

**Conversion to Jesus Christ:
(12) Regeneration, or, the New Birth**

Let us read together **1 Peter 1:22-25**.

²²Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, ²³having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, ²⁴because

“All flesh is as grass,
And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass.
The grass withers,
And its flower falls away,

²⁵But the word of the LORD endures forever.”

Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

On recent Sundays we have addressed the calling of God for people to come receive salvation that He offers through the gospel of Jesus Christ. We have considered two different forms of God’s calling that are depicted for us in the Scriptures. There is the *general call* of God that goes out to the entire the human race, calling them to turn from sin and believe the gospel in order to become saved. But due to the sinful condition of man, the general call of God is not sufficient to convert the soul. Therefore, a greater, inward, *effectual call* of God is necessary. God issues this effectual call to His elect, which always results in them coming to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Here again is the definition of God’s effectual call:

Effectual calling is the work of God’s Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, He doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered us in the gospel.”¹

Now for the past two Sundays, we have given attention to an aspect of God’s calling, that being the grace of illumination that God imparts to people. Illumination is the work of God’s grace in which He reveals saving truth to sinners. In God’s calling of sinners to salvation, He reveals and teaches them the truth regarding their sin and the remedy of sin through Jesus Christ. But just as there are two types of calling, there are two forms of illumination. God is able to illuminate sinners to truth while extending to them His general call to salvation. And so, God commonly illuminates people to spiritual truth, but *that illumination does not result in their salvation*. But thankfully *there is God’s illumination of the sinner that does result in salvation*. This form of illumination accompanies God’s effectual call of His people unto their salvation. When God brings salvation to an individual, *God Himself teaches that person that He is a sinner and that Christ is the Savior*. When the individual whom God intends to save hears the Word of God taught or preached, and if it is in God’s purpose and timing, God Himself opens the eyes of that person to understand the reality and importance of the truth. And so, there is an illumination of spiritual truth that does *not* result in salvation and there is an illumination of truth to the soul that *always* results in salvation. Sometimes you will see the former illumination as external illumination, which would accompany God’s general calling. The latter form of illumination is sometimes referred to as internal illumination, which would accompany God’s effectual call of His elect unto their salvation.

¹ This is the answer to question #31 in the Westminster Shorter Catechism.

What is the different or the additional work of God in His effectual call unto salvation which is accompanied with illumination of saving truth when compared with that which does not result in salvation? Whereas God will illuminate unsaved people to the meaning of truth and the truthfulness of God's Word, when God effectually calls His own unto salvation, He causes them to understand the truth, but in addition He causes them to see and embrace the *significance* of biblical truth. The Word comes to that soul with power. The sinner is struck with the importance of it—it is vital! The sinner is struck with his need to respond to it—it must be obeyed! God causes each of His elect to see the reality and the relevance of what God says respecting his sin, his need for salvation, his need for repentance, and his remedy that is in Jesus Christ alone. The illuminated sinner possesses a desire to conform his faith and life to the gospel that he has come to understand and value.

Today we want to examine the underlying cause that God's illumination of the sinner is seen and understood as to its truth and importance, resulting in changing the course of the life of the one who has received this gift of grace. This distinction between those who hear and understand and remain unchanged by the truth and those who understand and are transformed by that truth, is due to *the grace of regeneration* that God has caused to occur in those who are of His elect.

Now we spoke of this work of God's grace in regeneration back in the sixth sermon of this series when we described the *ordo salutis*, or the order of salvation. From then we then began in subsequent weeks to trace this order in which God works in people, addressing each of the steps of grace in turn. Today we arrive in the *ordo salutis*--the order of salvation--to the important matter of regeneration. And so, we want to now consider in more detail this sovereign work of God's grace in regeneration whereby He imparts spiritual life to a sinner who is spiritually dead in his sins and trespasses. Man's great need is for regeneration by the Spirit of God. Our Lord Jesus had told Nicodemus, a ruler off the Jews: "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." He repeated Himself to Nicodemus: "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'" Here our Lord taught the necessity of the new birth, of regeneration.

Here are the words of **Arthur Pink** regarding the necessity of regeneration:

Now fallen man has altogether departed from what ought to be his chief end, aim, or object, for instead of having before him the honour of God, *himself* is his chief concern; and instead of seeking to please God in all things, he lives only to please himself or his fellow-creatures. Even when, through religious training, the claims of God have been brought to his notice and pressed upon his attention, at best he only parcels out one part of his time, strength and substance to the One who gave him being and daily loadeth him with benefits, and another part for himself and the world. The natural man is utterly incapable of giving supreme respect unto God, until he becomes the recipient of a spiritual life. None will truly aim at the glory of God until they have an affection for Him. None will honour Him supremely whom they do not supremely love. And for this, the love of God must be shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5), and this only takes places at regeneration. Then it is, and not till then, that self is dethroned and God enthroned; then it is that the renewed creature is enabled to comply with God's imperative call, "My son, give *Me* thine heart" (Prov. 23:26).²

