

# Regeneration Through the Blood of Jesus

By William Reid

DEAR reader, Jesus spoke of *regeneration* as essential to salvation; and it is possible you may feel as if that experience stood between you and the “*precious blood of Christ*” (1 Pet 1:19). It seems as if it did, but it does not; for we are saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which is “shed on us abundantly *through Jesus Christ our Saviour*” (Titus 3:6). It can do you only good to consider the necessity of being born again, for it will shew you at once your utter helplessness and the all-sufficiency of the blood of JESUS alone to give you peace with God and a new heart. We do not shrink from the fullest statement of the truth of Scripture on this point, for it will be found that it does not clash in the very least with the truth, which I am specially desirous to impart, that we are not accepted as righteous in God's sight otherwise than in Christ; for, says the Word, “He made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be *made the righteousness of God in him*.” The necessity of being born again will shew us only the more clearly that we must be saved by faith in Jesus Christ alone. Turn to and read the third chapter of the Gospel by John, and then ponder the following thoughts on this vitally important subject, and see how you are stripped of every plea for mercy arising from yourself, and laid down as a lost sinner at the cross of Christ, needing to be saved by “*grace*” alone.

Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, asserts the absolute necessity of regeneration, when He says, “*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*” (John 3:3). And farther on, He says, as solemnly and decidedly, “*Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*” (John 3:5). And He gives a *fact* as the reason of this necessity: “*That which is born of the flesh is flesh*” (John 3:6). “Flesh,” or corrupt human nature—man as he is—is unfit to enter God's kingdom, and will ever continue so. No self-regeneration is to be expected. The total depravity of human nature renders a radical spiritual change of absolute necessity. The whole race, and every individual “man,” is utterly depraved in heart, his will averse from good, his conscience is defiled, his understanding is darkened, his affections are alienated from God and set upon unworthy objects, his desires are corrupt, his appetites ungoverned; and, unless the Holy Spirit impart a new nature, and work an entire change on the whole faculties of his mind by “the washing of water through the word,” cleansing away his filthiness of spirit as water cleanses away outward defilement, he must remain an unfit subject for God's holy kingdom.

And observe that Jesus spoke of two classes only—those who are “*fleshy*,” and those who are “*spiritual*.” We are naturally connected—as are all mankind—with those who are “*born of the flesh*,” who, on that very account, cannot even so much as “*see the kingdom of God*”; and we can get out of our natural state only by a spiritual birth; for only “*that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*” (John 3:6). All of us being born of parents who were themselves fallen and corrupt, are necessarily infected by the hereditary taint of depravity of nature; and, besides, “*the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God*, neither indeed *can* be. So then they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God” (Rom 8:7,8), and cannot enter into His kingdom. Attempts at morality are of no account with God. A moral Nicodemus was told he required something deeper and more comprehensive than conformity to a certain standard which passes with the world for morality. God's standard of holiness is not *morality*, but *spirituality*.

But some may say that, by publishing such extreme views, we may make many well-meaning persons feel disgusted at religion, and go off from it altogether.

But it is not our fault if they do so on account of the insufferableness of Divine truth. Are you convinced that Scripture is right when it says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer 17:9)? Do you believe that, as a man in the flesh, you are more like Satan than God?—incapable of knowing, loving, or serving God, and although in reputation for the highest morality, utterly unfit for entering into His holy kingdom?

It is, no doubt, hard to believe that one's own self is so bad as I have indicated, and none but the Holy Spirit can truly *convince* us of it; but does not Jesus represent our condition as utterly depraved—as “*flesh*”? Does He not solemnly say, that without *a new birth from above*, not one—no, not even a moral, learned,

inquiring Nicodemus—can *see* or *enter* the kingdom of God? He does not say that he *may* not, but that he *cannot*, enter—leaving it to be inferred that it is *morally impossible*. And this arises from the fact of its being a *kingdom*, as well as from the fact of our depravity. An anarchist has a decided dislike to constitutional and settled government; so a man, who hates the laws by which God's kingdom is governed, cannot be a loyal subject of His holy administration. God would require to change *His nature* before He admitted any of us into His kingdom with *our nature* unchanged. But as God cannot change, *we must be changed*, if we would *see* or *enter* His kingdom. Before we can be happy and loyal subjects of it, we must be “*born again*”; and, being new creatures, have its laws written in our minds and hearts.

