blind man in the gospel did. He went as blind, ragged, filthy, as he was. He went for all he needed, and obtained all he asked. Just so will you. Therefore come to Jesus, whose eye has been watching you while you have been reading these lines, and whose loving heart yearns over you, and will rejoice to bless you with a free, full, and everlasting salvation.

Remember, salvation is a free gift. It is free for the vilest. It is free for you! You cannot merit it, or deserve it; nor will it be given you on account of anything you do or anything you feel. But believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is yours — yours immediately — yours forever. The Holy Spirit also is a free gift, and Jesus says, "Ask, and you shall receive: for if you, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him." Ask then, ask at once, ask expecting, ask and receive, that your joy may be full. You cannot be more willing to receive — than the Lord is to give; nor so willing, for he bids you to ask, exhorts you to ask, almost begs you to ask — that he may confer the blessing upon you!

The Great Change!

James Smith

"Truly, truly, I say unto you: Unless a man is born again — he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3

The Lord Jesus Christ who spoke as never man spoke, here speaks to us. He who revealed the mind of Jehovah, who came into the world to save sinners, informs us that we must be born again. And, unless a man is born again, or born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Again, "Unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven." My fellow-sinner, Jesus, speaks of you, he speaks to you. Have you ever seriously considered the important language? Have you ever been led to inquire, What is it to be born again? If not, I will suppose that you now put the question: What is it to be truly converted to God? By way of answering it, I will observe:

- It is to be quickened by the Holy Spirit — to feel that you are a wretched, miserable, and ruined sinner.
- It is to be illuminated to see that you are vile, polluted, and filthy before God.
- It is to be alarmed at your state, surprised at your past unconcern, and to be now led to fly for refuge to Jesus the hope set before you.
- It is to be brought to know that there is neither goodness, help, nor hope in yourself.
- It is to be feelingly assured that unless you are saved by the Lord Jesus as an act of grace — that you must be lost forever.
- It is to be led by the Holy Spirit to cry earnestly, frequently, and perseveringly to the Lord for mercy.
- It is to be brought to see that the Lord Jesus Christ and his salvation are most exactly suited to you — to save, satisfy, and make you happy.
- It is to feel an insatiable craving, hungering, and thirsting after a saving interest in Christ, his righteousness, and blood.
- It is to feel sin to be a burden, a plague, and the misery of your life — and so to feel it, as to get no rest until you know it to be

pardoned, and find the guilt and burden of it removed from your mind, by the precious blood of Christ.

- It is to have the fear of the Lord implanted in your soul — operating as a preservative from sin, a preventative to falling into temptation, and a barrier to the inroads of Satan.
- It is to hate, abhor, and detest sin — all kinds of sin, and sinful practices.
- It is to mourn over inward depravity, outward inconsistency, and felt inability — with godly sorrow working repentance unto salvation.
- It is to feel Christ precious, mercy sweet, and the Gospel to be glad tidings indeed.
- It is to be panting for a spiritual, experimental, extensive knowledge of Jesus, in his person, work, sufferings, blood shedding, death, resurrection, and intercession.
- It is to feel a love to, a desire to be like, and a wish to be numbered with the Lord's spiritual people.
- It is to have a relish for, an ardent attachment to, and a realization of, the importance of the Word of God.
- It is to have Christ formed in the heart, the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul, and the laws of God inscribed upon the mind.
- It is to feel grace constraining to obedience, fear urging to flee to Jesus, and love impelling to choose that which is good, to pray for that which is promised, and to give the Lord no rest until you have made your calling and your election sure.
- It is in a word, to be as the Holy Spirit states, "a New Creature." "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old has gone, the new has come!" Such are the true "circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

Perhaps you are now ready to ask: "Am I born again?" I answer, not if you can live in sin! Not if the card table, the theater, or the ball-room suits your taste and yields you gratification. Not if the alehouse, profane language, and loose company are congenial to your mind. Not if you can indulge in pride, lying, or covetousness; for these are not the fruits of the Spirit — but the fruits of inward depravity. Not if you remain the same blind, careless, secure creature as you have been from your youth!

In a word, if you find no love to the Lord's people, no relish for his Word, no delight in his ways, no spirit of prayer, no dislike to the world, no inward crying for pardon, peace and salvation — you are not born again. You are still in the flesh, you cannot please God, for your very prayers are an abomination to the Lord. You are dead in trespasses and sins, walking according to the course of this world — according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that always works in the children of disobedience.

And what will be the end if you live and die in this state? Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, a certain fearful looking for of judgment awaits you, which will devour you as God's adversary! Remember, Oh! remember, my fellow-sinner, there is no salvation without a new birth; and no new birth without crying to God, mourning for sin, and a change of life. Without this, all, all is vain — you will die in your sins; and where Jesus, saints, and happiness are — you can never come. No well-spent life, no death-bed repentance, no crying, 'God be merciful' at last — can be substituted for this, "You MUST be born again."

And that you may not be deceived by taking external reformation for internal regeneration, the Lord has condescended in his word to compare it to a Resurrection. Man is spiritually dead, and consequently inactive, blind, and indifferent respecting his eternal concerns; but when Jesus calls, "then the dead hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear, live." John 5:25. "His sheep hear his voice — and follow him." John 10:27.

It is further set forth as a Creation. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." Ezekiel 36:26.

The sinner receives a new nature, which is holy, powerful, and immortal; and this leads him "to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God." Micah 6:8.

It is represented as "putting the law in the mind, and writing it in his heart;" and then the man appears to be "the epistle of Christ, written not with ink — but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone — but in fleshy tables of the heart." 2 Corinthians 3:3.

It is called a washing, "according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit; which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Savior." Titus 3:5, 6.

It is a deliverance from the power of darkness, and a translation into the kingdom of God's dear Son! Colossians 1:13.

The person opens his eyes upon new objects, and is taken up with new subjects, he finds his bosom the seat of new feelings, his heart is exercised with new fears, new hopes, new desires, and new discoveries. He now seeks a new way, looks to the new covenant, and finds new prospects opening before him! He is a new man — self, duties, and a form of godliness will no longer satisfy him; he must know that he has redemption in Jesus, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of divine grace. Ephesians 1:7.

My dear reader, no man can pass through all this, without some knowledge of it. The scriptures speak of God's people as knowing "that they have passed from death to life." And I am certain that a sinner that is truly born again, never can be satisfied until he does

know this.

Now have you been raised from a death in sin, to a life of righteousness? Have you been translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son? Have you a new heart? Are you washed, justified, and sanctified, according to 1 Corinthians 6:11? How infinitely important are such questions — may the Lord enable you honestly to answer them.

A title to Heaven is founded upon God's free grace, and is bestowed upon sinners through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; but a fitness for Heaven stands in the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart, creating us anew in Christ Jesus, and forming us a people to show forth Jehovah's praise; and without this new creation — there can be no spiritual religion here, nor happiness beyond the grave. May the Lord the Holy Spirit give you a new heart, and create in you a right spirit for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