When God called us to salvation, He performed two major works of grace within us in order that we would repent of sin and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. First, God had to make us keenly *aware* of our need of salvation and the way of salvation through Christ. We just addressed this in the matter of His grace of illumination. Second, He needed to impart to us a new heart, making us *willing* and *able* to respond to the message that He enabled us to understand. And so first, we needed to know the truth of God about our condition and about God's remedy in Christ. But *something more was needed* to bring each of us to salvation than our simply becoming *informed* about our condition. We needed to be *transformed* by the Holy Spirit with respect to our nature, if we were to be saved. When God effectually calls a person to salvation, He first

² Arthur Pink, *Regeneration or The New Birth*, at <http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/Regeneration/index.htm>

illuminates that person's mind to his sinful condition and to God's remedy in Christ, and then secondly, God works His grace in that person so that he would be made willing and able to respond to that message of the Gospel he had been brought to understand. This is what is known as God's work of grace in regeneration.

And so, there is God's work of grace in *illumination* in which He imparts spiritual understanding to us of our sinful condition and His remedy in Christ. Then there is God's work of grace in *regeneration* in which He secures our willing response to that understanding that He has given us. Both illumination and regeneration are associated with God's *effectual calling* each of us one by one to salvation. Both are essential if a sinner is to become saved. He needs to be *informed* so as to dispel the spiritual darkness of his thinking. He needs to be *transformed* so as to dispel his aversion and resistance to the will of God. Both these are involved in saving faith. Both of these must be present and evident if saving faith is present. And this is all of grace; it is a work of our good, loving, and sovereign toward us whom He has purposed to save from our sins.

I. Let us turn to 1 Peter 1:22-25 to begin considering this teaching of regeneration.

Here we read of a call to holy living because of our new birth by the Word of God. Peter first declared that all true Christians have purified themselves by obeying "the truth." Peter assumed that this is so. "Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth." The often-stated principle is implied here: ***A true Christian is one who has in faith responded to the Word of God in action, not just in word.*** If one really *believes* the truth, he will *obey* the truth. In doing so he will turn (repent) from sin and begin to order His life according to the truth of God's Word, the Bible. There is no such thing in the New Testament as a true Christian whose life is characterized by rebellion to the Word of God. Granted, we all disobey, and we do so all too many times. We resist, but we do not rebel. We procrastinate, but in the end He gains our compliance to His will. And so, although the Christian has already "purified" himself of many things, there is much more that needs to be done.

Secondly, Peter states that ***all true Christians have sincere love for other true Christians.*** He described them as having a "sincere love of the brethren." Again, Peter assumes this is so. Now the Christian in one sense owes "love" to all men, whether Christian or not. This may be described as a general desire for their good. It may be described as *goodwill toward men* and it should be seen in our action toward them. We are even to love our enemies, as the Lord Jesus commanded us. Essentially the idea is this: we should have a sincere desire to "promote another's true welfare." And yet, although a Christian owes love to all men, he has, nevertheless, ***a love for Christians that is of a purer kind and of a more intimate degree.*** He has a "sincere love" for the brethren (1:22). This is a product of the Holy Spirit, so much so that Paul could write to the Christians at Thessalonica: "But concerning love of the brethren you have no need to have any one write to you, *for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another*" (1 Thess. 4:9). We read of this also in 1 John 5:1f, "

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.

A person, who does not possess "sincere love" for other Christians, does not know God.

Nevertheless, ***true Christians need to love one another more deeply.*** This is the command of Peter in **verse 22**, "love one another fervently with a pure heart." Later Peter stated how this may be done in practical ways. But here he simply stated the command that we love one another deeply. What is being stressed here is that we should purpose to love each other with constancy and with intensity. This is something that we all need to work on, do we not?

The next three verses of 1 Peter 1 give further reasons why this command should be obeyed. It is fitting to do so when you consider ***the manner in which you were born again (1:23).*** The command to love one another deeply should be obeyed when one considers that you have been born again by the imperishable, living, "seed" of God. Here is a clear reference to the grace of regeneration, here referred to as being "born

again.” Regeneration is wholly a work of God’s sovereign grace in the heart and life of God’s elect, those whom He chose in eternity to be saved in history.

There is no place in the Bible where we may find steps prescribed that a sinner can take which will result in him becoming born again. This work of God is above us and beyond us. Our Lord told Nicodemus that he must be born again, but He never told Nicodemus that he must do certain things in order for this work of grace to take place. Regeneration is the product of the sovereign grace of Almighty God. Only God can raise the spiritually dead to spiritual life. We are incapable of affecting the new birth in ourselves or others.

Here is what **J. I. Packer** wrote concerning regeneration:

Regeneration is monergistic: that is, entirely the work of God the Holy Spirit. It raises the elect among the spiritually dead to new life in Christ (Eph. 2:1-10). Regeneration is a transition from spiritual death to spiritual life, and conscious, intentional, active faith in Christ is its immediate fruit, not its immediate cause.³

The question may be asked, *What is this incorruptible seed to which Peter refers?* It is not the “Word”; rather, it is the principle of spiritual life, or grace, that is imparted and sustained by means of the eternal Word of God. The Word of God mentioned here is the *instrument* by which God imparts this “seed” to His people. Each of us who is a true Christian has been born again having had the Word of God proclaimed to us, the word of truth, the eternal Word of God. Through that word God the Father caused us to be born again.

