

BIBLE TRUTHS EXPLAINED

What the Bible Teaches About

REGENERATION

Revised Edition, 2026

GORDON LYONS

ESV Edition

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Regeneration

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Regeneration

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PART 1

Synopsis: Effectual Calling and Regeneration

Because of the Fall, all humanity is dead (spiritually) in trespasses and sins and utterly alienated from God, their Creator. Effectual calling is a work of the Holy Spirit, who, in sovereign grace, irresistibly draws a person to Christ, illuminates their mind to understand the basic truths of the gospel message, and regenerates that person to newness of life. As an immediate and almost simultaneous consequence of the Spirit's convicting, convincing and converting operations, the sinner is enabled to apprehend fully his or her great spiritual need and danger, to repent of their sins, and to believe wholeheartedly on the Son of God as their personal Saviour and Lord. Regeneration is the actual and instantaneous birth of an entirely new spiritual life. A person who once was spiritually dead; in total darkness to spiritual truths, and alienated from God by sin, is made alive spiritually and is reconciled to God. The Lord Jesus delivers that person from the kingdom of darkness, and transfers him to the kingdom of light. The Lord releases this person from slavery to sin, to the freedom to live unto God in holiness of life. The Lord also delivers the believer from the fear of death, replacing it with the gift of eternal life and peace with God. As with effectual calling, regeneration or the new birth is a work of the Holy Spirit. Regeneration, repentance and faith are followed by justification, sanctification, and, ultimately, glorification.

Note 1: Nature of Effectual Calling

Effectual calling is that work of the Holy Spirit in a person's heart whereby the Spirit truly and properly convicts that person of his sin, and convinces him of his great need of redemption. The Spirit also makes him deeply aware of the penalty he must pay if he does not avail himself of the redemption freely offered him in Christ Jesus. Then, the Holy Spirit leads this now convicted, convinced and repentant sinner to embrace the salvation promised to him through faith in Christ. Effectual calling stands intimately related to the work of regeneration. However, whereas effectual calling may be a prolonged process, regeneration is an instantaneous act.

Scripture References (ESV) *Effectual Calling*

John 5:25

²⁵ "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. (See v.21; contrast vv.28-29)

Acts 2:37-39

³⁷ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" ³⁸ And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." (See vv.14-36)

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

¹³ But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits ¹ to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. ¹⁴ To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Note 2: The Holy Spirit Seals the Believer to God

As with every other aspect of a person's salvation, regeneration is entirely a gift of God's grace. God freely bestows the new birth on the undeserving sinner. He does this according to his sovereign purposes in election. Because of Christ's redemptive work, the believer becomes the purchased possession of God. To identify him permanently as belonging to God, each believer receives the seal of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit acts as the divine guarantor of the believer's final redemption.

Scripture References (ESV)*The Holy Spirit Seals the Believer to God*

2 Corinthians 1:21-22

²¹ And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, ²² and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

2 Corinthians 5:4-5

⁴ For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. (See vv.1-10)

Ephesians 1:13-14

¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (See vv.4-12)

Titus 3:4-7

⁴ But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our

¹ chose you as the firstfruits: [2 Thessalonians 2:13](#) Some manuscripts chose you from the beginning. (ESV footnote)

Saviour, ⁷ so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Note 3: In Regeneration, the Sinner is Passive

God commands all people everywhere to repent; and all mankind is deemed responsible to God and inexcusable if they fail to seek the Lord's mercy. However, although they can seek to know the ways of the Lord, yet—because of their spiritually dead and sinfully inclined natures—no-one anywhere can exercise saving faith in Christ unless God gives this kind of faith to that person. A person is responsible for seeking the Lord or turning toward God (and only his spiritually dead and sinful nature impedes him from doing so). However, because he is spiritually dead, that person cannot repent and believe unless effectually called and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Concerning regeneration or the new birth, therefore, a person is *entirely passive*. The sinner can do nothing to assist in his new birth. In the act of regeneration, the sinner is as helpless as a child during the process of natural birth.

Scripture References (ESV)

In Regeneration, the Sinner is Passive

Matthew 11:27

²⁷ All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. (See vv.25-26)

John 6:44

⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. (See v.45)

John 6:65

⁶⁵ And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." (See vv.64-66)

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (See vv.1-10)

James 1:16-18

¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. ¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ¹⁸ Of his own will

he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. (See vv.19-25)

Note 4: The Unregenerate Sinner Remains in Satan's Domain

Regeneration is the only means by which a person can experience deliverance from Satan's kingdom or the kingdom of darkness, and be transferred into God's kingdom or the kingdom of light. Unless the Holy Spirit regenerates a person, he remains in Satan's domain, a child of the devil, and under the wrath and curse of God. Since he is a sinner by birth and by choice—and since he remains totally alienated from, and at enmity with, a holy and righteous God—this is his just desert. Only by the sovereign grace of God may he be delivered from this state and translated into the state of the children of God.

Scripture References (ESV) *The Unregenerate Sinner Remains in Satan's Domain*

John 8:44

⁴⁴You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (See vv.37-47)

1 John 3:8

⁸Whoever 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.

1 John 3:10

¹⁰By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practise righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

1 John 5:19

¹⁹We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. (See v.18)

Acts 26:17-18

¹⁷delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you ¹⁸to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.' (See vv.15-16)

Colossians 1:12-14

¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Related Bible Truths

Closely linked to the doctrine of regeneration are the doctrines of *predestination*, *faith*, *repentance*, and *justification*. All those whom God has given to the Son are drawn to him by the Holy Spirit in effectual calling. Those whom the Spirit effectually calls and renews spiritually, he enables to repent of their sins, and believe—*freely and willingly*—on the Lord Jesus Christ. In Christ, and by God's Spirit, they receive justification, adoption, and sanctification.²

Summary below

² See *Bible Truths Explained: Predestination; Faith; Repentance; Justification; Adoption; Sanctification*.

Part 1 Summary

- Part 1 introduces **effectual calling and regeneration** as closely connected works of the Holy Spirit.
- It begins by stating that, because of the Fall, all humanity is **spiritually dead in trespasses and sins** and alienated from God.
- **Effectual calling** is described as the Spirit's sovereign work of drawing a person to Christ, enlightening the mind, convicting of sin, and enabling the sinner to understand the gospel.
- Through this work, the sinner becomes aware of their **spiritual need and danger**, repents of sin, and believes in Christ as Saviour and Lord.
- **Regeneration** is defined as the instantaneous birth of a completely new spiritual life.
- A person who was spiritually dead, in darkness, and alienated from God is made spiritually alive and reconciled to God.
- Christ delivers the believer from the **kingdom of darkness** and transfers them into the **kingdom of light**.
- The believer is released from slavery to sin and enabled to live unto God in **holiness of life**.
- Regeneration also delivers the believer from the **fear of death**, replacing it with eternal life and peace with God.
- Part 1 explains that effectual calling may involve a process, but regeneration itself is **instantaneous**.
- Regeneration, repentance, and faith are followed by **justification, sanctification, and ultimately glorification**.
- The Holy Spirit also **seals the believer to God**, marking them as God's purchased possession and guaranteeing their final redemption.
- Scripture passages such as John 5:25, Acts 2:37–39, 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14, 2 Corinthians 1:21–22, Ephesians 1:13–14, and Titus 3:4–7 are used to support these truths.
- Part 1 stresses that in regeneration the sinner is **entirely passive**; the new birth is wholly God's work and cannot be assisted by human effort.
- Since unregenerate sinners remain under Satan's domain, regeneration is necessary for deliverance from spiritual darkness, sin, and condemnation.
- The final section links regeneration with related doctrines such as **predestination, faith, repentance, justification, adoption, and sanctification**.

PART 2

Doctrine of Regeneration: Summary of Regeneration

Before considering the doctrine of regeneration in more detail, we will first summarise the principal elements of this doctrine:

1. Regeneration is wholly an act of God, and a demonstration of his omnipotence. It is the same kind of omnipotence as God exercised when, by his word of command, he created the universe; or when, by a like word of command, the Lord Jesus raised the dead to life. If it requires almighty power to create the universe or to raise the dead, so it requires the same almighty power to raise those who are spiritually dead. It is this divine and almighty power that God exerts in regeneration when—by his Holy Spirit—he raises a sinner from spiritual death, making him a new creation. (John 5:25; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 1:19-20)
2. By the Person and agency of the Holy Spirit, God regenerates or gives new birth to the (spiritually dead) soul. This new birth is wrought in the sinner by the almighty working of the Spirit of holiness. This is a divine and omnipotent act; therefore, it follows that the sinner himself can do absolutely nothing to assist in its production. Regeneration of the soul is exclusively the work of God. It is in no respect attributable to the desire or effort of fallen, sinful, and spiritually dead human beings. (John 3:5-8; Eph. 2:8-10; Col. 2:13)
3. Regeneration is not a change of mind or purpose engendered by the sinner himself. It is not a determination on the sinner's part to choose God or holiness, rather than the pleasures of sin. Fallen and unregenerate humanity is spiritually dead. Those who are spiritually dead can have no desire for the things of the Spirit, or for God. His soul must first be made alive. To regenerate is to make alive unto God, or to quicken from spiritual death to new spiritual life. (Eph. 2:1-6; 4:18-19; Titus 3:3-7)
4. Regeneration is the creating of a new heart or new inner life. This inner change or conversion must come from outside the person himself, and from God above. In other words, a person must be born again—born from above—in order to receive a new spiritual nature and have new holy desires created within his heart or mind. Those who are thus born from above are said to be born of God; i.e. they have been born spiritually into the kingdom and family of God. The kingdom of God comprises all the members of the true or invisible Church. (John 1:12-13; Rom. 8:14-17; 1 John 3:9-10)
5. Unless a person is born from above (regenerated), he remains in utter darkness to spiritual truths. He cannot understand them because these truths require spiritual discernment; i.e. they require the presence of the Holy Spirit to enlighten the mind and the understanding. It is the power of the Word and the Spirit that enables a person to see the truth and to repent of his sin. By that same powerful witness to the truth, the sinner is led to believe on the Son of God, and to follow holiness of life. (1 Cor. 1:18-25; 2:12-15; 2 Cor. 4:3-6)

Different Names for Regeneration

The Bible alludes to, or describes, regeneration under different names or terms—including the following:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. <i>The new birth.</i> (i.e. being born again or born from above) | John 1:13; 3:3,6-7
1 Pet. 1:3,23
1 John 3:9; 5:1,18 |
| 2. <i>A (spiritual) resurrection, or newness of life.</i> | Rom. 6:4-13
Eph. 2:4-6
Col. 2:12-13; 3:1-3 |
| 3. <i>A new creation.</i> | 2 Cor. 5:17
Gal. 6:15 |
| 4. <i>A new heart (or mind).</i> | Jer. 24:7; 31:33; 32:38-39
Ezek. 11:19-20; 36:25-27
Heb. 10:16 |