REGENERATION - BORN AGAIN

QUOTES FROM VARIOUS SOURCES

- The two greatest days in a person's life are the day he was born and the day he finds out why he was born. (And then is born again!)
- Repentance is a change of the mind and regeneration is a change of the man. Thomas Adams
- Nature forms us; sin deforms us; school informs us; Christ transforms us.
- Conversion is a deep work—a heart-work. It goes throughout the man, throughout the mind, throughout the members, throughout the entire life. Joseph Alleine
- Conversion is no repairing of the old building; but it takes all down and erects a new structure. Joseph Alleine
- Everything that is born of God is no shadowy work. God will not bring forth a dead fruit, a lifeless and powerless work, but a living, new man must be born from the living God. JOHANN ARNDT
- Man is not converted because he wills to be, but he wills to be because he is ordained to election. Augustine
- Regeneration is the fountain; sanctification is the river. J. Sidlow Baxter
- Seeing we are born God's enemies we must be new-born his sons. Richard Baxter
- Despair of ever being saved, "except thou be born again," or of seeing God "without holiness," or of having part in Christ except thou "love him above father, mother, or thy own life." This kind of despair is one of the first steps to heaven. Richard Baxter
- Becoming a Christian is not making a new start in life; it is receiving a new life to start with. John Blanchard
- Take away the mystery from the new birth and you have taken away its majesty. John Blanchard
- Man's basic need is not a grasp of logic but the gift of life. John Blanchard
- Regeneration is God's mysterious prerogative. John Blanchard
- The new birth is infinite in its beginning because its beginning lies in infinity. John Blanchard
- The new birth is not only a mystery that no man can understand, it is a miracle that no man can undertake. John Blanchard
- No human birth can compare to the supernatural birth of a child of God. James M Boice
- I remember this, that everything looked new to me... the fields, the cattle, the trees. I was like a new man in a new world. Billy Bray
- Conversion is not the smooth, easygoing process some men seem to think it otherwise man's heart would never have been compared to fallow ground and God's Word to a plough. John Bunyan
- The egg's no chick by falling from the hen,
- Nor man a Christian till he's born again. - John Bunyan
- Faith does not proceed from ourselves, but is the fruit of spiritual regeneration. John Calvin
- True conversion is proved by the constant tenor of the life. John Calvin
- We... are born lions, tigers, wolves and bears, until the Spirit of Christ tames us, and from wild and savage beasts forms us to be mild sheep. John Calvin
- When God designs to forgive us he changes our hearts and turns us to obedience by his Spirit. John Calvin
- In the conversion of man, the properties of our original nature remain entire. John Calvin
- Men by their own free will cannot turn to God until he first change their stony hearts into hearts of flesh. John Calvin
- In the natural world it is impossible to be made all over again, but in the spiritual world it is exactly what Jesus Christ makes possible. Oswald Chambers
- You must be born again. This is not a command, it is a foundation fact. The characteristic of the new birth is that I yield myself so completely to God that Christ is formed in me. Oswald Chambers
- Adoption gives us the privilege of sons, regeneration the nature of sons. Stephen Charnock
- Regeneration is a spiritual change; conversion is a spiritual motion. Stephen Charnock

- Regeneration is a universal change of the whole man... it is as large in renewing as sin was in defacing. Stephen Charnock
- O Lord, convert the world—and begin with me. CHINESE STUDENT'S PRAYER
- If Christ's lordship does not disrupt our own lordship, then the reality of our conversion must be questioned. Charles Colson
- If the second birth hath no place in you, the second death shall have power over you. William Dyer
- Conversion is but the first step in the divine life. As long as we live we should more and more be turning from all that is evil and to all that is good. Tryon Edwards
- Regeneration, however it is described, is a divine activity in us, in which we are not the actors but the recipients. Sinclair Ferguson
- It is in dying that we are born to eternal life. SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI
- Regeneration is the communication of the divine nature to man by the operation of the Holy Spirit through the Word. A. J. Gordon
- In one bold stroke, forgiveness obliterates the past and permits us to enter the land of new beginnings. Billy Graham
- A transformed life is the greatest of all miracles. Every time a person is "born again" by repentance of sin and faith in Jesus Christ, the miracle of regeneration is performed. Billy Graham
- Conversion is an empty-handed turning from sin to the Saviour. Vance Havner
- It takes a radical break to turn from earth's trash to heaven's treasure. Vance Havner
- We are born with our backs upon God and heaven, and our faces upon sin and hell, till grace comes and that converts—turns us. Philip Henry
- Such is the degeneracy of human nature that there is no true wisdom to be found with any but those who are born again and who, through grace, partake of the divine nature. Matthew Henry
- Regeneration is a single act, complete in itself, and never repeated; conversion, as the beginning of holy living, is the commencement of a series, constant, endless and progressive. A. A. Hodge
- Whatever man may do after regeneration, the first quickening of the dead must originate with God. A. A. Hodge
- The almighty power of God in the conversion of a sinner is the most mysterious of all the works of God. Thomas Hooker
- Spiritual life is the consequence of spiritual quickening. The baby cries because it is born; it is not born because it cries. Erroll Hulse
- If a man is as passionate, malicious, resentful, sullen, moody or morose after his conversion as before it, what is he converted from or to? John Angell James
- God's work of regeneration is never directly perceived by the soul: it takes place in man within the region of what has now come to be called the subconscious. Ernest F. Kevan
- When one is born of the Spirit one does not suddenly become perfect or even nearly so. Rather, one becomes exceedingly sinful in one's own estimation. That is to say, one comes under conviction of sin. R. B. Kuiper
- Conversion requires an alteration of the will, and an alteration which, in the last resort, does not occur without the intervention of the supernatural. C. S. Lewis
- To expect Christian conduct from a person who is not born again is rank heresy. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones
- We must not think of ourselves as ordinary people. We are not natural men; we are born again. God has given us his Holy Spirit. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones
- When God works in us, the will, being changed and sweetly breathed upon by the Spirit of God, desires and acts, not from compulsion, but responsively.
- Martin Luther
- When by the Spirit of God, I understood these words, "The just shall live by faith," I felt born again like a new man: I entered through the open doors into the very Paradise of God! Martin Luther
- We cannot be changed by altering a few of our bad habits. Reformation will not do, for the disease of sin has captured our very life system. We need regeneration, a new heart. Will Metzger
- Unless God changes a person's heart, nothing lasting will be achieved. Will Metzger
- We must not make the mistake of thinking that people are converted because they follow our line of reasoning as we explain the gospel. Will Metzger
- If you have been born of the Holy Spirit, you will not have to serve God . . . it will become the natural thing to do. D. L. Moody
- Man is born with his back toward God. When he truly repents, he turns right around and faces God. Repentance is a change of mind. . . . Repentance is the tear in the eye of faith. D. L. Moody
- The genesis of Christianity as an experience is that of being born again of the Spirit. G. Campbell Morgan
- Just as in the beginning 'God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light' so, at the moment he appointed for our new birth, he said, 'Let there be life' and there was life. J. A. Motyer
- We are helpless to co-operate in our regeneration as we are to co-operate in the work of Calvary. Iain H. Murray
- Whenever a profession of conversion is not accompanied by holiness of life it must be understood that the person concerned is not yet a Christian. Iain H. Murray
- Let them pretend what they please, the true reason why any despise the new birth is because they hate a new life. John