Besides, as a professor in one of our colleges has well remarked, “It is a principle of our nature that, in order to happiness, there must be some correspondence betwixt the *tastes*, the *dispositions*, the *habits* of a man, and the *scene* in which he is placed, the *society* with which he mingles, and the *services* in which he is employed. A coward on the field of battle, a profligate in the house of prayer, a giddy worldling standing by a death-bed, a drunkard in the company of holy men, feel instinctively that they are misplaced—they have no enjoyment there.” And what enjoyment could unregenerate men have in God's kingdom, on earth, or in heaven? Even the outward services of the sanctuary below are distasteful to them, in proportion to their spirituality. As long as preachers keep by the pictorial and illustrative—and speak of the seasons of the year, the beautiful earth, and the ancient sea, mountains and plains, rivers and lakes, fields, flowers and fruits, sun, moon, and stars—they comprehend the discourse and applaud it; but when the deeply spiritual and eternally important form the theme, they feel listless, and characterize it as dull, prosy, and uninteresting. But if we cannot *enjoy* a highly *spiritual* discourse, it must be because we are “carnal,” and want the spiritual “sense” which always accompanies the new birth; for “*the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*” (1 Cor 2:14).

And is it not an alarming truth, that this being “BORN AGAIN” is not a making of ourselves better, but a being made anew spiritually by God himself! This appears evident from what Jesus said during His conversation with Nicodemus. His words are these, “Except a man be born of water and of THE SPIRIT, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). This great change is effected by the Holy Spirit, through means of the living “water” of the Word of God—the testimony of Jesus—and is of a spiritual nature, “for that which is born of the Spirit *is spirit*.” It consists not in outward reformation, but inward transformation. We must be regenerated in soul in order to be truly reformed in life. The change is of such a nature that it is sure to be manifested outwardly if it exist inwardly. If you wish to have a holy life, you must be born again. Praying, weeping, striving against sin, and obeying God's laws, is just so much labour lost, unless you have in the first place this “*born-again*” experience.

Ah! but you say, as you read this hard saying, This lays me entirely prostrate before God, a sick and dying sinner; and I may give myself up to despair at once, for such an experience is utterly beyond my reach.

No, not at all! You may well despair of *self*, for *self* is incurably bad, but you are by this shut up to trust in “*Jesus only*” (Mark 9:8). For, remember, Jesus continued to lay before this Jewish ruler atonement through Himself, lifted up as a Mediator, and God's free love to a perishing world, embodied in the gift and work of His Son. You want to be born again? Well, Jesus would have you look to the Son of man lifted up, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, and you will thus be pardoned and made to live. You say you are prostrated and helpless—with the poison of the serpent coursing through you—sick and dying, and you want to live—to experience such a new life as shall prove not only a present counteractive to the virus of this terrible death-poison, but also an enduring spiritual reality? Well, Jesus says, in this conversation with the inquiring ruler, that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have *everlasting life*” (John 3:16).

God sent His Son not to condemn the perishing men of the world to lie in their corrupt and diseased condition, and perish for ever, but that He Himself might die that they might be pardoned and *saved*! And those who are recovered from the disease of corruption, tell us that they were “born again,” *not* by lying in their corruption and crying for a new nature, and expecting it to come in some arbitrary and different way from that of faith; but their uniform testimony is, “Of his own will begat he us *with the word of truth*”

(James 1:18); we are new creatures, “*being born again by the word of God*” (1 Pet 1:23); and “*whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God*” (1 John 5:1).<sup>2</sup> The realization of regeneration being by faith in Jesus, you must fill your eyes with the atoning cross if you would have your guilt removed, and you must direct your eyes to the risen Living One at the right hand of God, and through Him get out of the old creation with its condemnation and death, into the new creation with its justification and life, if you would know what it is to be “born again,” and have your heart filled with divine life (See Rom 6 and Eph 2). This is the truth which Jesus taught in His conversation with Nicodemus; and the whole drift of the Gospel in which it occurs is a copy of the mind of Christ on this point; for the writer says, towards its close, “These are written, *that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name*” (John 20:31).

If you still feel that you know nothing of being “*born again*,” bring your mind into broad and immediate contact with THE WHOLE of this conversation. Do not close the book and moan over the misery of your state, as it is now discovered to you by the awakening truths contained from verses 3 through 9; but go on until you take in the discovery of the plain, gracious, free, and righteous way of getting out of your death and misery, as you have it laid down by Jesus, when He speaks (from the fourteenth to the seventeenth verse) of His own all-sufficient sacrifice, and His Father's unexampled love and gracious purpose towards perishing sinners, and His willingness to save and give eternal life to every one who believes in Him. “*He that hath the Son hath life*” (1 John 5:12).

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Dr. Owen says, “If a man of a carnal mind is brought into a large company, he will have much to do; if into a company of Christians, he will feel little interest; if into a smaller company engaged in religious exercises, he will feel less; but if taken into a closet and forced to meditate upon God and eternity, this will be insupportable.”

2. “Every one who *really believes* is said to be *born of God*; and as every true believer is a converted man, it follows that *the production of saving faith is equivalent to the work of regeneration* ...Conversion properly consists in a sinner being brought actually, intelligently, and cordially, to close and comply with God's revealed will on the subject of His salvation.”— *Professor Buchanan, D.D., LL.D.*