The Necessity of Regeneration

Just as natural birth results in entry into the natural and temporal realm (the kingdom of this world), so spiritual birth results in entry into the spiritual and eternal realm (the kingdom of God and the world or age to come). We cannot experience the physical world without having been *born into it **naturally***. Similarly, we cannot experience the spiritual world without having been *born into it **spiritually***. Except a person be born again—born spiritually from above—he or she cannot see the kingdom of God. (John 3:3,5,7)

Summary below

Part 2 Summary

- Part 2 gives a **summary of the doctrine of regeneration** before exploring the subject in greater detail.
- Regeneration is described as **wholly an act of God** and a demonstration of his almighty power.
- The same divine power that created the universe and raised the dead is said to be required to raise a sinner from **spiritual death** to new spiritual life.
- The Holy Spirit is the one who **regenerates the spiritually dead soul**, giving new birth by divine power.
- The sinner can do **nothing to assist** in regeneration; it is entirely God's work, not the result of human desire, effort, or decision.
- Regeneration is not merely a **change of mind, purpose, feeling, or moral intention** produced by the sinner.
- Because fallen humanity is spiritually dead, the soul must first be **made alive unto God** before it can desire spiritual things.
- Regeneration is the creation of a **new heart** or new inner life that comes from God above.
- Those who are born from above are described as **born of God**, brought into God's kingdom and family.
- Without regeneration, a person remains in **spiritual darkness** and cannot understand spiritual truths, because they require spiritual discernment by the Holy Spirit.
- The Word and the Spirit enable the sinner to **see the truth, repent, believe in Christ, and pursue holiness**.
- Part 2 lists several biblical names or descriptions for regeneration, including:
 - **The new birth** — being born again or born from above.
 - **A spiritual resurrection** — being raised to newness of life.
 - **A new creation**.
 - **A new heart or mind**.
- The section ends by stressing the **necessity of regeneration**: just as natural birth is required to enter the physical world, spiritual birth is required to enter and see the kingdom of God.

PART 3

Divergent Views of Regeneration

Reformed Teaching of Regeneration

In accordance with the express teaching of the Bible, we maintain that a person can be regenerated only by being born again³—the new birth being closely associated with repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, to become a Christian, a person must be reborn or regenerated spiritually by God's Holy Spirit. We maintain also that this new birth occurs as a result of God's eternal and sovereign purposes in election, and of the Holy Spirit's operations in effectual calling. Effectual calling results in regeneration, which in turn result immediately in a person turning to Christ in heartfelt repentance and unreserved faith in God's one and only Son.

Roman Catholic Teaching of Regeneration

Members of the Roman Catholic Church, however, have a completely different understanding of how and when God's Spirit effects regeneration. They believe that a person's spiritual regeneration (or, as they term it, 'justification') occurs at or during (water) baptism. In view of the vast number of people who hold to this belief in *baptismal regeneration*, we will look briefly at the Roman Catholic Church's teaching on this subject. Then, we will move on to consider the true biblical teaching.

Roman Catholic View

The Effects of Baptism ⁴

The Catholic Church teaches that Baptism produces several distinct and permanent effects, all of which are described in the Catechism (CCC 1262–1274):

- **Forgiveness of original sin and all personal sins.** Baptism wipes the slate completely clean. Original sin — the sin inherited from Adam and Eve — is forgiven. Any personal sins committed before Baptism are also forgiven. The baptized person emerges from the water with no sin on their soul.
- **Infusion of sanctifying grace.** Baptism does not merely forgive sin — it fills the soul with sanctifying grace, the very life of God. The baptized person becomes a "partaker of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), sharing in God's own life.
- **Incorporation into the Body of Christ.** The baptized person becomes a member of the Church — not merely a member of an organization, but a living cell in the Body of Christ. This is why the Church is called the Body of Christ: because all the baptized are genuinely united to him.

³ (*born*) *again*: Greek, ἀνωθεν **anōthen**. The Greek term *anōthen* can mean 'again', but the more usual meaning of *anōthen* in the Scriptures is 'from above'. (i.e. born from above or from God in heaven, working through the Holy Spirit).

⁴ The section entitled *The Effects of Baptism* is quoted from the online source, *The Guide Catholic. Catholic Baptism: What It Is, What It Does & Why It Matters*

- **The theological virtues.** Faith, hope, and charity are infused into the soul at Baptism, along with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These are not merely human virtues — they are supernatural gifts that orient the person toward God.
- **The indelible character.** Baptism imprints a permanent, indelible spiritual mark on the soul — a "character" that can never be removed. This is why Baptism can never be repeated. Even if a person falls away from the faith, the baptismal character remains. It is a permanent seal of belonging to Christ.

Summary Remarks Concerning the Roman Catholic View

According to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church—and certain other churches—an individual's regeneration is not dependent on his or her personal faith in Christ. Rather, according to this view, the Holy Spirit effects regeneration during that person's baptism in, by, or with water. Thus, by baptising infant children, they believe that the Holy Spirit has regenerated them, or infused righteousness into their souls. (In RC theology, they refer to this as (the first) justification—rather than regeneration.)

Those people who hold to this view of regeneration, invariably submit their infant children to baptism. They believe that—in so doing—the Holy Spirit will purify their children's souls, cleansing them from the guilt and pollution of original sin. They further believe that baptism results in the infusion of righteousness into the child's soul, thereby justifying that child and making him or her acceptable in the sight of God.

From this, it follows that they consider a baptised infant to have been *born again* (i.e. regenerated (or justified)); to have become a Christian, and to have been made a member of God's kingdom. They therefore do not accept that a person needs to profess personal faith in Christ. Again, although practising 'Confirmation', they do not necessarily accept that a person must be born again (born from above) at an age of understanding, by the Holy Spirit of God.

Baptism Cannot Effect Regeneration

It is the clear teaching of the Bible that there can be no regeneration or new birth without it being associated with repentance and faith. (With the sole exception of children who die before birth, in infancy, or adults who, because of some medical or health condition, are not capable of responding to the call of the gospel.) There can be no repentance of sin, however, when one is not consciously aware of sin. But, to be consciously aware of sin, a person must have reached an age of understanding, and must have been convicted of their sin by the Holy Spirit.

Regeneration or the new birth cannot be effected through or during baptism. Nor can righteousness be infused into a person's soul. The Holy Spirit regenerates a person whom he has effectually called to faith in Christ. Consequently, that person repents and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. Through that faith in Christ—a faith graciously given him by God—God *justifies* the believing sinner, or *declares him righteous* in his sight.

Baptism is Not a Saving Rite

Baptism with water is not a saving rite or sacrament. In and of itself, baptism does not convey any saving power or efficacy to the soul. Rather, it is a public testimony that the person receiving this ordinance has already been regenerated or born again from above. The believer has already been

washed or purified—but not by water. He has been washed by the Spirit and the Word of God, and he has been cleansed or purified in Christ’s atoning blood. (1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5-6; Heb. 9:12-22; 1 Pet. 1:2,22; 1 John 1:7)

Biblical Teaching of Regeneration

The Natural State of Man

Prior to their regeneration, men and women are abiding in a state of spiritual death. They are guilty of, and polluted by, sin—original, and actual sin. In virtue of their guilt and pollution, men and women are totally alienated from God, and are abiding under God’s wrath and curse.

Fallen humanity is totally depraved⁵ and utterly blind to the truths of God’s Word. Thus, the Scripture says:

1 Corinthians 2:14

¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. (See vv.9-16)

Again, God’s Word says:

2 Corinthians 4:3-4

³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the god of this world ⁶ has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (See vv.2-3)

The *natural* person—i.e. men or women without the Spirit of God—may or may not be gifted with considerable intelligence, capacities and abilities. Notwithstanding their intellectual prowess and abilities, however, he or she is incapable of comprehending the truths of God’s Word in a way that leads to their personal and eternal salvation. These truths are folly to them; and they remain so, unless God illuminates their souls by the Holy Spirit. Only then does the light of the glorious gospel of Christ penetrate their moral and spiritual darkness to shine upon their hearts.

⁵ *totally depraved*: This does **not** mean that every unregenerate person in the world has descended to the utmost depths of wickedness, sin or evil. It means that, because of their fallen, sinful nature, every unregenerate man or woman has the capacity or capability of sinning to this degree—although many individuals never actually descend to such depths of depravity. Nevertheless, their actual sins and sinful nature are still evil in the sight of God and worthy of his righteous wrath and judgment. Thus, *all* sinners—regardless of the extent or depth of their sin—will perish unless they repent and seek God’s abundant mercy and forgiveness.

⁶ *the god of this world (or age)*: That is, the devil or Satan.

In this regard, the Scripture says:

2 Corinthians 3:15-16

¹⁵ Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. ¹⁶ But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.

2 Corinthians 4:6

⁶ For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness” {*Gen. 1:3*}, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Only then—as the Holy Spirit enlightens a man’s mind to spiritual truths—is he able to see, to understand, and to believe the things that are of value to the soul.

But concerning those whose minds have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and whom God’s Spirit has regenerated and justified, the Scripture says:

2 Corinthians 3:18

¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (See v.17)

Summary below

Part 3 Summary

- Part 3 compares **divergent views of regeneration**, especially the Reformed view and the Roman Catholic view.
- The Reformed teaching maintains that regeneration is the **new birth by the Holy Spirit**, closely associated with repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- It teaches that regeneration flows from **God's sovereign election** and the Spirit's work in **effectual calling**.
- In this view, effectual calling results in regeneration, and regeneration immediately results in a person turning to Christ in **heartfelt repentance and genuine faith**.
- The Roman Catholic view is presented as teaching that regeneration, or what it terms the first justification, occurs **at or during water baptism**.
- According to the Catholic view described, baptism forgives original and personal sin, infuses sanctifying grace, incorporates the person into the Church, gives theological virtues, and leaves an indelible spiritual mark.
- The section explains that this view leads to the practice of **infant baptism**, with the belief that the Holy Spirit regenerates or justifies the child through baptism.
- Part 3 then argues that **baptism cannot effect regeneration**, because biblical regeneration is connected with conscious repentance and faith.
- It states that water baptism has **no saving power in itself**, but is a public testimony that a believer has already been regenerated and cleansed by the Spirit, the Word, and Christ's blood.
- The biblical teaching section describes the natural state of humanity as **spiritual death**, guilt, pollution, alienation from God, and blindness to spiritual truth.
- It emphasises that the natural person cannot understand or accept the things of the Spirit unless God enlightens the mind by the Holy Spirit.
- Scripture passages such as 1 Corinthians 2:14 and 2 Corinthians 4:3–6 are used to show that unbelievers are spiritually blind until God shines gospel light into their hearts.
- The final emphasis is that regeneration requires **God's sovereign spiritual illumination**, enabling a person to understand, believe, and be transformed by the Spirit.

PART 4

How Regeneration is Effected

Creation of New Life

Regeneration is not an external change, nor is it a natural change. It is an internal and spiritual change, as to both its nature and its origin. It is not a change of purpose, nor of opinion, nor of feeling. Rather, it is the creation of a new spiritual life and principle.⁷

Regeneration is the creation of a new life. This new life begins when the Holy Spirit effectually calls a person to Christ in repentance and faith, and when that person confesses Christ as his or her Saviour and Lord.