Owen

- Regeneration has made our hearts a battle field. J. I. Packer
- Sinners cannot obey the gospel, any more than the law, without renewal of heart. J. I. Packer
- There is no regeneration without spiritual activities. J. I. Packer
- If regeneration is a work of new creation, sanctification is a work of new formation. If regeneration is a new birth, sanctification is a new growth. J. I. Packer
- Regeneration is the transforming not only of an unlovely object, but of one that resists with all its might the gracious designs of the heavenly Potter. A. W. Pink
- True conversion is the heart turning from Satan's control to God's, from sin to holiness, from the world to Christ. A. W. Pink
- The regenerate have a spiritual nature within that fits them for holy action, otherwise there would be no difference between them and the unregenerate. A. W. Pink
- I found that I was not only converted, but I was invaded. Eugenia Price
- The act of God in our regeneration is so momentous that no single category of thought is sufficient to describe the changes it brings about in and for us. Maurice Roberts
- Grace does not run in families. It needs something more than good examples and good advice to make us children of God. J. C. Ryle
- If you are never born again, you will wish you had never been born at all. J. C. Ryle
- The surest mark of true conversion is humility. J. C. Ryle
- There are no still-born children in the family of grace. William Secker
- Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born, If he's not born in thee, thy soul is still forlorn. Johannes Scheffler
- A dead man cannot assist in his own resurrection. W. G. T. Shedd
- Before Christ could marry us he must be born in our nature, for the husband and the wife must be of one nature. Richard Sibbes
- Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born, If he's not born in thee, thy soul is still forlorn. Angelus Silesius
- The very first and indispensable sign of regeneration is self-loathing and abhorrence. Charles Simeon
- A person is never partially born. He is either regenerate or he is not regenerate. R. C. Sproul
- Every generation needs regeneration. C. H. Spurgeon
- True conversion gives a man strength and holiness, but it never lets him boast. C. H. Spurgeon
- When the Word of God converts a man, it takes away from him his despair, but it does not take from him his repentance. C. H. Spurgeon
- Regeneration is a change which is known and felt: known by works of holiness and felt by a gracious experience. C. H. Spurgeon
- The new creation is as much and entirely the work of God as the old creation. C. H. Spurgeon
- When Christ came into my life I came about like a well-handled ship. Robert Louis Stevenson
- We are not truly converted if we are not intellectually and morally converted, and we are not intellectually and morally converted if we have not subjected our minds and our wills to the yoke of Jesus Christ. John R. W. Stott
- God regenerates the soul by uniting it to Jesus Christ. Augustus H. Strong
- Regeneration is a restoration of the original tendencies towards God which were lost by the Fall. Augustus H. Strong
- Regeneration is essentially a changing of the fundamental taste of the soul. By taste we mean the direction of man's love, the bent of his affections, the trend of his will. Augustus H. Strong
- Someone else, describing his new life in Christ, said, "Everything seems new—the Bible, my friends, my love for others, even Sunday itself. I have a new desire for spiritual things, a desire to know more about God and His church." George Sweeting
- We must begin by acknowledging that we need God's help, God's power, and God's life. Dead things cannot grow; and without Christ, we are spiritually dead. We are powerless and defeated. George Sweeting
- The sense of newness is simply delicious. It makes new the Bible, and friends, and all mankind, and love, and spiritual things, and Sunday, and church, and God Himself. So I've found. TEMPLE GARDNER OF CAIRO
- Regeneration gives our birth a value and our death a glory. David Thomas
- Mere outward reformation differs as much from regeneration as white-washing an old rotten house differs from pulling it down and building a new one in its place. Augustus M. Toplady
- Conversion for the early New Testament Christians was not a destination; it was the beginning of a journey. A. W. Tozer
- When I find someone who is settled down too snugly into this world and its system, I am forced to doubt whether he has ever truly been born again. A. W. Tozer
- There are two spirits abroad in the earth: the spirit that works in the children of disobedience and the Spirit of God. These two can never be reconciled in time or in eternity. The spirit that dwells in the once-born is forever opposed to the Spirit that inhabits the heart of the twice-born. A. W. Tozer
- Man's need can only be met by a new creation. Geoffrey B. Wilson

- The change of a sinner's heart is as great a miracle as any Jesus Christ wrought on earth. Joseph Wilson
 - Before Christ, a man loves things and uses people; after Christ he loves people and uses things. Horace Wood
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Regeneration

NOT AN EARTHLY CHANGE.—A sculptor may take a piece of rough marble, and work it into the marvelous figure of a man; yet it remains but lifeless marble. A jeweler may take a watch, the mainspring of which is broken; he may clean every wheel, cog, pin and hand, the face and the cases, but, unless the mainspring is rectified, it will all be useless for time-telling. A painter may decorate the outside of a pest-house with the most beautiful colors, but, if he produce no change within, it remains a pest-house still. A pauper might clothe himself with the garments of a millionaire, but a beggar he would still remain. A leper might cover all the spots of his disease with his garments, but, he would be a leper still. So the sinner may turn over a new leaf, and reform in all the externals of his life, but unless he is born again, born of the Spirit, a sinner he still remains.

PROFESSOR AND BOATMAN.—A learned professor, who was being ferried across a stream, asked the boatman: "Do you understand philosophy?" "No, never heard of it." "Then one-quarter of your life is gone. Do you understand geology?" "No." "Then one-half of your life is gone. Do you understand astronomy?" "No." "Then three-quarters of your life is gone." Presently the boat tipped over, and both men fell into the water. "Can you swim?" asked the boatman. "No," replied the professor. "Then the whole of your life is gone," responded the boatman.

DOCTOR AND PATIENT.—A doctor visiting a patient, said to the sick one: "I want you to tell me what it is, this believing, faith in Jesus, and getting happiness?" The patient replied: "Doctor, I have felt that I could do nothing, and I have put my case into your hands—I am trusting in you. This is what every poor sinner must do in the Lord Jesus Christ."

INDIAN ON BAPTISM.—Concerning the error of baptismal regeneration, an Indian once said: "The Great Spirit wants clean here (pointing to his heart), never mind face. Jim Beech-tree mad as ever with strong water (or whiskey). Baptize on face do him no good; he old Jim still."

SUMMERFIELD'S ANSWER.—When the celebrated Summerfield was a young minister, he once met a distinguished doctor of divinity, who said to him: "Mr. Summerfield, where were you born?" "I was born," said he, "in Dublin and in Liverpool." "Ah, how can that be?" asked the great doctor. The boy preacher paused a moment, and then answered: "Art thou a master in Israel and understandest not these things?"

NEVER LIVED WITH HIM.—"Is such a man a Christian?" was once asked of Whitefield. "How should I know?" was the reply, "I never lived with him."

WORKING AT EIGHTY.—Lyndhurst was nearly eighty years of age before he became converted. Desiring to be loyal for Christ, he used to hobble about the lobbies of the House of Lords, watching for an opportunity of bearing testimony for the Master. He would stop and plead with his friends there, while tears bathed his cheeks, and, in a voice tremulous with emotion, plead the Redeemer's cause. He would say: "My soul is saved, but my life is lost."

LITTLE GIRL'S DEFINITION.—A little girl, on being asked to tell what it was to live a Christian life, answered: "To live as Jesus would live, and to behave as He would, if He were a little girl and lived at our house." - George Noble - 625 New Bible Stories and Illustrations

'There is no doubt that those men were right who, a hundred years ago or less, declared to a self-satisfied world that the true cure for all moral evil was, not sound moral advice, too good to be followed, not earnest moral effort which the sinful soul was unable to make, or at least to sustain, but the reception of a cleansing power from without, that the soul must be supernaturally, miraculously, divinely, undeservedly delivered from its evil past, if it were ever to start on a new and better life, if it were ever to be made natural to it to do good or possible for it to deserve well. Nothing short of a miracle can put a sinner in the way of repentance.' - Nisbet - Church Pulpit Commentary

Apart from [the doctrine of the Trinity], doctrines such as the Deity of Christ, the incarnation, the personality of the Holy Spirit, regeneration, justification, sanctification, the meaning of the crucifixion, and the resurrection cannot be understood.—Dr. Loraine Boettner

Jeremiah 17:9 Total Depravity Many object to the doctrine of total depravity on the ground that all men are capable of some good even if unsaved. All of us recognize the value of decency in behavior, of a kindly spirit, of generosity in caring for the needy, and similar virtues, which are frequently seen in unconverted and even positively godless men and women. How, then, it is asked, can they be said to be totally depraved? Dr. Joseph Cook, the great Boston lecturer of the latter half of the nineteenth century, answers this question with the following illustration:

He said he had in his home a very beautiful and valuable clock. It had an exceedingly handsome case, a very fine set of works, a nice appearing dial and elegantly finished hands. It was altogether a good clock to look upon but it had one fault. It simply would not, or could not, keep time. It had been gone over by many different clock-makers, but no one had been able to correct this fault. As a timepiece it was totally depraved!

Is not this like man, even at his best, if he has not been born again? There may be much about him that others can admire, but he is positively unable to do the will of the Lord, because his heart is utterly estranged from God, and therefore so far as holiness is concerned, he is totally depraved. **Only the new birth—regeneration by the Word and Spirit of God—can enable him to keep in line with the divine will as laid down in the Holy Scriptures.** However righteous he may appear in the eyes of his fellows, because of this fatal defect all his righteousness is as filthy rags in the sight of God - H A Ironside - Illustrations of Bible Truth

"From Mire and Slime of Sin"

The beloved American poet Longfellow could take an ordinary sheet of paper, write some lines on it and make it worth several thousand dollars and we call that genius. A mechanic takes material worth six dollars and makes an article worth sixty and we term that skill. The artist selects a piece of canvas, paints a scene on it and increases its value a thousand times and we say this is art. Jesus Christ reaches down into the mire of sin and picks up the remains of a blasted life and "by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost" He produces "a new creature: old things pass away and behold all things become new" and we call this Salvation.

"Cut It Up By the Roots" - A young minister addressing a rather fashionable audience, attacked their pride and extravagance, as seen in their dresses, ribbons, chains, and jewels. In the evening an old minister preached powerfully on the corruption of human nature, the enmity of the soul against God and the necessity of a change of heart by the regeneration of the Spirit. Late that night as they sat together in private, the young minister said, "Doctor D., why don't you preach against the pride and vanity of people for dressing so extravagantly?" "Ah, son Timothy," replied the venerable man: "while you are trimming off the top branches of the tree, I am endeavoring to cut it up by the roots, and then the whole top will die out."

When translator Des Oatridge, working in Papua New Guinea, came to the words "born again" in John's Gospel, he asked his native co-translator to think of a good way to express it. The man explained this custom: "Sometimes a person goes wrong and will not listen to anybody. We all get together in the village and place that person in the midst of us. The elders talk to him for a long time. 'You have gone wrong!' they say. 'All your thoughts, intentions, and values are wrong. Now you have to become a baby again and start to relearn everything right.' " It was the answer Des was looking for. Today the words of John 3:3 in Binumarien reads "No one can see the Kingdom of God unless he becomes like a baby again and relearns everything from God's Word." —From In Other Words (Mar/Apr 1993). Christian Reader

We are not advocating reformation but regeneration, not a new suit on the man but a new man in the suit. - William MacDonald

A popular belief among Christians divides the work of God between the three Persons, giving a specific part to each: creation to the Father, redemption to the Son, and regeneration to the Holy Spirit. This is partly true but not wholly so, for God cannot so divide himself that one Person works while another is inactive. In the Scriptures the three Persons are shown to act in harmonious unity in all the mighty works that are wrought throughout the universe. - A W Tozer

No sermon is of any value, or likely to be useful, which has not the three Rs in it: ruin by the fall, redemption by Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit.- John C Ryland

William Booth was asked in 1901 what he regarded as the chief dangers ahead for the 20th Century. He replied, "Religion without the Holy Ghost, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God and heaven without hell."

The Rag Tag and Bobtail of Humanity - In a 3rd-century debate on Christianity, Celsus said to Origen, "When most teachers go forth to teach, they cry, 'Come to me, you who are clean and worthy,' and they are followed by the highest caliber of people available. But your silly master cries, 'Come to me, you who are down and beaten by life,' and so he accumulates around him the rag tag and bobtail of humanity." And Origen replied: "Yes, they are the rag tag and bobtail of humanity. But Jesus does not leave them that way. Out of material you would have thrown away as useless, he fashions men, giving them back their self-respect, enabling them to stand on their feet and look God in the eyes. They were cowed, cringing, broken things. But the Son has set them free."

Regeneration - Kent Hughes on a New Heart - Dr. Christiaan Barnard, the first surgeon ever to do a heart transplant, impulsively asked one of his patients, Dr. Philip Blaiberg, "Would you like to see your old heart?" At 8 p.m. on a subsequent evening, the men stood in a room of the Groote Schuur Hospital in Johannesburg, South Africa. Dr. Barnard went up to a cupboard, took down a glass container and handed it to Dr. Blaiberg. Inside that container was Blaiberg's old heart. For a moment he stood there stunned into silence—the first man in history ever to hold his own heart in his hands. Finally he spoke and for ten minutes plied Dr. Barnard with technical questions. Then he turned to take a final look at the contents of the glass container, and said, "So this is my old heart that caused me so much trouble." He handed it back, turned away and left it forever. This is a window into what Christ does. We remain the same people, but our hearts become radically new. God has written his laws within us. He has made us to be "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). True, we still battle with our fleshly nature, but as members of Christ's Body, our spiritual inclinations are matched to God's laws (cf. John 14:15–17; 16:12, 13). They are no longer external and foreign to us but internal. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The saints' love to God is the fruit of God's love to them; it is the gift of that love. God gives them a spirit of love for Him because He loved them from eternity. His love is the foundation of their **regeneration** and the whole of their redemption. —Jonathan Edwards

Blind Bartimaeus - Theodore Monod, while telling his little brother about blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52), asked him, "What would you have asked for if you had been in his place?" The boy answered, "Oh, I would have asked for a nice big dog with a collar and a chain to lead me about." Bartimaeus knew better what he needed. He did not want reformation, but **regeneration**. Though this is the need of the world today, how many choose the blind man's dog to the seeing man's eyes (Mark 10:46)!

C H Spurgeon - Do you all know what it is to be born of God? I do not think I can tell you, in so many words, exactly what it is, though I know for myself. It is not simply to be improved and reformed. It is a grand thing when a man, who has been degraded, lives in a better fashion; but a cobbler might take an old shoe, and mend it, yet that would not make it a new one. Being born of God is also more than being made anew. It includes that, but that is not all that it includes. For God, who makes all things, can new-make them when he pleases; yet that does not make them to be born of him. We all know what it is for one person to be born of another; you were all born of your father, and of your mother, and so you became partakers of your parents' nature. In like manner, only in a far higher sense, regeneration is more than creation, for there is in it a kinship with God. So, being born again makes us something more than God's creatures; we are God's children. You know that blessed truth of adoption, by which God takes men, and adopts them into his family; but regeneration is a great deal more than adoption. A man may have an adopted child, but yet it is really no child of his; there is nothing of himself in it, and he cannot put his nature into it. But we are not only God's adopted children; if we are indeed born from above, we are God's newborn children; The divine nature is actually put into us when we are born of God; is not that a wonderful thing? And that miracle of mercy must be wrought in all of us who are ever to overcome the world. (Full sermon - [Victorious Faith](#))

M R De Haan gives the following illustration explaining that it is impossible to get **regeneration** from **reformation**...

The message of salvation is **regeneration—not reformation**. Paul says, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation" (2Cor. 5:17). The new birth is not an overhaul of the "old wreck," or a new paint job. The old Adamic nature is so incorrigibly corrupt that even God will not attempt to fix it up. He insists on completely rejecting the old hulk and making a new man. Jesus said to Nicodemus,

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again (John 3:6, 7).

The old nature received at birth is hopeless, and dressing it up with education and culture only makes it more dangerous than before. The more we work on the "old man," the more deceptive it becomes. Do you know why the sinner must be born anew? Because he was born all wrong the first time. He doesn't have to be taught to go his own way—it comes naturally to him. But by the new birth he is turned around and headed in the right direction!

Spurgeon told of a missionary who visited a primitive hut and became nauseated by the filthy floor on which he had to sit. He suggested to his host that they scrub the dirty surface with soap and water, but the man replied,

the floor is just clay—packed down and dry. Add water and it turns to mud. The more you try to wash it, the worse the mess becomes!

Yes, the hut needed something besides an earthen floor. So it is with the human heart: it is hard and dirty, and

nothing will help it. Man needs a new heart. He must be born again from above! (M. R. De Haan, Our Daily Bread) (Bolding added) ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Barney Can't Compete - In the Minneapolis Star-Tribune (1/17/98) Judy Zmerold writes:

Three-year-old Katie was taken to her pediatrician during a recent bout with the flu. As the doctor examined her ears, he asked, "Will I find Big Bird in here?"

Apprehensively, Katie replied, "No."

Then, before examining her throat, he asked, "Will I find the Cookie Monster in here?"

Again, "No."

Finally, listening to her heart, he asked, "Will I find Barney in here?"

With innocent conviction, she looked him directly in the eye and said, "No, Jesus is in my heart. Barney is on my underwear."

Regeneration - Many unregenerate men consider themselves to be God's children, or "sons of God." But being a product of God's handiwork does not qualify one for a sonship relationship.

A cabinetmaker constructs a cabinet. But this does not make the cabinet a "child" of the cabinetmaker. A birth process would be necessary for this. The unregenerate man who claims sonship with God "because he made me" is basing his claim merely on the fact that he is a product of God's handiwork. Like the cabinet, he lacks the new birth necessary for a sonship relationship.