Regarding a person who has experienced the new birth, God's Word says:

2 Corinthians 5:17

¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.⁸ The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Primarily, regeneration is a new birth. Without this new birth, it is impossible for anyone to enter the kingdom of God. However, everyone who experiences the new birth becomes a member of God's kingdom, a child of God, and a joint-heir with the Son of God.

Deliverance From Darkness to Light

A person's salvation—including his regeneration—is referred to as a 'deliverance from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light'. The Bible refers to it also as a 'deliverance from the power of Satan unto God', and as a 'crossing over from death to life'. Thus, concerning why the message of repentance and faith must be preached to people of all nations, the Scripture answers:

Acts 26:18

¹⁸to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.' (See vv.15-17)

Regarding those who have turned to God, the Bible says:

Colossians 1:12-14

¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³He has delivered us from the domain of

⁷ Based on C. Hodge: *Princeton Sermons* [Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1879, 1979 reprint], pp.136-137.

⁸ [2 Corinthians 5:17](#) Or *creature*. (ESV footnote)

darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

John 5:24

²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgement, but has passed from death to life. (See v.25)

1 John 3:13-14

¹³ Do not be surprised, brothers,⁹ that the world hates you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. (See vv.10-18)

Those whom the Holy Spirit has regenerated, and who are presently being sanctified, have forever crossed over from death to life. They have passed from spiritual death to spiritual and eternal life. They have been made alive in Christ Jesus to live by the Spirit, and according to God's will and purpose for their lives.

The Effect of Preaching The Gospel

The External Call

Christ commanded his disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation—or to all humankind. This command is known as *the Great Commission*. At present, the Great Commission is being carried out by preachers, teachers, evangelists, missionaries, and many other Christian workers throughout the world. According to the command of Christ, they are endeavouring to proclaim his name to the whole human race.

Concerning this great commission, God's Word declares:

Matthew 28:18-20

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

⁹ *brothers*: [1 John 3:13](#) Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church; also verses [14](#), [16](#) (ESV footnote)

Mark 16:15-16

¹⁵ And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Luke 24:47

⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

This proclamation of the gospel to all mankind—together with the exhortation to repent and believe the message—is known as *the external call*. Multitudes hear the external call to faith and repentance, but only a relatively small number respond.

Effectual Calling

Those who respond to the external call of the gospel, and to whom God grants the gifts of repentance and faith, are said to have been *effectually called*. They have heard the external call to repentance; they have heeded this call, and they have turned to God in true repentance and genuine faith.

In their case, the Holy Spirit has made the external call to repentance effective or effectual in their lives. Those whom God's Spirit effectually calls, are regenerated and receive forgiveness of sins and life eternal through faith in Christ.

Effectual calling is a work of the Holy Spirit. Effectual calling results in spiritual regeneration, and this includes the ability which God gives to those who have been drawn to Christ to begin to understand the things of God. By nature, fallen man cannot comprehend spiritual things. They are foolishness to him. By grace, however, God removes the veil of darkness that has been covering their minds, so that they can see (or understand) spiritual truths, repent, and believe. (1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 3:16; 4:6)

Everyone whom the Holy Spirit effectually calls to faith in Christ is regenerated or born again.¹⁰

Difference Between Regeneration and Conversion

Although sometimes used interchangeably, regeneration and conversion are not identical terms. They refer to different aspects of a person's salvation, and we should not confuse or confound these aspects.

¹⁰ For further information regarding the external call and effectual calling, see *Bible Truths Explained: Repentance*.

We may express the distinction between the two terms as follows:

1. **Regeneration:** Regeneration = The New Birth.

In regeneration, the sinner—whom the Holy Spirit has drawn effectually to Christ—is entirely **passive**; i.e. there is absolutely nothing that the sinner can do to effect his new birth or to assist in its production. In this respect, spiritual birth and regeneration is analogous to natural birth.

2. **Conversion** Conversion = Repentance + Faith.

In conversion, the Holy Spirit—having fully convicted and convinced a sinner of his sin and great need of salvation, and of the forgiving love of God—enables that sinner to turn toward God. This the sinner does, *freely and willingly* repenting of his sins and believing on the Lord Jesus Christ for his salvation. In this sense, the sinner is said to be **active** in his conversion.

Salvation is wholly the work of God, and none of self. However, in regeneration a person is *passive*, while in conversion a person is *active*.

Summary below

Part 4 Summary

- Part 4 explains **how regeneration is effected**, describing it as an inward, spiritual work rather than an external or merely natural change.
- Regeneration is the **creation of new spiritual life**, not simply a change of opinion, purpose, or feeling.
- This new life begins when the Holy Spirit **effectually calls a person to Christ** in repentance and faith.
- A regenerated person is described as being “**in Christ**” and therefore a **new creation**, with the old life passing away and the new life beginning.
- The new birth is necessary for entrance into **God’s kingdom**; everyone born again becomes a child of God and joint-heir with Christ.
- Salvation is pictured as **deliverance from darkness to light**, from Satan’s power to God, and from spiritual death to life.
- Scripture passages such as Acts 26:18, Colossians 1:12–14, John 5:24, and 1 John 3:13–14 are used to show that believers have been transferred into Christ’s kingdom and have passed from death to life.
- Part 4 explains that the **external call** is the general proclamation of the gospel to all people through preaching, teaching, evangelism, and mission.
- The **Great Commission** is presented as the basis for this external call, commanding Christ’s followers to proclaim repentance and forgiveness to all nations.
- The section contrasts the external call with **effectual calling**, where the Holy Spirit makes the gospel call savingly effective in a person’s life.
- Effectual calling results in **regeneration, forgiveness of sins, spiritual understanding, and eternal life**.
- Part 4 also distinguishes between **regeneration and conversion**:
 - **Regeneration** is the new birth, in which the sinner is entirely passive.
 - **Conversion** is repentance and faith, in which the sinner—enabled by the Holy Spirit—freely and willingly turns to God.
- The final emphasis is that **salvation is wholly God’s work**, though the regenerated sinner actively responds in conversion through repentance and faith.

PART 5

Sinners Commanded to Seek the Lord

God commands all mankind to repent of their sins, and to seek his mercy. Although men and women are dead (spiritually) in trespasses and sins, yet they are responsible for their sinful condition and are commanded to seek the Lord. But to what extent can fallen and spiritually dead mankind respond to this command?

All mankind hear the external call of the gospel. Even if they should plead ignorance of the gospel message, all mankind can see, or come to understand, the revelation of God's existence, power and glory in his natural creation. This revelation in nature, or the external call, makes all men and women fully aware of their responsibility and accountability toward God. It also places them under obligation to acknowledge God and to seek to discover his ways more fully—leaving them inexcusable if they refuse. (Rom. 1:19-20)

Supposing, then, that—in response to God's command to seek him, or in response to what he has understood of God in the natural creation—a sinner seeks to find God or to discover his mercy and forgiveness. In his fallen and spiritually dead condition, what can a sinner do to find out about God, or to discover his mercy?

Let us illustrate by example: A man who has been born blind earnestly desires to be able to see. He knows he is completely unable to heal himself. However, he learns that a person called the Lord Jesus Christ is able to heal him.

The blind man now has two choices:

1. He can remain where he is—hoping that the Lord Jesus will come to him.
(This represents disobedience to God's command to seek the Lord while he may be found).
2. He can make his way to where he knows the Lord Jesus is to be found.
(This represents obedience to God's command to seek him with all his heart and soul.)

It is the man's responsibility to choose the latter course. Let us assume that this is what this particular individual does. (In the passing, we must concede that most of sinful mankind do not follow this man's example, for they fail to actively seek the Lord.) This man, however, believes the reports that he has heard about the Lord Jesus Christ (the external call), so he determines to seek the Lord while he may be found. (Isa. 55:6)

The blind man—probably with the help of friends—has made his way to the Lord Jesus. He now stands before the Lord, by this time convinced of his very great need and believing that the Lord Jesus alone can fully meet his need (effectual calling).

There is, however, absolutely nothing that the man himself can do to assist in his physical healing *(or spiritual rebirth, which this example illustrates)*. He is entirely in the Lord's hands. He believes the Lord can heal him; but, in and of itself, his faith will not actually restore his sight. This will depend entirely on Christ's willingness to heal him (although, of course, there is no question of the Lord failing to respond to a genuinely seeking person's cry for help).

By means of the Holy Spirit, this man has been drawn to Christ—firstly, in obedience to God’s command to seek him (the external call); and, secondly, by the more direct operation of the Holy Spirit in effectual calling. Having come to this point, there is now nothing more that this man can do. If he is to receive his sight, he must depend wholly on Christ to grant him this priceless gift. This represents the sinner whom the Holy Spirit has drawn to Christ and is about to regenerate.

In regard to his regeneration or new spiritual birth, the sinner cannot co-operate in any way. The new birth is the priceless gift of God. In his grace and mercy, God freely bestows this gift upon everyone whom the Holy Spirit effectually calls to Christ. However, no-one who comes to Christ in this manner will ever be refused healing of their soul or turned away without their need being fully met. All who thus come will be received; all will find the mercy of the Lord, and all will be forgiven and granted full spiritual healing together with the gift of eternal life. (John 4:13-14; 6:37; 7:37-38)

Living Water

As has been noted, regeneration or the new birth is a work of the Holy Spirit. The Word of God often refers to, or alludes to, this aspect of the Spirit’s work as *living water*. The Holy Spirit is the spring or source of life—in this case, abundant and eternal life. The Spirit of God is the only person who is able to quench a sinner’s deep inward and spiritual thirst, or the longing for righteousness, forgiveness of sins, and peace with God

Scripture References (ESV) *NT Illustrations of Water and The Spirit*

Regarding this living water or source of eternal life, and as the only true satisfaction for the deepest needs of the soul, Jesus said to the woman of Samaria:

John 4:10

¹⁰ Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink’, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” (See vv.4-9)

John 4:13-14

¹³ Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (See vv.11-26)

Again, the Scripture says:

John 7:37-39

³⁷ On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” ³⁹ Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in

him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (Cf. v.38 with Isa. 12:3; 44:3)

All who believe on Christ have received the Holy Spirit; i.e. they have been born again or regenerated by the Spirit. In addition, the Holy Spirit indwells them, sanctifies them and seals them as belonging to God for all eternity. This is the gift of eternal life.

Because of its refreshing and renewing effects upon the soul—and therefore upon the whole person and personality—the effects of the Spirit's work in regeneration is sometimes described as *living water*: renewing, refreshing and invigorating the soul.

Scripture References (ESV)***OT Illustrations of Water and The Spirit***

This thought is not confined to the teaching of the New Testament. In the Old Testament, God says of the Spirit's work:

Isaiah 44:3

³ For I will pour water on the thirsty land,
and streams on the dry ground;
I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring,
and my blessing on your descendants.
(See vv.1-5)

Isaiah 55:1

¹“Come, everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters;
and he who has no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.
(See vv.2-7)

Concerning those of God's people who had turned away from the LORD, the Scripture says:

Jeremiah 2:13

¹³ for my people have committed two evils:
they have forsaken me,
the fountain of living waters,
and hewed out cisterns for themselves,
broken cisterns that can hold no water.
(See vv.4-19)

For those who return to the LORD with all their hearts, however, the Scripture declares:

Isaiah 12:3

³ With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.
(See vv.1-6; see also Isa. 11ff)

Or, as God's abundant salvation is expressed by the prophet Joel:

Joel 2:28

²⁸ "And it shall come to pass afterwards,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.