Regeneration - We may sweep the world clean of militarism, we may scrub the world white of autocracy, we may carpet it with democracy and drape it with the flag of republicanism. We may hang on the walls the thrilling pictures of freedom: here, the signing of America's Independence; there, the thrilling portrait of Joan of Arc; yonder, the Magna Carta; and on this side, the inspiring picture of Garibaldi. We may spend energy and effort to make the world a paradise itself where the lion of capitalism can lie down with the proletarian lamb. But if we turn into that splendid room mankind with the same old heart, deceitful and desperately wicked, we may expect to clean house again not many days hence. What we need is a peace conference with the Prince of Peace. - Arthur Brisbane

Mike Tyson - Heavy-weight boxing champion Mike Tyson said yesterday he does "not really" want to get back together with his estranged wife, Robin Givens. "Both of us, you know, we made big mistakes and I said things that I really shouldn't have said. I meant them, but I shouldn't have made them publicized," Tyson told interviewer David Frost. Asked if he wants a reconciliation with Givens, whom he has sued for divorce, Tyson said "Well, not really." He also told Frost, "I'm kind of frustrated at this particular time, but as far as being happy, I'm content with what's going on." His most prized possessions are "two dogs that I like." These are strange remarks in light of Tyson's recent publicized conversion to Christ. I thought people were supposed to change when they came to the Savior

Spurgeon - "We are sure that the Gospel we have preached is not after men because men do not take to it. It is opposed, even to this day. If anything is hated bitterly, it is the out-and-out Gospel of the Grace of God, especially if that hateful word, Sovereignty is mentioned with it! Dare to say, "He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion," and furious critics will revile you without stint! The modern religionist not only hates the doctrine of Sovereign Grace, but he raves and rages at the mention of it! He would sooner hear you blaspheme than preach Election by the Father, Atonement by the Son, or **Regeneration** by the Spirit! If you want to see a man worked up till the Satanic is clearly uppermost, let some of the new divines hear you preach a Free-Grace sermon! A Gospel which is after men will be welcomed by men—but it needs a Divine operation upon the heart and mind to make a man willing to receive into his utmost soul this distasteful Gospel of the Grace of God!

Spurgeon - If your conversion is an instance of the preacher's power, you need to be converted again! If your salvation is the result of your own power, it is a miserable deception from which may you be delivered! Every man who is saved must be operated upon by the might of God the Holy Spirit every jot and tittle of true **regeneration** is the Spirit's work!"

Spurgeon - Every regeneration is really instantaneous. Its evidences, its outward manifestations may be gradual, but there must be a time when the man begins to live. There must be a period when the first ray of light darts on the opened eye. There must be a time when the man is condemned, and a period when he is not condemned. And there must be an instant when the change takes place.

Spurgeon - Do I address one here who imagines that an orthodox creed will save him? I suppose that no one is more orthodox than

the devil, yet no one is more surely lost than he is. You may get a clear head, but if you have not a clean heart, it will not avail you at the last. You may know the Westminster Assembly's Catechism by heart, but unless you are born again, it will not benefit you. Did you say that you believed the thirty-nine articles? There is one article that is essential—"Ye must be born again" (John 3:7). And woe to that man who has not passed through that all-important change.

Spurgeon - We believe, that the work of regeneration, conversion, sanctification and faith, is not an act of man's free will and power, but of the mighty, efficacious and irresistible grace of God.

Spurgeon - Regeneration is an absolute necessity before any soul can enter Heaven—and you must not be satisfied with anything short of that! Yet you may be grateful if, like Timothy, from a child you have known the Scriptures, or if, like Samuel, you have been brought up in the house of the Lord from your very early years."

Spurgeon - "Jesus Christ, the Seed of the woman, sets His foot upon the monster, Sin, and breaks its head. And if you believe in Jesus, that pierced foot of His shall crush the life out of your sin and you shall be delivered from its power. Oh, that you might have Grace to trust in Jesus for instantaneous pardon, instantaneous **regeneration**, instantaneous deliverance from nature's darkness into God's most marvelous light! If you are as prostrate as Peter's wife's mother was, you ought not to lie still any longer when Christ is ready to give you such a lift as that!"

More Spurgeon on Regeneration:

To fashion a world has less difficulty in it than to create a new life in an ungodly man; for, in the creation of the world, there was nothing in the way of God; but, in the creation of the new heart, there is the old nature opposing the Spirit.

The grace which does not make a man better than others is a worthless counterfeit.

Those who are saved by God the Holy Spirit are created anew according to Scripture; but who ever dreamed of creation creating itself? God spake the world out of nothing, but nothing did not aid in the creation of the universe. Divine energy can do everything, but what can nothing do? Now if we have a new creation, there must have been a creator, and it is clear that being then spiritually created, we could not have assisted in our own new creation, unless, indeed, death can assist life, and non-existence aid in creation.

After we are regenerated, he continues to renew us; our thoughts, feelings, desires, and acts are constantly renewed. Regeneration as the commencement of the new creation can never come twice to any man, but renewal of the Holy Ghost is constantly and perpetually repeated.

No strength but that which made me can new-make me.

Without **regeneration**, all human efforts to improve the quality of life (mental or physical) are limited. —Archibald Hart

George Mueller's Regeneration - At the age of sixteen George Mueller of Bristol, Eng., was imprisoned for theft; and later at the university he lived a drinking, profligate life, acting dishonestly even toward his friends. At twenty years of age he came under the influence of the Bible, and the miracle of **regeneration** was wrought. He who had been a thief was now so utterly a new creature that in the course of the years he gave away, of the money sent to him for his personal use, no less a sum than \$135,000, and when he died his personal possessions were valued at less than \$1,000. - Knight's Master Book of New Illustrations

Charles Haddon Spurgeon's articles in Arrows and Anecdotes - Regeneration

"If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature."

Regeneration the Foundation of Christian Experience

It is the A B C of God's salvation. If a man is unsound on regeneration, he is unsound on everything. It is really the foundation-stone of Christian character; and we must get the foundation right. If we don't, what is the good of trying to build a house? Now, Christ says plainly, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." But although regeneration, or the new birth, is taught so plainly in the third chapter of John, I don't believe there is any truth in the whole Bible that there is such great darkness about as this great truth. There are a great many like the man who saw men as trees walking. Many Christians do not seem to be clear about this new birth.

Regeneration a Mystery

A great many men try to investigate and find out God. Suppose you spend a little of your time in asking God to reveal himself to you. I heard some time ago of some commercial travellers who went to hear a man preach. They came back to the hotel, and were sitting in the smoking-room talking, and they said the minister did not appeal to their reason, and they would not believe anything they could not reason out. There was an old man sitting there listening, and he said to them: "You say you won't believe anything you can't reason out?" "No, we won't." The old man then said, "As I was coming in the train yesterday, I noticed some sheep and cattle and swine and geese, all eating grass. Now, can you tell me by what process that same grass is turned into feathers, hair, bristles, and wool?" "Well, no, we can't just tell you that." "Do you believe it is a fact?" "Oh yes, it is a fact." "I thought you said you would not believe anything you could not reason out?" "Well, we can't help believing that; that is a fact we see before our eyes." "Truly, on the same ground," said the old man, "I can't help but believe in regeneration, and a man being converted, although I cannot explain how God converted him."

Effects of Regeneration

It may be that I am talking now to some poor drunkard. When he comes into his house his children listen, and hear by the footfall that their father is coming home drunk, and the little things run away and hide from him as if he were some horrid demon. His wife begins to tremble. Many a time has that great, strong arm been brought down on her weak, defenseless body. Many a day has she carried about marks from that man's violence. He ought to be her protector, support, and stay; but he has become her tormentor. His home is like hell upon earth; there is no joy there. There may be one such here tonight who hears the good news that he can be born again, and receive a nature from heaven, and receive the Spirit of God. God will give him power to hurl the infernal cup from him. God will give him grace to trample Satan under his feet, and the drunkard will then become a sober man. Go to that house three months hence, and you will find it neat and clean. As you draw near that home you will hear singing; not the noise of the drunkard, that is gone; all things have become new; for he has been born of God, and is singing one of the songs of Zion—

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee."

Or perhaps he is singing that good old hymn that his mother taught him when he was a little boy—

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains."