Joel 2:32

³² And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of
the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be
those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be
those whom the LORD calls. (See vv.25-31)

Water of Life Free to All

Again, in the New Testament, the Lord Jesus offers the water of life freely to all who come:

Revelation 22:17

¹⁷ The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say,
"Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take
the water of life without price.

Summary below

Part 5 Summary

- Part 5 explains that **God commands all people to repent and seek his mercy**, even though humanity is spiritually dead in sin.
- It distinguishes between the **external call**—God’s general revelation in creation and the gospel invitation—and the **effectual call**, where the Holy Spirit draws a sinner personally and savingly to Christ.
- The blind man illustration shows that a sinner may seek Christ, but **cannot heal or regenerate himself**; spiritual rebirth depends wholly on Christ’s grace and the Holy Spirit’s work.
- Regeneration is described as entirely **God’s gift**, not something the sinner can cooperate in or produce.
- The section stresses that **no one who truly comes to Christ will be rejected**; all who come will receive mercy, forgiveness, spiritual healing, and eternal life.
- The Holy Spirit’s regenerating work is pictured as **“living water”**—refreshing, renewing, satisfying spiritual thirst, and giving eternal life.
- New Testament passages such as John 4, John 7, and Revelation 22 present Christ as offering this living water freely to all who thirst.
- Old Testament passages such as Isaiah 44, Isaiah 55, Jeremiah 2, Isaiah 12, and Joel 2 show the same imagery of God’s Spirit and salvation as water poured out on the needy.
- The final emphasis is that the **water of life is freely offered**, and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

PART 6

Baptised By The Holy Spirit

God pours out his Holy Spirit upon all his people—the same Spirit by whom he has effectually called them to faith in Christ.

All who believe on Christ are baptised by the Spirit into the body of Christ; i.e. the church. Thus, the Scripture says:

Mark 1:8

⁸“I [John the Baptist] have baptized you with water, but he [Jesus] will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” (See vv.1-15; cf. Matt. 3:11-12)

John 1:33-34

³³“I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.” (See vv.29-32)

Before ascending into heaven, the Lord Jesus said to his disciples:

Acts 1:5

⁵“for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” (See vv.1-8; see esp. v.8)

When the Lord’s followers had come together on the day of Pentecost ¹¹ the Scripture records:

Acts 2:2-4

²And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. (See vv.5-21,33; see also vv.37-39)

The Lord’s followers had gathered together on the day of Pentecost. While they were assembled, the Holy Spirit descended upon them and filled each one of them. Then, the Lord’s followers began speaking in other tongues.

We must remember that many of the Jewish people now assembled in Jerusalem had come there specially for the feast of Pentecost. These Jews had arrived at Jerusalem from many different countries

¹¹ *Pentecost*: The Feast of Weeks or the feast of the first fruits of wheat harvest.

abroad. Most did not speak the local languages of Aramaic or Greek. They knew only their own foreign languages. Thus, in order for the Lord's disciples to communicate the gospel to these Jews from abroad, they needed to speak to them in their own native languages.

Of course, few if any of the Lord's disciples would be fluent in these foreign languages. For this reason, the Holy Spirit bestowed upon them the gift of tongues: i.e. the gift of being able to speak in foreign languages that the followers of Jesus had never previously learned.

Thus, it is written:

Acts 2:5-12

⁵ Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷ And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? ⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, ¹¹ both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." ¹² And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"

By this means, the foreign-speaking Jewish worshippers were able to hear the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed to them in their own native languages. By the same means, many Gentiles who were also visiting Jerusalem would hear and understand the gospel in their own languages. Thus, both Jews and Gentiles from many different countries would hear the gospel—and, by God's grace, many would be saved and baptised into the body of Christ.

Concerning God's intention to include Gentiles in the body of Christ (the Church), Peter gives this testimony:

Acts 11:15-16

¹⁵ "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'" (See vv.1-14)

Acts 11:17-18

¹⁷ "If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" ¹⁸ When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life."

Concerning the unity of the body of Christ, the apostle Paul says:

1 Corinthians 12:13

¹³For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. (See vv.1-31)

The apostle Paul uses similar language when he speaks of the redemption of God's people Israel and their deliverance from bondage in Egypt:

1 Corinthians 10:1-5

¹For I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, ²and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³and all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. ⁵Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

1 Corinthians 10:6

⁶Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. (See vv.7-14; cf. v.6 with v.11)

One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism

The Holy Spirit baptises a repentant sinner into the body of Christ at that person's regeneration or new birth.

When the Holy Spirit baptises a believing sinner into the body of Christ, he makes that person a partaker of all the benefits of the redemption secured by Christ. There is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.

Thus, God's Word says:

Ephesians 4:4-6

⁴There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (See vv.1-3)

Ephesians 4:7-8

⁷But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸Therefore it says,

“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives,
and he gave gifts to men.” {*Psalms 68:18*}
(See Eph. 4:9-10; cf. v.8 with Col. 2:15)

Ephesians 4:11-13

¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds¹² and teachers,¹³ ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, (See vv.14-16; cf. Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:1-31; 14:1-40)

Ephesians 4:11-13 lists some of the gifts that the Holy Spirit bestows upon certain believers as he sees fit. These gifts are intended for the building up of the church in love. Thus, selected individuals receive gifts equipping them to become pastors or shepherds of God's flock. Some are equipped by God's Spirit to become teachers, evangelists, missionaries or other servants of God. These are just some of the gifts of the Spirit.

We distinguish between the *baptism* of the Spirit and the *gifts* of the Spirit:

- Baptism of the Holy Spirit is associated with the new birth (regeneration). It involves a repentant sinner's forgiveness and reconciliation with God and their entry into the kingdom and family of God and the body of Christ—the church.
- The gifts of the Spirit are bestowed upon those who are already within the fellowship of Christ's church. These spiritual gifts are bestowed at God's pleasure for the purpose of serving Christ and his church in a specific capacity, and to the glory of God the Father.¹⁴

Summary below

¹² shepherds: [Ephesians 4:11](#) Or *pastors*. (ESV footnote)

¹³ teachers: [Ephesians 4:11](#) Or *the shepherd-teachers*. (ESV footnote)

¹⁴ These concepts are discussed in detail elsewhere in this series. See under *Bible Truths Explained: God the Holy Spirit*; and, *The Work of The Holy Spirit*.

Part 6 Summary

- Part 6 explains that **all believers are baptised by the Holy Spirit** into the body of Christ, the church.
- John the Baptist's water baptism is contrasted with Christ's greater work of **baptising his people with the Holy Spirit**.
- Scripture passages such as Mark 1:8, John 1:33–34, and Acts 1:5 are used to show that Jesus is the one who baptises with the Spirit.
- The fulfilment of this promise is linked especially with **Pentecost**, when the Holy Spirit came upon Christ's followers.
- At Pentecost, the disciples were **filled with the Holy Spirit** and enabled to speak in foreign languages they had not previously learned.
- The gift of tongues is explained as a practical means for proclaiming the gospel to Jews gathered in Jerusalem from many different nations.
- The section emphasises that these tongues were **real human languages**, understood by the hearers in their own native speech.
- This event demonstrated that the gospel was not confined to one nation or language, but was to be proclaimed widely.
- The Spirit's coming at Pentecost marked a decisive stage in the formation and empowerment of the New Testament church.
- The baptism of the Holy Spirit is presented as something shared by **all who truly believe in Christ**, not merely by a special class of Christians.
- The Holy Spirit unites believers to Christ and to one another in his body.
- Part 6 therefore connects regeneration, faith, and incorporation into the church through the Spirit's saving and unifying work.

PART 7

God is the Author of Regeneration

God is the Author of the new birth. The power he employs to effect the new birth is not physical or natural but spiritual and divine. It is therefore impossible for a person to be born again if he has not personally experienced God's regenerating power in his life.

Agency of The Holy Spirit in Regeneration

The divine efficiency that God employs in causing the new birth is effected through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Although the Spirit of God may work when, where, and how he pleases, he generally works by the means of grace. In this case, the Spirit operates by applying the truths of God's Word to the sinner's soul.

The Spirit of God works within the heart of the unbeliever, revealing to him the truths of God's Word, and causing him to understand these truths. During this process, the Holy Spirit convicts that person of his sin. He convinces the sinner of his great need of salvation, and he regenerates him. Almost simultaneously, the now regenerated sinner turns in heartfelt repentance and faith toward God, thereby experiencing full justification in the sight of God and the forgiveness of all his sins.

Scripture References (ESV)

OT Passages on Regeneration

In the Old Testament, regeneration (or spiritual rebirth) is alluded to by the Prophets, including Ezekiel. In their immediate contexts, these passages refer to Israel's restoration to their own land following their captivity and exile. However, they are equally applicable to the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration.

Thus, God's Word says:

Ezekiel 11:19-20

¹⁹ And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰ that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. (See vv.13-18)

Ezekiel 36:24

²⁴ I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. (See vv.16-23)

Ezekiel 36:25-27

²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules [or *decrees*]. (See vv.28-31; cf. Jer. 24:6-7; 31:31-34; 32:36-41)

In a vision given to him by the LORD, Ezekiel describes the valley of dry bones (representing the spiritually dead nation of Israel). The prophet then speaks of the spiritual resurrection and restoration effected on these dead bones by the Holy Spirit of God.

To this end, the Scripture says:

Ezekiel 37:3

³ And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." (See vv.1-4)

Ezekiel 37:5

⁵ Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath ¹⁵ to enter you, and you shall live. (See vv.6-8)

Ezekiel 37:9-10

⁹ Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath [or *spirit*]; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live." ¹⁰ So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army. (See vv.11-14)

Scripture References (ESV)

NT Passages on Regeneration

In the New Testament, regeneration or the new birth is referred to in passages such as the following:

John 1:11-13

¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (See vv.6-18)

¹⁵ *breath*: [Ezekiel 37:5](#) Or *spirit*; also verses [6](#), [9](#), [10](#) (ESV footnote)

John 3:3-7

³ Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again [or *from above*] he cannot see the kingdom of God.” ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” ⁵ Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’

Ephesians 5:25-26

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

Titus 3:5

⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,

1 Peter 1:3

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

1 Peter 1:23

²³ since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;

Summary below

Part 7 Summary

- Part 7 focuses on **effectual calling**, the inward and saving call of God by the Holy Spirit.
- Effectual calling is distinguished from the **external call**, which may be heard by many but rejected by some.
- In effectual calling, the Holy Spirit applies the gospel personally and powerfully to the sinner's heart.
- The Spirit convinces the person of sin, reveals their need of Christ, and draws them savingly to him.
- This call is effective because it results in **repentance, faith, and salvation**, not merely outward hearing.
- Part 7 stresses the **necessity of repentance**: sinners must turn from sin and seek God's mercy.
- The section warns that those who do not repent will **perish**, echoing Christ's teaching that repentance is essential.
- Repentance is not presented as a human achievement or meritorious work.
- True repentance is possible only because of **God's grace** and the Spirit's inward work.
- The sinner does not earn salvation by performing duties, religious acts, or outward obedience.
- God's call brings the sinner to acknowledge guilt, forsake sin, and look to Christ alone for mercy.
- Part 7 therefore connects effectual calling with repentance, showing that saving repentance flows from God's gracious and powerful work in the heart.