He has become a child of God and an heir of heaven. His children are climbing upon his knees, and he has his arms around their neck. That dark home is now changed into a little Bethel on earth. God dwells there now. Yes, God has done all that, and that is regeneration.

Free! Free!

You know that in the British Colonies, before the time of Wilberforce, there used to be a great many slaves; but that good man began to agitate the question of setting them free; and all the slaves in the Colonies, when they heard of it, were very anxious to know how he was getting along. They knew the bill was before Parliament; and with them it was a question next to that of life itself. But in those days there were no telegraphs and no steamships. The mails went by the slow sailing-vessels. They would be from six to eight months in making a voyage to some of the more distant of the Colonies. The slaves used to watch for the white sails of British ships, hoping to hear good news, but fearing they might hear bad news. There was a ship which had sailed immediately after the Emancipation Act had been passed and signed by the king, and when she came within hailing distance of the boats which had put off from the shore at the port where she was bound, the captain could not wait to deliver the message officially, and have it duly promulgated by the Government; but, seeing the poor, anxious men standing up in their boats, eager for the news, he placed his trumpet to his mouth, and shouted with all his might: "Free! Free!" Just so the angels shout when the poor bondman of Satan, almost in the jaws of the pit, is taken in hand by the Saviour himself and delivered from the bondage of darkness, into the liberty of God's dear Son. Free—free from sin—free from the curse of the law—free now, and in a little while free from the bonds of the flesh as well.

I am Married unto You

In the Old Testament the Lord uses this expression: "I am married unto you." Jeremiah 3:14. Paul uses the same figure in his epistles, as in Romans 7:4, in setting forth the union between Christ and his church. Now, it is an illustration you can all understand. When a man offers himself the woman must do either of two things—either receive or reject him. So every soul must do one of these two things—"receive" or "reject" Christ. Well, if you receive him, that is all you have to do, he has promised the rest. There was a shop-girl in Chicago a few years ago; one day she could not have bought a pound's worth of anything; the next day she could go and buy a thousand pounds' worth of whatever she wanted. What made the difference? Why, she had married a rich husband; that was all. She had accepted him, and, of course, all he had became hers. And so you can have everything, if you only receive Christ. Remember, you can have no power without him; you will fail, constantly, until you receive him into your heart; and I have Scripture authority to say that Christ will receive every soul that will only come to him.

The Slaves and the North Star

In our country before the war, when we had slavery, the slaves escaping used to keep their eye on the north star. If a slave fled to the Northern states the slave-master could come and take him back in slavery. But there was another flag on American soil, and if they could only get under that flag they were for ever free. It is called the Union Jack. If they could only get to Canada they were safe, and therefore their eye was always looking towards the north star. They knew if they got into the Northern states there would be some men ready to take them back. So it is with every poor sinner who wants to come to Christ. Many men do all they can to hinder him; others cheer him on. Let us help every man towards the north star. Well, to give you a picture of what used to occur, the moment a man has escaped, perhaps he swims across the Mississippi, or crosses the Ohio river in a little canoe. The master hears of it, and he takes his hounds and sends them on the track, and begins to hunt him down. The slave hears the hounds; they have their nose upon his scent, and his master is coming to take him back. What does he do? He escapes as fast as he can. He makes his way for the frontier, over hedges, bridges, and rivers; away he goes for Canada, day and night. He works hard, and he does not eat much. He is in the greatest haste to get liberty. By-and-by he comes in sight of Canada. He can see that flag floating in front of him, and he knows that if he can only cross the line before his master and the hounds overtake him, he will be free. The poor black man runs on with all his might, and at last with one bound he goes over the line. He is a free man now. One minute he is a slave; the next minute he is a free man under the flag of Queen Victoria—the British flag; and your Parliament says that no man under that flag shall be a bondman. One minute he is liable for the old master to drag him back; the next minute he shouts: “Free!” If Christ tells us that we are free, we are free.

Born a Christian

In the inquiry-room, a person came in, and I said, “Are you a Christian?” “Why,” says she, “of course I am.” “Well,” I said, “how long have you been one?” “O sir, I was born one!” “Oh, indeed! then I am very glad to take you by the hand; I congratulate you; you are the first woman I ever met who was born a Christian; you are more fortunate than others; they are born children of Adam.” She hesitated a little, and then tried to make out that, because she was born in England, she was a Christian. There are a great many have the idea, that because they are born in a Christian country, they have been born of the Spirit. Now, in the third chapter of John, the new birth is brought out so plainly, that if any one will read it carefully and prayerfully, I think his eyes will soon be opened. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; it remains flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, and remains spirit. So, when a man is born of God, he has God’s nature. When a man is born of his parents, he receives their nature, and they receive the nature of their parents, and you can trace it back to Adam. But when a man is born of God, or born from above, or born of the Spirit, he receives God’s nature, and then it is he leaves the life of the flesh for the life of the spirit.

Cut the Cord

I once heard of two men who, under the influence of liquor, came down one night to where their boat was tied; they wanted to return home, so they got in and began to row. When the gray dawn of morning broke, behold, they had never loosed the mooring line or raised the anchor!

And that’s just the way with many who are striving to enter the kingdom of heaven. They cannot believe, because they are tied to this world. Cut the cord! cut the cord! Set yourselves free from the clogging weight of earthly things, and you will soon go on towards heaven.

Have You Got the Token?

The first thing is to know you are sprinkled with the atoning blood. You go to a railway station, and you buy a ticket, and get into a carriage; and the guard comes round and cries, “Tickets,” and you put your hand in your pocket and pull out the ticket, and present that to the man; but the guard does not look to see if you are a white man or a black, learned or unlearned, great or small. He does not know, perhaps, who you are, or what you are; but he looks for the token. Oh, my friends, God says, “If you have got the token I will pass over you.” Have you got the token? That is the question—the solemn question. Exodus 12:13.

The Telegram

A lady friend of mine was starting from England, with others, for America, and when she got to Liverpool all her friends wanted to go to the same hotel, but it was full, and they had to go away; but she had been thoughtful enough to take precautions, and had sent a telegram and engaged her room before. Let the news go up on high that you want a mansion there, and write down your name in the book. Drop everything else till you are sure that your names are written in the Book of Life; make up your minds that you will neither eat nor sleep till this great question for time and eternity is settled.

Spurgeon in Faith's Checkbook - STRANGERS, sojourners, and servants upon hire were not to eat of holy things. It is so in spiritual matters still. But two classes were free at the sacred table, those who were bought with the priest’s money, and those who were born into the priest’s house. Bought and born, these were the two indisputable proofs of a right to holy things. Bought. Our great High Priest has bought with a price all those who put their trust in him. They are his absolute property—together the Lord’s. Not for what they are in themselves, but for their owner’s sake, they are admitted into the same privileges which he himself enjoys, and “they shall eat of his meat.” He has meat to eat which worldlings know not of. “Because ye belong to Christ,” therefore shall ye share with your Lord. Born. This is an equally sure way to privilege; if born in the priest’s house we take our place with the rest of the family. **Regeneration** makes us fellow-heirs, and of the same body; and, therefore, the peace, the joy, the glory, which the Father

has given to Christ, Christ has given to us. Redemption and **regeneration** have given us a double claim to the divine permit of this promise.

Spurgeon Morning and Evening - But now is Christ risen from the dead." —1 Corinthians 15:20

The whole system of Christianity rests upon the fact that "Christ is risen from the dead;" for, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain: ye are yet in your sins." The divinity of Christ finds its surest proof in his resurrection, since he was "Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." It would not be unreasonable to doubt his Deity if he had not risen. Moreover, Christ's sovereignty depends upon his resurrection, "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." Again, our justification, that choice blessing of the covenant, is linked with Christ's triumphant victory over death and the grave; for "He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Nay, more, our very regeneration is connected with his resurrection, for we are "Begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." And most certainly our ultimate resurrection rests here, for, "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." If Christ be not risen, then shall we not rise; but if he be risen then they who are asleep in Christ have not perished, but in their flesh shall surely behold their God. Thus, the silver thread of resurrection runs through all the believer's blessings, from his regeneration onwards to his eternal glory, and binds them together. How important then will this glorious fact be in his estimation, and how will he rejoice that beyond a doubt it is established, that "now is Christ risen from the dead."