PART 8

Examples of Regeneration

Jesus and Nicodemus

Scripture References (ESV)

Jesus and Nicodemus

In his conversation with Nicodemus, the Lord Jesus emphasises the absolute necessity of the new birth:

John 3:3

³ Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again¹⁶ he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (See vv.1-2)

John 3:4-5

⁴ Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” ⁵ Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

John 3:6-7

⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.¹⁷ ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’

John 3:8

⁸ The wind ¹⁸ blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (See vv.9-15)

John 3:16-18

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the

¹⁶ (born) again: [John 3:3](#) Or from above; the Greek is purposely ambiguous and can mean both *again* and *from above*; also verse [7](#). (ESV footnote)

¹⁷ spirit: [John 3:6](#) The same Greek word means both *wind* and *spirit*. (ESV footnote)

¹⁸ wind: [John 3:8](#) The same Greek word means both *wind* and *spirit*. (ESV footnote)

world might be saved through him. ¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. (See vv.19-21)

Other NT Passages

Scripture References (ESV)	Other NT Passages
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Titus 3:3-7

³For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. ⁴But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, ⁷so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (See vv.1-2)

James 1:16-18

¹⁶Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. ¹⁷Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ¹⁸Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

1 Peter 1:3-5

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (See vv.2-12; see esp. v.12)

1 Peter 1:23

²³since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; (See vv.13-25)

1 John 2:29

²⁹If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practises righteousness has been born of him. (See vv.26-28)

1 John 3:9

⁹ 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. (See vv.7-16)

1 John 5:18-19

¹⁸ We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.

¹⁹ We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. (See vv.16-17; see also vv.1,4-5)

Additional Scriptures Relating to the New Birth

Scripture References (ESV)

Additional Scriptures Relating to the New Birth

Romans 6:3-4

³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. (See vv.1-14)

Ephesians 2:4-6

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, (See vv.1-10)

Colossians 2:12-13

¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, (See vv.10-17; see also Col. 3:1-3)

2 Corinthians 5:14-16

¹⁴ For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

¹⁶ From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. (See vv.10-13)

2 Corinthians 5:17

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (See vv.18-21)

Galatians 6:15

¹⁵ For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. (See vv.13-14)

Hebrews 10:14-18

¹⁴ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

¹⁵ And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,

¹⁶ “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds” {*Jer. 31:33*},

¹⁷ then he adds,

“I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.” {*Jer. 31:34*}.

¹⁸ Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. (See vv.19-25; cf. Heb. 8:7-13; Ezek. 36:25-27)

Summary below

Part 8 Summary

- Part 8 presents **examples of regeneration**, showing from Scripture what the new birth is, why it is necessary, and how it is evidenced in the believer's life.
- The section begins with **Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus** in John 3, where Christ teaches that no one can see or enter the kingdom of God unless they are born again, or born from above.
- Nicodemus misunderstands the new birth in natural terms, but Jesus explains that this birth is spiritual: "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."
- John 3:8 compares the Spirit's work to the wind: it is real and effective, yet sovereign and mysterious, because the Spirit acts according to his own will.
- John 3:16–18 connects the new birth with faith in Christ, teaching that whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, while unbelief leaves a person under condemnation.
- Titus 3:3–7 shows that salvation is not based on works done in righteousness, but on God's mercy, through the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.
- James 1:16–18 teaches that the new birth is according to God's own will and is brought about through the word of truth.
- 1 Peter 1:3–5 presents regeneration as being born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, with an imperishable inheritance kept by God's power.
- 1 Peter 1:23 adds that believers are born again not of perishable seed, but of imperishable seed, through the living and abiding word of God.
- The passages from 1 John show that the new birth produces visible evidence: those born of God practise righteousness, do not make sin their settled pattern of life, and are kept by God from the evil one.
- Romans 6:3–4 links union with Christ in his death and resurrection with walking in **newness of life**.
- Ephesians 2:4–6 and Colossians 2:12–13 describe regeneration as God making spiritually dead sinners alive together with Christ.
- 2 Corinthians 5:14–17 and Galatians 6:15 describe the believer as a **new creation**, emphasizing that the old has passed away and the new has come.
- Hebrews 10:14–18 connects regeneration with the new covenant promise that God writes his laws on the hearts and minds of his people and remembers their sins no more.
- The overall emphasis of Part 8 is that regeneration is the sovereign, merciful work of God by the Holy Spirit, producing new life, faith in Christ, forgiveness, righteousness, and a changed pattern of life.

PART 9

God's Spirit Will Not Always Strive With Man

Regeneration is the invariable culmination of effectual calling. It is the granting of new birth and new life to every sinner whom the Holy Spirit draws to Christ, and who come to him repentant and believing.

This is wholly the work of God and it is in full accord with God's sovereignty, and with his purposes in election. It is also in full accord with man's free will and responsibility, since the Holy Spirit enables men and women to respond freely and willingly to the effectual call of God. However, although God graciously calls individuals to repentance by his Holy Spirit, he has warned that—for those who refuse to repent—his Spirit will not always strive with man.

Consequences of Resisting the Outward Call

A person cannot resist God's grace in effectual calling. However, he can resist God's grace in the outward or external call to repentance. It is, however, a fearful thing to resist and reject the external call of God. Those who persist in doing so will ultimately perish.

Concerning those who resist the Spirit of God, the Scripture says:

Genesis 6:1-3

¹ When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, ² the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. ³ Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not abide in ¹⁹ man for ever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years."

Deuteronomy 6:3-4

³ Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.

⁴ "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.
(See vv.1-6; cf. Jos. 23:12-13)

Acts 7:51-53

⁵¹ "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. ⁵² Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who

¹⁹ *My Spirit shall not abide in: [Genesis 6:3](#) Or My Spirit shall not contend with.* (ESV footnote)

announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, ⁵³you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.” (See vv.1-50)

Hebrews 2:2-4

² For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, ³ how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, ⁴ while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will. (See v.1)

Hebrews 10:28-31

²⁸ Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? (Cf. Ex. 24:1-8) ³⁰ For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” {*Deut. 32:35*}. And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” {*Deut. 32:36; Psalm 135:14*}. ³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (See vv.26-27; cf. 1 Pet. 4:17-18)

Hebrews 12:18

¹⁸ For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest

Hebrews 12:22

²² But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,

Hebrews 12:24

²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. (See vv.14-23)

Hebrews 12:25

²⁵ See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. (See vv.26-28)

Hebrews 12:29

²⁹for our God is a consuming fire. {Deut. 4:24}.

Above Warnings are Not Addressed to Genuine Believers

God is not addressing genuine born again believers when he utters these solemn warnings shown above. Rather, he is addressing two other classes of people:

1. **Unbelievers:** Unsaved people who hear the external call to repentance but who repeatedly refuse to respond to it. They resist that call wilfully, persistently and defiantly—often over a prolonged period of time. They thereby harden their hearts against God and against his call to repentance. This is likely to lead them to final impenitence and God's eternal judgment if they proceed along this path. It is to *unbelievers* such as these people that God addresses such solemn warnings of judgment.

(We must remember that unbelievers can resist the *external* call to repentance.)

2. **Professing 'Christians':** Others to whom these warnings may apply include *professing* 'Christians'. These are people who claim to belong to Christ but to whom Christ will say, '*I never knew you. Depart from me...*' These false so-called 'Christians' are often found among the true people of God. A number of them attain to places of leadership within the church—some to very high ecclesiastical office. These people, however, have never been born again. Nor have they ever received the indwelling Holy Spirit. They call themselves 'Christians' but they have never experienced regeneration (the new birth). Therefore, in God's sight, they are still in their sins—unrepentant and unforgiven. They have tasted of the work of the Holy Spirit *externally* (in the external call and in common grace). But they have never experienced the work of the Holy Spirit *internally* (in effectual calling and the new birth).

It is to false professors such as these that God addresses these solemn warnings. The Lord God is not addressing any believer who is genuinely born again by the Spirit of God and who is endeavouring to live a life honouring to God. Genuine believers may stumble or backslide on occasions. But the Lord will willingly restore them whenever they confess their sins and repent. They can never fall away from God's grace for the Lord Jesus has redeemed them and granted them eternal life. They can never perish. Christ has already paid the full penalty for all their sins—past, present and future. The Holy Spirit indwells them to sanctify them and prepare them for their glorification in the presence of the Father and his Son for all eternity. Though at times they may stumble, they will nevertheless persevere unto the end. For by the grace of God he will keep them from falling away, and he will carry them until the day that they meet with their Lord and Saviour in glory.

Summary below

Part 9 Summary

- Part 9 begins with the solemn warning that **God's Spirit will not always strive with man**, teaching that sinners must not presume indefinitely upon divine patience, gospel privilege, or repeated calls to repentance.
- The striving of the Spirit may be seen in the external call of the gospel, the preaching of God's Word, providential warnings, conviction of conscience, and gracious restraints by which God calls sinners to turn from sin and seek mercy.
- The section emphasises that God is longsuffering and merciful, but his patience toward impenitent sinners is not to be treated as though it were endless or without consequence.
- Persistent resistance to God's Word and Spirit can lead to increasing hardness of heart, spiritual insensibility, and final impenitence.
- The warning is therefore urgent: sinners must respond while God is still calling, rather than delaying repentance or assuming that further opportunities will always be granted.
- The example of the days of Noah shows that God may strive with sinners for a time, but judgment eventually falls upon those who persistently reject his warnings.
- God's patience is intended to lead sinners to repentance, not to encourage presumption, carelessness, unbelief, or continued rebellion.
- Part 9 stresses human responsibility: those who hear the external call to repentance are accountable before God for how they respond to that call.
- To resist the Spirit is to resist the one who exposes sin, warns of judgment, reveals the need of Christ, and points sinners to the only way of salvation.
- These warnings are not meant to drive awakened sinners to despair, but to impress upon them the seriousness of their danger and the urgency of fleeing to Christ.
- The section then clarifies that these solemn warnings are **not addressed to genuine born-again believers**.
- God is not warning true believers that they may finally fall away from grace, lose eternal life, or perish despite Christ's redeeming work.
- Rather, the warnings are directed especially to **unbelievers** who hear the external call to repentance but repeatedly refuse to respond to it.
- Such unbelievers may resist the external call wilfully, persistently, and defiantly, often over a prolonged period of time.
- By continuing to reject God's call, they harden their hearts against God, against his Word, and against repentance.
- If they continue in this path, their resistance may lead to final impenitence and God's eternal judgment.

- The section notes that unbelievers can resist the **external call** to repentance, even though they cannot resist God's effectual saving work when he sovereignly calls and regenerates a sinner.
- These warnings may also apply to **professing "Christians"** who claim to belong to Christ but have never truly been born again.
- Such false professors may outwardly identify with the church, use Christian language, and appear to belong among the people of God, yet remain unregenerate and unforgiven.
- Some false professors may even attain positions of leadership within the church, including high ecclesiastical office, while never having experienced the new birth.
- Although they may have tasted the work of the Holy Spirit externally through the external call, exposure to the gospel, religious privileges, and common grace, they have never experienced the internal saving work of the Spirit in effectual calling and regeneration.
- These people may call themselves Christians, but in God's sight they remain in their sins because they have never truly repented, believed, or received the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- The warnings therefore apply to those who have only an outward profession of faith, not to those who possess true saving faith.
- Part 9 makes a firm distinction between false professors and genuine believers.
- Genuine believers may stumble, fall into sin, or backslide for a time, but they are not abandoned by God or left to perish.
- When true believers confess their sins and repent, the Lord willingly restores them.
- They cannot finally fall away from God's grace because Christ has redeemed them, given them eternal life, and promised that they shall never perish.
- Christ has already paid the full penalty for all their sins — past, present, and future.
- The Holy Spirit indwells genuine believers, sanctifies them, preserves them, and prepares them for final glorification in the presence of the Father and the Son.
- Though genuine believers may stumble at times, they will nevertheless persevere to the end because God's grace keeps them from finally falling away.
- The section therefore combines a solemn warning to the impenitent with strong assurance for true believers.
- The overall emphasis is that sinners must not resist the Spirit's external call or presume upon God's patience, while genuine believers may rest secure in Christ's finished work, the Spirit's indwelling presence, and God's preserving grace.

PART 10

Born Again as Children of God

Those whom the Spirit regenerates to newness of life, God justifies and adopts into his family as his own children. By his grace, God gives them all the rights, privileges and responsibilities of his children. The rights and privileges of God's children include full acceptance as sons and daughters of God. As co-heirs with God's one and only Son, they also include all the rights of inheritance that pertain to the children of God.

The responsibilities incumbent upon the children of God includes the obligation to live their whole lives for the sake of the one who loved them. They ought always to remember that he who loved them died to make them his own, so that—together with him—they might become the heirs of glory. Those who assume these responsibilities ought to do their utmost to live to the praise of God's glory; to honour their Father in heaven, and to serve his Son with all their heart and soul.²⁰

Scripture References (ESV)

Born Again as Children of God

Concerning these things, the Scripture says:

Romans 8:14-18

¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons ²¹ of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. (See vv.19-23)

Galatians 4:6-7

⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. (See Gal. 3:26-29; 4:1-5)

²⁰ See further on *Bible Truths Explained: Adoption*.

²¹ sons of God: Romans 8:14-18; The Greek is literally, *sons* (of God). However, depending on the context, this is understood to mean either *sons* (of God) (if the context requires it) or *sons and daughters* (of God) (where the context requires it—as here, in this verse. This is demonstrated in Romans 8:14-16 where the apostle Paul begins by saying *sons of God* in v.14 and then continues by saying *children of God* in v.16. (The Greek in v.14 is υἱός *huios*, *son* or *child* (of either gender). The Greek in v.16 is τέκνον *teknon*, *child*, *son*, or *daughter*.)

Ephesians 2:18-19

¹⁸ For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens,²² but you are fellow citizens with the saints²³ and members of the household of God, (See vv.11-22)

Ephesians 5:1-3

¹ Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ² And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

³ But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. (See vv.4-8)

Philippians 1:29-30

²⁹ For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, ³⁰ engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have. (See vv.27-28)

1 Peter 1:13-16

¹³ Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” {Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7}. (See 1 Pet. 1:3-12; cf. Deut. 7:6)

1 John 5:1-2

¹ Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. ² By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. (See vv.3-5; cf. John 14:15,21,23-24)

²² *aliens*: [Ephesians 2:19](#) Or *sojourners*. (ESV footnote)

²³ *saints*: [Ephesians 2:19](#); The Greek, ἅγιος **hagios**, means ‘*holy*’ ‘*consecrated*’ or ‘*sanctified*’ ones. In the present context, and in many places elsewhere in Scripture, these are the *holy, consecrated* or *sanctified* people of God. In other words, all genuinely born again believers, or all the children of God. In the Bible, ‘*saints*’ are not an elite class of Christians. ‘*Saints*’ are the redeemed people and children of God—members of the household and family of God.

Only those Born Again by the Holy Spirit are God's Children

From the above Scripture references and from many other places in the Bible, we can see that only those who have been born again or regenerated by the Holy Spirit can truly belong to God. These are his children by redemption and by adoption. And this is true for every single individual who has repented of their sins and believed on Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord.

All genuinely born again believers belong to the family and household of God. Their adoption places each child of God into the Father's kingdom and household. God not only adopts them. He also makes them heirs of his kingdom and heirs of glory.

Indeed, God makes every believer not only an heir to the inheritance but a joint heir with God's own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And since God has adopted them as his own sons and daughters he will never leave them nor forsake them. At times, God will discipline his children in love, but he will never disown or disinherit them. Every believer is and will remain a child of God for all the ages of eternity.

As God's Word says:

1 John 3:1-3

¹ See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. ³ And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

1 Peter 1:3-5

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Summary below

Part 10 Summary

- Those whom the Holy Spirit regenerates are also **justified and adopted** by God into his family.
- By grace, believers receive the **rights, privileges, and responsibilities** of God's children.
- Their privileges include being fully accepted as **sons and daughters of God**.
- Believers are also made **co-heirs with Christ**, sharing in the inheritance that belongs to the children of God.
- As God's children, believers are called to live for the one who loved them and gave himself for them.
- They should seek to live to the **praise of God's glory**, honour their heavenly Father, and serve Christ wholeheartedly.
- Scripture teaches that those led by the Spirit are **sons of God** and may cry, "Abba! Father!"
- The Spirit bears witness that believers are **children of God**, and therefore heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.
- Believers are no longer slaves or strangers, but members of **God's household**.
- As beloved children, Christians are called to imitate God, walk in love, and pursue holiness.
- Suffering for Christ is presented as part of the believer's calling, but it is not worthy to be compared with the glory to come.
- Those born of God are expected to love God, love fellow believers, and obey God's commandments.
- Only those who have been **born again by the Holy Spirit** truly belong to God as his redeemed and adopted children.
- Every genuine believer is brought into God's family, kingdom, and household.
- Since believers are adopted as God's sons and daughters, God will never leave, forsake, disown, or disinherit them.
- God may discipline his children in love, but they remain his children for all eternity.
- The section closes by stressing the Father's love: believers are already **children of God**, and when Christ appears they will be made like him.
- Their future inheritance is described as **imperishable, undefiled, unfading, and kept in heaven**; each one of God's children being guarded by his almighty power until the day that God receives them into his glorious presence.

PART 11

Evidences Confirming Regeneration

Whether a person has experienced spiritual regeneration (the new birth) or not, determines whether that person is God's child or not. A tree is known by its fruit; and a good tree must produce good fruit. Conversely, a bad tree—an unregenerate heart—can produce only bad fruit or no fruit at all.

The man or woman who has truly experienced the new birth will show the evidence of this by their daily conduct. This does not mean that those who have been born again will never commit sin. However, it *does* mean that sin will not dominate their lives; nor will they deliberately practise sin. Since, by the Spirit of holiness, their old sinful nature must be put to death, then sin must no longer rule over them. Instead, their lives will become more and more like Christ, as the Holy Spirit continues the ongoing work of sanctification: a work that must result in holiness of life.

Regeneration is also confirmed in a person's life by their love for God, for Christ, and for his people. This kind of love will manifest itself by its actions.

Again, there will be the desire and the power to believe and obey the Word of God. There will be the desire to put into practice the teachings of that Word, and to live daily in its truths. There will be the power to overcome sin: power granted by the indwelling Holy Spirit to provide victory. This power over sin may be immediate or gradual. However, we must not understand this to mean that we can achieve total or absolute victory over all sin in this life. Throughout this life, each child of God will find himself engaged in a constant spiritual warfare against sin and against the desires of his old sinful nature.

There will be joy of heart, and true peace with God.

Good and Bad Fruit

Scripture References (ESV)

Good and Bad Fruit

Concerning the significance of good or bad fruit—or the lack of fruit—in a person's life, the Scripture says:

Matthew 3:7-10

⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹ And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father', for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰ Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (See vv.1-6)

Matthew 3:12

¹² His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” (See v.11)

Matthew 7:15-20

¹⁵ “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes, or figs from thorn bushes? ¹⁷ So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

Matthew 7:21-23

²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

Matthew 12:50

⁵⁰ For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.” (See vv.46-49)

Matthew 25:34-35

³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, (See vv.31-36)

Matthew 25:37

³⁷ Then the righteous ²⁴ will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? (See vv.38-39)

²⁴ *the righteous*: All those whom God has justified and declared righteous in his sight through their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ: that is, all genuinely born again believers.

Matthew 25:40

⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers,²⁵ you did it to me.'

Matthew 25:41-42

⁴¹ "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, (See v.43)

Matthew 25:44-45

⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.'

Matthew 25:46

⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Living to Honour the Lord**Scripture References (ESV)*****Living to Honour the Lord***

As God's redeemed and holy children, we must never allow sin, or the desires of the sinful nature, to dominate our lives. Rather, as truly regenerated people, we should ensure that—by God's grace—our lives are producing the fruit of the Spirit. We should ensure also that godliness and holiness characterises our daily lives.

Thus, the Scripture says:

Romans 6:6-10

⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷ For one who has died has been set free from sin. ⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no

²⁵ *brothers*: [Matthew 25:40](#) Or *brothers and sisters*. (ESV footnote)

longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰ For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. (See vv.1-5)

Romans 6:11-14

¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. ¹³ Do not present your members ²⁶ to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. (See vv.15-23)

Romans 7:4

⁴ Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. (See vv.1-7)

Galatians 5:19-21

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, ²⁷ enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, ²⁸ drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (See vv.16-18)

Galatians 5:22-24

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (See vv.25-26)

²⁶ *members*: [Romans 6:13](#); That is, the different parts of the body. Not only the physical parts, but also intended to include faculties of the mind (thoughts, ideas, imagination, etc.) ‘*Members*’ also includes speech and the need to control the tongue, what we say in words or how we say it (To this end, James says, ‘*the tongue is a restless evil...*’ (James 3:8))

²⁷ *sorcery*: [Galatians 5:20](#); Greek, φαρμακεία **pharmakeia**, *witchcraft* including magic and spells, and often involving drugs.