"The promise is fulfill'd,
Redemption's work is done,
Justice with mercy's reconciled,
For God has raised his Son."

Spurgeon on Regeneration

To fashion a world has less difficulty in it than to create a new life in an ungodly man; for, in the creation of the world, there was nothing in the way of God; but, in the creation of the new heart, there is the old nature opposing the Spirit. - An All Around Ministry,

The grace which does not make a man better than others is a worthless counterfeit. Morning And Evening,

Those who are saved by God the Holy Spirit are created anew according to Scripture; but who ever dreamed of creation creating itself? God spoke the world out of nothing, but nothing did not aid in the creation of the universe. Divine energy can do everything, but what can nothing do? Now if we have a new creation, there must have been a creator, and it is clear that being then spiritually created, we could not have assisted in our own new creation, unless, indeed, death can assist life, and non-existence aid in creation. - Salvation Altogether By Grace, Volume 12, Sermon #703 - 2 Timothy 1:9

No strength but that which made me can new-make me. - The Sitting Of The Refiner, Volume 27, Sermon #1575 - Malachi 3:3

As I have warned you before, abhor the doctrine of the universal fatherhood of God, for it is a lie, and a deep deception. It stabs at the heart, first, of the doctrine of the adoption, which is taught in Scripture, for how can God adopt men if they are all his children already? In the second place, it stabs at the heart of the doctrine of regeneration, which is certainly taught in the Word of God. Note it is by regeneration and faith that we become the children of God, but how can that be if we are the children of God already?

After we are regenerated, he continues to renew us; our thoughts, feelings, desires, and acts are constantly renewed. Regeneration as the commencement of the new creation can never come twice to any man, but renewal of the Holy Ghost is constantly and perpetually repeated.

The Maintenance Of Good Works, Volume 34, Sermon #2042 - Titus 3:3-8

Spurgeon on Regeneration, False and True - THE sprinkling of an infant makes no change in that child whatever; it is, as I believe, a vain ceremony, not commanded of God, nor warranted in Scripture; and as the Church of England practises it, it is altogether pernicious and superstitious, and if there be any effect following it, it must be an evil effect upon those who wickedly lie unto Almighty God, by promising and vowing that the unconscious shall keep God's commandments, and walk in the same all the days of his life; which they cannot do for the child, inasmuch as they cannot even so do for themselves. Ye must have another regeneration than this, the work not of priestly fingers, with their hocus-pocus and superstitious genuflexions, but the work of the

Eternal Spirit, who alone can regenerate the soul, whose office alone it is that can give light to the spiritually blinded eye, and sensation to the spiritually dead heart. Be not misled by the priests of this age. Ye profess to have cast off Rome, cast off her Anglican children. Wear not the rags of her superstition, nor bear her mark in your foreheads. Ye must be born again in another sense than formality can work in you. It must be an inward work, a spiritual work, and only this can save your souls. If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature, that is, he has experienced a radical change.

Regeneration. I have seen, beneath the microscope, a seed, three thousand years old, start into instant germination, when touched with a drop of warm water. So, a human soul, long apparently lifeless, begins to grow when touched by the water of life. - A T Pierson

Regeneration - Let them pretend what they please, the true reason why any despise the new birth is because they hate a new life. He that cannot endure to live to God will as little endure to hear of being born of God. - John Owen

The least degree of sincere sanctification, being an effect of regeneration, is a certain sign of adoption, and may minister a sure argument to him that has it, that he is the adopted child of God. - Thomas Gataker

Death-bed Regeneration

A lost person should not presume on being saved in a last-minute, death-bed regeneration. But at the same time, no matter what one's sins may be, a person should not give up hope. Jesus is ever ready to save those who turn to Him in repentance and faith—even as the moment of death looms near.

Regeneration Descriptions:

Regeneration is not a removal of the old substance or faculties of the soul. Some thought that the substance of Adam's soul was corrupted when he sinned, therefore suppose the substance of his soul to be altered when he is renewed. Sin took not the substance, but the rectitude; the new creation therefore gives not a new faculty but a new quality. The cure of the leprosy is not a destroying of the fabric of the body, but the disease; yet in regard of the greatness of man's corruption, the soul is so much changed by these new habits, that it is as it were a new soul, a new understanding, a new will. - Stephen Charnock

In regeneration nature is not ruined, but rectified.. The convert is the same man, but new made. The faculties of his soul are not destroyed, but they are refined, the same viol, but new tuned. Christ gave not the blind man new eyes, but a new sight to the old ones. Christ did not give Lazarus a new body, but enlivened his old body, So God in conversion does not bestow a new understanding, but a new light to the old; not a new soul, but a new life to the old one. - George Swinnock

There may be several things which may help to make the life fair in the eyes of men; but nothing will make it amiable in the eyes of God, unless the heart be changed and renewed. All the medicines which can be applied, without the sanctifying work of the Spirit, though they may cover, they can never cure the corruption and diseases of the soul. - George Swinnock

Nor is regeneration an addition to nature. Christ was not an addition to Adam, but a new Head by Himself . . . Grace grows not upon the old stock. It is not a piece of cloth sewn to an old garment, but the one is cast aside the other wholly taken on. . . . It is not a new varnish, nor do old things remain under a new paint, nor new plaster laid upon old; a new creature, not a mended creature. - Stephen Charnock

Repentance is a change of the mind, and regeneration is a change of the man. - Thomas Adams

Adoption gives us the privilege of sons, regeneration the nature of sons. - Stephen Charnock

Regeneration is a universal change of the whole man. . . . it is as large in renewing as sin was in defacing. - Stephen Charnock

The creation of the world is a shadow of the regeneration of a Christian. First, there was an earth without form, void, and a darkness upon the face of the deep. Predestination is this great deep, which cannot be discovered or discerned. There the light was separated from the darkness; here knowledge is separated from ignorance of the soul; there is calling. Then was the sun created; so here the bright beams of grace are diffused into our hearts which fill us with spiritual joy; there is sanctification. Lastly, Adam was created after the image of God, and placed in Paradise; so the new man is confirmed to the image of Christ, and shall be reposed in the paradise of everlasting glory. - Thomas Adams

In the first creation, God made man after His own image. So in the second creation or regeneration, God does create men after His own image, in knowledge, righteousness, true holiness, and love. - Vavasor Powell

Reader, make sure of this inward change; otherwise, though thy conversation may be specious, it can never be gracious, nor thy profession durable. . . . I wonder not that many professors disown the Lord Jesus when they are ignorant why they at any time owned Him. He that takes up religion on trust, will lay it down when it brings him into trouble. He that follows Christ, he knoweth not why, will forsake Him, he knoweth not how. - George Swinnock

Thou must be righteous and holy, before thou canst live righteously and holily. - William Gurnall

Importance of early regeneration: As an early regeneration makes for God's honor, so it makes for your own interest. Your new birth will be the gentler. The work of conscience will be more kindly, without the horrors they have who have lain many years soaking in the old nature. More of hell must be flashed in an old sinner's face, to awaken him from his dead sleep. Paul who had sinned some years with an high hand, was struck to the earth. Christ, as it were took him by the throat, and shook him: Acts 9:6. He trembling and astonished said, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" There will be more amazing aggravations of sin to reach the conscience and consequently more anguish. Putrefied wounds require more lancing; and therefore are more painful in the cure than those which are but newly made. The more we are alienated from the life of God, the harder it will be to return to live that life again. - Stephen Charnock

I D E Thomas - The Golden Treasury of Puritan Quotations

The Preacher's Three R's - The Rev. Rowland Hill used to like Dr. Ryland's advice to his young academicians: "Mind, no sermon is of any alue, or likely to be useful, which has not the three R's in it—Ruin by the Fall; Redemption by Christ; Regeneration by the Holy Spirit. Of himself he (the Rev. R. Hill) remarked: "My aim in every sermon is, a stout and lusty call to sinners, to quicken the saints, and to be made a universal blessing to all."