²⁸ [Galatians 5:21](#) Some manuscripts add *murder*. (ESV footnote)

Part 11 Summary

- **Regeneration is evidenced by spiritual fruit:** A person's life reveals whether they have experienced the new birth, just as a tree is known by its fruit.
- **Good fruit confirms a changed heart:** Those truly born again will show evidence of regeneration in their daily conduct.
- **Sin will not dominate the regenerate person:** Believers may still sin, but they will not deliberately practise sin or allow it to rule their lives.
- **The old sinful nature must be put to death:** Through the Spirit of holiness, believers are called to resist sin and live increasingly holy lives.
- **Sanctification is ongoing:** The Holy Spirit continues to make believers more like Christ, producing holiness of life.
- **Love is a mark of regeneration:** True regeneration is confirmed by love for God, for Christ, and for God's people.
- **True love is active:** This love is not merely emotional or verbal but shows itself in practical actions.
- **Regenerate people desire God's Word:** They will want to believe, obey, and live according to Scripture.
- **Believers are given power to overcome sin:** The indwelling Holy Spirit grants victory over sin, either gradually or more immediately.
- **Complete sinless perfection is not reached in this life:** Christians remain engaged in lifelong spiritual warfare against sin and the desires of the old nature.
- **Joy and peace accompany regeneration:** The child of God experiences joy of heart and true peace with God.
- **Good and bad fruit distinguish true and false profession:** The Scripture passages from Matthew stress that good fruit, obedience, righteousness, and mercy reveal genuine faith, while bad fruit and lawlessness reveal an unregenerate heart.
- **Doing God's will matters:** Mere outward profession, religious speech, or impressive works are not enough; the true child of God does the will of the Father.
- **Mercy toward Christ's people is evidence of righteousness:** Matthew 25 teaches that care shown to Christ's brothers reflects true righteousness, while wilful neglect reveals a person to be unregenerate and under the Lord's judgment.
- **Believers must live to honour the Lord:** Romans 6 teaches that Christians are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.
- **Sin must not reign in the believer's body:** Believers are to present themselves to God as instruments of righteousness.
- **Christians belong to the risen Christ:** Because believers have died to the law through Christ, they now bear fruit for God.

- **The works of the flesh exclude from God's kingdom:** Galatians 5 lists sinful practices that characterize the unregenerate and warns that those who live in such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.
- **The fruit of the Spirit marks those who belong to Christ:** Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are evidences of the Spirit's work.
- **Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh:** True believers reject the passions and desires of the sinful nature and seek to live by the Spirit.

PART 12

New Birth Evidenced by Love, Victory and Peace

Scripture References (ESV)

New Birth Evidenced by Love

That a person confirms his regeneration or new spiritual birth by such things as love for God, for Christ, and for his people, is demonstrated by such Scriptures as the following:

John 14:15

¹⁵ “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. (See vv.16-20)

John 14:21

²¹ Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” (See v.22)

John 14:23-24

²³ Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. ²⁴ Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me. (See vv.25-31)

John 15:12-14

¹² “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. (See vv.1-15)

John 15:16

¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. (See v.17)

James 2:14-17

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in

peace, be warmed and filled”, without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (See vv.18-26; see esp. v.26; cf. Prov. 3:27-28; 19:17; 21:13)

1 John 3:16-18

¹⁶ By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. ¹⁷ But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. (See vv.10-24)

Victory in Union with Christ

Scripture References (ESV)

Victory in Union with Christ

When we abide in Christ, and walk by the Spirit, God gives us the power to subdue and to overcome sin in our lives. As a rule, however, we achieve this victory only by engaging in a constant spiritual warfare. This entails wholehearted trust in the Lord Jesus to give us the strength to persevere in our fight against sin and against the desires of our old sinful nature.

Thus, God's Word says:

John 15:3-6

³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. (See vv.1-8; cf. v.6 with Matt. 3:10; 7:19)

Romans 8:10-11

¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. (See vv.1-9)

Romans 8:12-13

¹² So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. (See vv.14-17)

Galatians 5:16-18

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. (See vv.19-26; cf. v.17c with John 15:5c)

Ephesians 6:10-13

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. (See vv.14-18; cf. v.12 with John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11)

1 John 5:1

¹ Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. (See vv.2-3)

1 John 5:4-5

⁴ For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵ Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Revelation 3:19-21

¹⁹ Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. ²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. ²¹ The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. (See vv.14-22)

Peace Within**Scripture References (ESV)***Peace Within*

Regeneration is also confirmed by the possession of true and lasting peace and joy in the heart of the believer. Thus, the Scripture says:

Isaiah 12:1-3

You will say in that day:

“I will give thanks to you, O LORD,
for though you were angry with me,
your anger turned away,
that you might comfort me.

²“Behold, God is my salvation;
I will trust, and will not be afraid;
for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song,
and he has become my salvation.”

³With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.
(See vv.4-6; cf. v.3 with John 4:10-14; 7:37-39)

Isaiah 26:3

³You keep him in perfect peace
whose mind is stayed on you,
because he trusts in you.

John 14:26-27

²⁶But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. ²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. (See v.25)

Romans 5:1-2

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ²Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Philippians 4:6-7

⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Summary below

Part 12 Summary

- **Part 12 explains that regeneration is confirmed by visible spiritual evidence**, especially love, victory over sin, and inward peace.
- **Love for Christ is shown through obedience**: Jesus teaches that those who love him will keep his commandments and his word.
- **Obedience is not the cause of regeneration but evidence of it**: A genuine love for Christ produces a desire to obey him.
- **Love for God's people is a mark of the new birth**: Believers are commanded to love one another as Christ loved them.
- **True love is practical and sacrificial**: Christian love is not merely expressed in words but in actions, care, service, and willingness to help those in need.
- **Faith without works is dead**: James teaches that a claim to faith is empty if it is not accompanied by practical obedience and compassion.
- **Love must be shown "in deed and in truth"**: 1 John stresses that genuine love acts toward fellow believers in real and tangible ways.
- **Believers bear lasting fruit because Christ has chosen and appointed them to do so**: Fruitfulness is part of the evidence of belonging to Christ.
- **Victory over sin comes through union with Christ**: Believers overcome sin only by abiding in Christ, just as branches bear fruit only by remaining in the vine.
- **Apart from Christ, believers can do nothing spiritually fruitful**: Dependence on Christ is essential for holiness and perseverance.
- **The indwelling Spirit gives life and power**: Romans 8 teaches that the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead gives life to believers and enables them to resist sin.
- **Believers must put sin to death by the Spirit**: Victory over sin involves active spiritual warfare, not passive ease.
- **Walking by the Spirit prevents the believer from gratifying the desires of the flesh**: Galatians 5 presents the Christian life as a conflict between the Spirit and the sinful nature.
- **Spiritual victory requires strength from the Lord**: Ephesians 6 calls believers to put on the whole armour of God and stand firm against the devil's schemes.
- **The new birth enables believers to overcome the world**: 1 John teaches that everyone born of God overcomes the world through faith in Jesus Christ.
- **Those who conquer are promised fellowship and reward with Christ**: Revelation 3 links repentance, perseverance, and overcoming with Christ's gracious promise.
- **Regeneration is also evidenced by peace and joy within**: The believer receives true and lasting peace that comes from God.

- **God gives comfort, salvation, strength, and joy:** Isaiah 12 presents salvation as a source of thanksgiving, trust, and joy.
- **Perfect peace belongs to those who trust in God:** Isaiah 26 teaches that God keeps in peace those whose minds are fixed on him.
- **Christ gives peace unlike the world's peace:** John 14 promises the Holy Spirit and Christ's own peace to troubled and fearful hearts.
- **Justification by faith brings peace with God:** Romans 5 teaches that believers have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.
- **Prayer replaces anxiety with God's guarding peace:** Philippians 4 teaches that the peace of God surpasses understanding and guards the hearts and minds of believers in Christ.
- **Overall, Part 12 teaches that the new birth is evidenced by love that obeys and serves, victory that depends on Christ and the Spirit, and peace that rests in God's saving grace.**

PART 13

Clear Evidences of Regeneration

Those Christians who determine to live—not for self—but for God's glory, give one of the clearest evidences of their regeneration. The further a person progresses in the Christian life, the more deeply conscious he becomes of his own utter unworthiness and sinfulness in the sight of a holy and righteous God. At the same time, the believer begins to appreciate more and more the value and necessity of the superabundant grace of God that saves him and keeps him.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, the believer determines to fight against temptation—or to flee from it. Similarly, by the aid of the Spirit, he makes it his aim to overcome besetting sin in his life, and to live his life only for God's honour and glory. The believer, however, also becomes increasingly aware that the fight against temptation and sin is a continual spiritual warfare. He learns that victory over sin comes only by abiding in Christ, and by walking in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Never in this life will the believer reach his ultimate goal of moral and spiritual perfection. However, he must determine resolutely to put to death the old sinful nature, and to pursue holiness of life: for without holiness, no-one will see the Lord.

In the World, But Not Of the World

Although the believer is *in* the world, he is not *of* the world. This world is not his home. He has a better and an abiding home prepared for him on high. While in this world, therefore, each believer resolves to separate himself from the *contamination* of the world (but not to isolate himself from the *people* of the world). He desires to dedicate his life wholly to God. He endeavours to glorify the name of God by every thought, word and deed, and by every attitude of heart and mind.

Taking up the Cross

Scripture References (ESV)

Taking up the Cross

Concerning the believer's determination to live for God, rather than for self, we should consider the following Scriptures:

Mark 8:34-37

³⁴ And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever would save his life ²⁹ will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. ³⁶ For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? ³⁷ For what can a man give in return for his soul? (Cf. Matt. 16:24-26; Luke 9:23-25)

²⁹ *life*: Mark 8:34-37; Or *soul*. Greek, ψυχή **psychē**. In the Greek of this passage, the same word *psychē* is used for both *life* or *soul*, depending on the context.

Mark 8:38

³⁸ "For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." (Cf. Matt. 10:32-33; Luke 9:26; 12:8-9)

Romans 12:1-2

¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (See vv. 3-8)

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (See vv.13-18; cf. 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 6:14 - 7:1)

Warring Against the Sinful Nature**Scripture References (ESV)*****Warring Against the Sinful Nature***

Concerning the growing believer's increasing awareness of sin, and increasingly greater dependence on the grace of God, the Scripture says:

Romans 7:18-20

¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. (See vv.5-17)

Romans 7:21-23

²¹ So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. ²² For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³ but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. (Cf. Gal. 5:16-18; Jas. 4:1; 1 Pet. 2:11)

Romans 7:24-25

²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin. (Cf. v.24; with Rom. 6:6; 8:2)

Perfection is the Prize

Scripture References (ESV)

Perfection is the Prize

Although God requires the believer to pursue holiness of life, no child of God will attain perfection in this life. Thus, God's word says:

Philippians 3:12-14

¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (See vv.1-11)

Philippians 3:15-16

¹⁵ Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. ¹⁶ Only let us hold true to what we have attained. (See vv.17-21)

Concerning the believer's obligation to pursue holiness of life, God's Word says:

Matthew 5:48

⁴⁸ You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (See vv.43-47; cf. Luke 6:36; Col. 1:28; 1 Pet. 1:15-16)

Hebrews 12:14

¹⁴ Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. (See vv.15-16)

Perfection of character and conduct is not yet a present reality. This will only be realised when the Lord Jesus calls us into his immediate presence for all eternity. Then, he will glorify us, transform this

present mortal body into an eternal spiritual body and will present us faultless and blameless (perfect) before the throne of God with rejoicing. (Jude 24)

In the meantime, the apostle Paul gives us this reminder:

1 Corinthians 3:18

¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (See vv.12-17)

Through the ongoing process of sanctification, the Holy Spirit of God has begun this transformation in every believer's life. This same Holy Spirit will most certainly bring it to completion in every believer's ultimate glorification.