"Preach the Word ..." says Paul in this charge to Timothy. Hugh Thomsen Kerr put the emphasis correctly: "We are not to preach sociology, but salvation; not economics, but evangelism; not reform, but redemption; not culture, but conversion; not progress, but pardon; not a new social order, but a new birth; not revolution, but regeneration; not renovation, but revival; not resuscitation, but resurrection; not a new organization, but a new creation; not democracy, but the Gospel; not civilization, but Christ; we are ambassadors, not diplomats.

By God Alone - Rebirth or **regeneration** is monergistic, not synergistic. It is done by God and by God alone. A dead man cannot cooperate with his resurrection. Lazarus did not cooperate in his resurrection. Regeneration is a sovereign act of God in which man plays no role. After God brings us to life, of course, we certainly are involved in "cooperating" with Him. We are to believe, trust, obey, and work for him. But unless God acts first, we will never be reborn in the first place. We must also realize it is not as if dead people have faith, and because of their faith God agrees to regenerate them. Rather, it is because God has regenerated us and given us new life that we have faith. R. C. Sproul

What makes our regeneration permanent is not our perseverance, but God's preservation. Ultimately it is not how diligently we persevere, and persevere we must, but how well God preserves us in faith. Tabletalk

His temptation and ours - For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Hebrews 4:15.

Until we are born again, the only kind of temptation we understand is that mentioned by St. James—"Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." But by **regeneration** we are lifted into another realm where there are other temptations to face, viz., the kind of temptations Our Lord faced. The temptations of Jesus do not appeal to us, they have no home at all in our human nature. Our Lord's temptations and ours move in different spheres until we are born again and become His brethren. The temptations of Jesus are not those of a man, but the temptations of God as Man. By **regeneration** the Son of God is formed in us, and in our physical life He has the same setting that He had on earth. Satan does not tempt us to do wrong things; he tempts us in order to make us lose what God has put into us by **regeneration**, viz., the possibility of being of value to God. He does not come on the line of tempting us to sin, but on the line of shifting the point of view, and only the Spirit of God can detect this as a temptation of the devil. Temptation means the test by an alien power of the possessions held by a personality. This makes the temptation of Our Lord explainable. After Jesus in His baptism had accepted the vocation of bearing away the sin of the world, He was immediately put by God's Spirit into the testing machine of the devil; but He did not tire. He went through the temptation "without sin," and retained the possessions of His personality intact. - Oswald Chambers - My Utmost for His Highest

The bent of regeneration - When it pleased God, ... to reveal His son in me. Gal. 1:15, 16.

If Jesus Christ is to regenerate me, what is the problem He is up against? I have a heredity I had no say in; I am not holy, nor likely to be; and if all Jesus Christ can do is to tell me I must be holy, His teaching plants despair. But if Jesus Christ is a Regenerator, One Who can put into me His own heredity of holiness, then I begin to see what He is driving at when He says that I have to be holy. Redemption means that Jesus Christ can put into any man the hereditary disposition that was in Himself, and all the standards He gives are based on that disposition: His teaching is for the life He puts in. The moral transaction on my part is agreement with God's verdict on sin in the Cross of Jesus Christ.

The New Testament teaching about regeneration is that when a man is struck by a sense of need, God will put the Holy Spirit into his spirit, and his personal spirit will be energized by the Spirit of the Son of God—"until Christ be formed in you." The moral miracle of Redemption is that God can put into me a new disposition whereby I can live a totally new life. When I reach the frontier of need and know my limitations, Jesus says—"Blessed are you." But I have to get there. God cannot put into me, a responsible moral being, the disposition that was in Jesus Christ unless I am conscious I need it.

Just as the disposition of sin entered into the human race by one man, so the Holy Spirit entered the human race by another Man; and Redemption means that I can be delivered from the heredity of sin and through Jesus Christ can receive an unsullied heredity, viz., the Holy Spirit. - Oswald Chambers - My Utmost for His Highest

An Inner Recreating - The new birth or regeneration is an inner recreating of fallen human nature by the Holy Spirit. It changes the disposition from lawless, godless self-seeking into one of trust and love, of repentance for past rebelliousness and unbelief, and loving compliance with God's law henceforth. It enlightens the blinded mind to discern spiritual realities and liberates and energizes the enslaved will for free obedience to God. The use of the figure of new birth to describe this change emphasizes two facts about it. The first is its decisiveness. The regenerate man has forever ceased to be the man he was; his old life is over and a new life has begun; he is a new creature in Christ, buried with him out of reach of condemnation and raised with him into a new life of righteousness. The second fact emphasized is that regeneration is due to the free, and to us, mysterious, exercise of divine power. Infants do not induce or cooperate in their own procreation and birth; no more can those who are dead in trespasses and sins prompt the quickening operation of God's Spirit within them. - Your Father Loves You by James Packer,

I should as soon attempt to raise flowers if there were no atmosphere, or produce fruits if there were neither light nor heat, as to regenerate men if I did not believe there was a Holy Ghost. - Henry Ward Beecher

Oswald Chambers on regeneration - What takes place is an explosion on the inside (a literal explosion, not a theoretical one) that opens all the doors that have been closed and life becomes larger; there is the incoming of a totally new point of view.

Regeneration is essentially a changing of the fundamental taste of the soul. By taste we mean the direction of man's love, the bent of his affection, the trend of his will. - Augustus Hopkins Strong

Regeneration is a single act, complete in itself, and never repeated; conversion, as the beginning of holy living, is the commencement of a series, constant, endless, and progressive. - Archibald Alexander Hodge

A W Tozer on Regeneration

In the Bible the offer of pardon on the part of God is conditioned upon intention to reform on the part of man. There can be no spiritual regeneration till there has been a moral reformation.

The converted man is both reformed and regenerated. And unless the sinner is willing to reform his way of living he will never know the inward experience of regeneration.

Man's hopeless condition cannot be perfected by some slow process of social regeneration—it must be brought about through the miraculous process of individual regeneration.

Contrary to much that is being said and practiced in churches, true worship is not something that we "do" in the hope of appearing to be religious!

True worship must be a constant and consistent attitude or state of mind within the believer, a sustained and blessed acknowledgment of love and admiration. If we have this awareness in our own lives and experience, then it is evident that we are not just waiting for Sunday to come to church and worship.

Having been made in His image, we have within us the capacity to know God and the instinct that we should worship Him. The very

moment that the Spirit of God has quickened us to His life in regeneration, our whole being senses its kinship to God and leaps up in joyous recognition!

That response within our beings—a response to the forgiveness and pardon and regeneration—signals the miracle of the heavenly birth without which we cannot see the kingdom of God. Thus the primary work of the Holy Spirit is to restore the lost soul to intimate fellowship with God through the washing of regeneration.

The primary work of the Holy Spirit is to restore the lost soul to intimate fellowship with God through the washing of regeneration. To accomplish this He first reveals Christ to the penitent heart (1 Corinthians 12:3). He then goes on to illumine the newborn soul with brighter rays from the face of Christ (John 14:26; 16:13-15) and leads the willing heart into depths and heights of divine knowledge and communion. Remember, we know Christ only as the Spirit enables us and we have only as much of Him as the Holy Spirit imparts.

God wants worshipers before workers; indeed the only acceptable workers are those who have learned the lost art of worship. It is inconceivable that a sovereign and holy God should be so hard up for workers that He would press into service anyone who had been empowered regardless of his moral qualifications. The very stones would praise Him if the need arose and a thousand legions of angels would leap to do His will.

Gifts and power for service the Spirit surely desires to impart; but holiness and spiritual worship come first.

A whole new generation of Christians has come up believing that it is possible to “accept” Christ without forsaking the world. But what saith the Holy Ghost? “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4), and “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15).

This requires no comment, only obedience.

It is an error to assume that we can experience justification without transformation. Justification and regeneration are not the same; they may be thought apart in theology but they can never be experienced apart in fact!

When God declares a man righteous He instantly sets about to make him righteous.

The error today is that we do not expect a converted man to be a transformed man, and as a result of this error our churches are full of substandard Christians. Many of these go on day after day assuming that salvation is possible without repentance and that they can find some value in religion without righteousness. A revival is, among other things, a return to the belief that real faith invariably produces holiness of heart and righteousness of life!