Summary below

Part 13 Summary

- **Part 13 teaches that one of the clearest evidences of regeneration is living for God's glory rather than for self.**
- **True believers become increasingly aware of their own unworthiness and sinfulness** before a holy and righteous God.
- **As believers grow, they also appreciate more deeply the greatness and necessity of God's grace**, which both saves and keeps them.
- **The Holy Spirit enables believers to fight against temptation** or flee from it when necessary.
- **Believers aim to overcome besetting sins** and to live in a way that honours and glorifies God.
- **The Christian life involves continual spiritual warfare** against temptation, sin, and the old sinful nature.
- **Victory over sin comes only through abiding in Christ** and walking in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- **Believers will not reach moral or spiritual perfection in this life**, but they must still press on toward holiness.
- **Christians must put to death the old sinful nature** and pursue holiness, since without holiness no one will see the Lord.
- **The believer is in the world but not of the world**: this world is not their true home, because they have an eternal home prepared for them above.
- **Christians should separate themselves from the contamination of the world**, while not isolating themselves from the people of the world.
- **The regenerate believer desires to dedicate his or her life wholly to God**, seeking to glorify him in thought, word, deed, attitude, heart, and mind.
- **Taking up the cross is central to discipleship**: Jesus calls his followers to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow him.
- **Losing one's life for Christ and the gospel leads to true life**, while gaining the world at the cost of the soul is worthless.
- **Believers must not be ashamed of Christ or his words**, since Christ warns that he will be ashamed of those who are ashamed of him.
- **Romans 12 calls believers to present their bodies as living sacrifices**, holy and acceptable to God.
- **Christians must not be conformed to this world**, but transformed through the renewal of their minds.
- **Because believers belong to God and are temples of the Holy Spirit**, they are to glorify God in their bodies.

- **The growing believer becomes increasingly conscious of the conflict between the desire to do good and the presence of indwelling sin.**
- **Romans 7 describes the inward warfare of the believer**, who delights in God's law but still struggles against sin in the flesh.
- **Deliverance from this struggle comes through Jesus Christ the Lord**, not through the believer's own strength.
- **Perfection is the goal and prize, but not yet a present reality**: believers press on toward the goal because Christ has made them his own.
- **Mature believers continue to strive forward**, forgetting what lies behind and pressing toward the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.
- **God commands believers to pursue perfection and holiness**, reflecting the character of their heavenly Father.
- **Full perfection will come only when Christ brings believers into his presence**, glorifies them, transforms their mortal bodies, and presents them faultless before God.
- **The Holy Spirit is already transforming believers into Christ's image**, from one degree of glory to another.
- **Sanctification is an ongoing work begun by the Holy Spirit**, and it will certainly be completed in the believer's final glorification.
- **Overall, Part 13 presents regeneration as evidenced by self-denial, holiness, separation from worldliness, spiritual warfare, dependence on grace, and steady transformation into Christ's likeness.**

PART 14

Evidences Denying Regeneration

What kind of evidences would indicate that a person has *not* been born again? Frequently, this can be very difficult to determine with certainty; but we list some of the more obvious possibilities below:

1. A person's refusal to believe the Word of God.
2. Their refusal to accept the teaching of God's Word, or to put that teaching into practice.
3. Their wilful rejection of the primary doctrines of the faith. This refers to the outright repudiation of particular doctrines that are essential to the faith. It does not apply to differences of opinion regarding the interpretation of non-essential matters.
4. An aversion to Christ, or to spiritual things.
5. Their deliberate neglect of the ordinances of the church (baptism and the Lord's Supper).
6. Their not associating regularly with God's people. This presupposes that there is no valid reason for their continued absence from church fellowship.
7. Their continuance in the deliberate practice of sin.

These are some of the evidences or signs that could indicate that a person has not been born again.

Not all of these signs need be present. A person may claim to be a Christian: that person may attend church services and activities regularly. However, regardless of their claim and of their church attendance, if some of the signs listed above are unmistakably evident in their life, the assumption must be that this person does not belong to Christ. If, however, he does not belong to Christ, he is yet in his sins.

This, however, is only an *assumption*. God alone knows a person's heart, and he alone knows their true spiritual condition. If we think a professing Christian may not be regenerated, the church pastor or elders must deal with this person not only in love and with great compassion, but also truthfully, and—if necessary—firmly. The leadership of the church must show that person what the Lord requires.

This process of instruction and correction from the Scriptures may require to be complemented by church discipline. In extreme cases, church discipline could result in excommunication from the church. However, unless the situation warrants it, excommunication need not necessarily be permanent. The apostle Paul envisages a person being excommunicated so that that person may be exposed to the sorrows of the world, to Satan, and deprived of church fellowship and the means of grace. (1 Cor. 5:1-13; see also Matt. 18:15-20)

However, when writing his second letter to the church at Corinth, the apostle Paul envisages a time when such a person may truly repent, forsake his sin and seek re-admission to the fellowship of believers. In such cases, the repentant believer should be restored to church fellowship. (See 2 Cor. 5:1-11)

Those, however, who do not ultimately repent have shown that they were never true believers. Their return to the world is a return to their own natural environment—and there they have chosen to remain. Consider the example of Demas who returned to the world after having served with the apostle Paul in his ministry. (2 Tim. 4:10) Although not excommunicated, Demas' departure demonstrates that—although present and serving in church ministry for a time—it is still possible to return to the world. This shows that not all who profess to belong to Christ do actually belong to Christ—even if they had been serving or ministering in his name.

Judas Iscariot is another classic example of an unregenerate person associating with Christ, serving in his name, and occupying a particular office and responsibility (treasurer). The Lord Jesus, of course, knew the true state and condition of Judas' heart. But the other disciples believed Judas was a genuine follower of the Lord until the point he betrayed the Lord. Then, Judas' truly unregenerate state became obvious.

No Regeneration Without Holiness

We cannot emphasise too strongly that there is no such thing as regeneration that does not result in holiness of life. Those who have been born again are born of God. If, however, they have been born of God, then God's seed is in them. They cannot continue in the deliberate practice of sin, for they are indwelt by the Spirit of holiness.

Regarding these things, God's Word says:

John 1:12-13

¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (See vv.9-14)

Romans 8:9-10

⁹ You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. (See vv.1-13)

Romans 8:14

¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. (See vv.15-17)

1 Peter 1:14-16

¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” {*Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7*}. (See 1 Pet. 1:13)

1 Peter 1:23

²³ since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; (See vv.22-25)

1 John 3:9

⁹ 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. (See vv.1-10; cf. ch. 5:18)

Holiness of Life

It is well for us to remember these points:

1. Profession of faith in Christ is no guarantee of regeneration—unless it results in holiness of life.
2. Giving a testimony of conversion is no guarantee of regeneration—unless it results in holiness of life.
3. Regular attendance at church services is no guarantee of regeneration—unless it results in holiness of life.

The guarantee of regeneration is the fruit of holiness in the believer's life. Without this fruit, the branch is dead—and fit only for the burning.

John 15:4-8

⁴ [*Jesus said*] Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. (See vv.1-3)

John 15:16

¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. (See vv.9-17)

Every one of us who are truly born again and are being sanctified by the work of the Holy Spirit should desire earnestly to honour the Lord by pursuing holiness of life. We will never be perfect in this life. However, it should be our aim to honour the One who loved us and saved us to belong to him and to serve him.

Summary below

Part 14 Summary

- **Part 14 explains signs that may indicate a person has not been born again**, while acknowledging that such matters can be difficult to determine with certainty.
- **Possible evidences denying regeneration include:**
 - Refusal to believe the Word of God.
 - Refusal to accept or obey the teaching of Scripture.
 - Wilful rejection of essential doctrines of the Christian faith.
 - Aversion to Christ or to spiritual things.
 - Deliberate neglect of baptism and the Lord's Supper.
 - Avoiding regular fellowship with God's people without valid reason.
 - Continuing deliberately in the practice of sin.
- **Not all of these signs need to be present** for serious concern to arise.
- **A person may profess faith and attend church regularly**, yet still show signs that suggest they do not truly belong to Christ.
- **If these signs are clearly evident**, the assumption may be that the person is not regenerate and remains in sin.
- **However, only God truly knows the heart**, so human judgment must be careful, humble, and limited.
- **Church leaders must respond with love, compassion, truthfulness, and firmness** when dealing with a professing Christian who may not be regenerate.
- **Pastors and elders should instruct and correct such a person from Scripture**, showing them what the Lord requires.
- **Church discipline may sometimes be necessary**, especially where sin is serious and persistent.
- **In extreme cases, discipline may lead to excommunication**, though this need not always be permanent.
- **The purpose of discipline is restorative**, aiming to bring the person to repentance and eventual restoration to fellowship.
- **Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 5 is used to show that excommunication may expose a person to the consequences of sin and remove them from church fellowship and the ordinary means of grace.**
- **2 Corinthians is cited to show that a repentant person should be restored to church fellowship** when genuine repentance is evident.
- **Those who never repent show that they were never true believers**, returning to the world as their natural environment.

- **Demas is given as an example of someone who served alongside Paul but later returned to the world**, showing that outward service does not necessarily prove true regeneration.
- **Judas Iscariot is presented as a classic example of an unregenerate person who outwardly associated with Christ**, held a position of responsibility, and appeared genuine to others until his betrayal revealed his true condition.
- **Part 14 strongly emphasizes that there is no regeneration without holiness of life.**
- **Those born of God have God's seed in them** and cannot continue deliberately practising sin.
- **The indwelling Spirit of holiness prevents the regenerate person from living under the dominion of deliberate sin.**
- **Scriptures such as John 1:12–13, Romans 8:9–14, 1 Peter 1:14–16, 1 Peter 1:23, and 1 John 3:9 are used to support the connection between regeneration and holiness.**
- **Profession of faith alone is not a guarantee of regeneration** unless it results in holiness of life.
- **A testimony of conversion is not a guarantee of regeneration** unless it is followed by holiness of life.
- **Regular church attendance is not a guarantee of regeneration** unless the person bears the fruit of holiness.
- **The true guarantee of regeneration is the fruit of holiness in the believer's life.**
- **John 15 teaches that true disciples abide in Christ and bear much fruit**, while branches that do not abide and bear fruit are dead and fit only for burning.
- **Believers are chosen and appointed by Christ to bear lasting fruit.**
- **Those truly born again and being sanctified by the Holy Spirit should earnestly desire to honour the Lord by pursuing holiness.**
- **Believers will not be perfect in this life**, but their aim should be to honour the One who loved and saved them.
- **Overall, Part 14 teaches that refusal of Scripture, rejection of essential truth, avoidance of spiritual life, persistent deliberate sin, and lack of holiness may deny regeneration; while true regeneration is shown by abiding in Christ, bearing fruit, and pursuing holiness.**

END