How does this verse relate to loving the brethren fervently? Essentially this way: In contrast to earthly life that is weak and temporal, our life that God has given us is eternal. *Because we have this common family life of eternal duration, having been wrought and being sustained by the imperishable “seed”, we should love one another deeply.* The point is this; we have a family connection with one another. And this connection of family is much closer and of a purer kind than blood relation of earthly brothers and sisters. Whereas our relatives were born of “seed” bringing about an earthly connection that will cease with death, the children of God were born of “seed” which brought about a family connection that will never dissolve. Because the “seed” that resulted in your “second birth” is eternal, the family connections that it produced are also eternal, therefore we should love the brethren “deeply.” We will be dwelling in eternity together as brothers and sisters in Christ. We should love one another because of this connection.

It is fitting to obey this command when you consider **the eternal nature of the Word of God (1:24, 25a).**

“All flesh is as grass,
And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass.
The grass withers,
And its flower falls away,
²⁵But the word of the LORD endures forever.”

These verses are the quotation of **Isaiah 40:6-8**. We considered this in our study of Isaiah 40 some months ago. Isaiah 40 is a passage that held forth the promise of salvation for certain Jewish exiles that had been taken were captive in Babylon. But at the same time it looks forward to the salvation that we have through Jesus Christ in this church age. God had judged the nation of Judah severely for its sins. But in addition, Isaiah declared that God in His mercy and grace would send forth His Word again, but this time it would not be to judge, but to redeem His captive people. And so the prophet foretold of John the Baptist’s ministry and then of the coming of the Lord Jesus to His people, bringing salvation to them. Here in our New Testament passage, Peter is speaking to “strangers” or “exiles” as well, but they are identified as Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, who are strangers in this fallen world. We *have been the recipients* of God’s life-giving grace through His Word.

³ J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology* (Tyndale House, 1993), p. 158.

Peter emphasizes as did Isaiah, **(1) the fragile and temporary nature of life apart from God.** All men are frail, and the best that they can accomplish and the best they can become is fragile. All will soon fade and perish. How easily and quickly can all come to nothing that a man is and has. As fast as grass can shrivel and flowers wilt under the hot winds blowing off the desert, a man can deteriorate and perish that quickly.

But in contrast, Peter also emphasizes **(2) the enduring nature of the Word of God through which the Father gives eternal life.** This is set in contrast to the life that an earthly father imparts to his children, which is but temporal. The Word of God is truth and it is eternal and therefore what it produces and sustains is also eternal. Wrote **John Brown** of Haddington, “Till mind ceases to be mind, truth to be truth, God to be God, it must continue, binding believers in a holy, happy relation to God as their Father and to one another as brethren, to all eternity.”

In addition, Peter reasons that it is fitting to obey this command when you consider **it was this Word that was preached to you (1:25b).** What a great privilege it is to have the imperishable, living, and enduring Word of God preached! It is the means by which God accomplishes His purposes. God performs a work of God through His Word that takes place in the hearts of His chosen people, a work that is mysterious in nature and is hidden from any possibility of physical scrutiny. The Spirit of God causes people to be born again through this proclaimed Word, which results in bringing each of His people into eternal relation with Himself and with all others who have been similarly blessed.

II. Let us consider other Biblical terms for the grace of regeneration.

The Bible uses several different words or ideas to convey this act of grace whereby He transforms a person from a sinner into a Christian.

1. The Bible speaks of Christians being **“born again”**, or **“born from above.”** We examined this some weeks ago when we spoke of our Lord instructing Nicodemus regarding his need for regeneration. In John 3:3 we read, “Jesus answered and said unto him, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be *born again*, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’” It is also referred to in John 1:12 and 13, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: *who were born*, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

2. The Bible speaks of Christians having been **“begotten”**, or that God had **“begat”** us, as a man father’s his child. We read in James 1:17f, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of His own will *begat* He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.”

3. The Bible speaks of Christians having experienced the **“renewal of the Holy Spirit.”** Paul wrote to Titus saying,

⁴But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, ⁵not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through *the washing of regeneration* and *renewing of the Holy Spirit*, ⁶whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:4-7)

4. The Bible speaks of Christians having been **“quicken”** by God. This is a word used in the King James Version.

And you hath *He quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins; ² Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: ³Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of

wrath, even as others. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, ⁵ Even when we were dead in sins, *hath quickened us* together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) ⁶And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: (Eph. 2:1-6)

Before we came to receive salvation we were spiritually dead in our sins. What this means is that we were both incapable and unwilling to live before God. He came to us in our spiritually dead condition and through an act of grace created life within us. He gave us spiritual life that is seen in both the desire and the ability to respond to God as God.

We read the same language in John 5.

“For as the Father raises up the dead, and *quickeneth* them: even so the Son *quickeneth* whom He will.”

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that hears my word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”

The basic idea is that God imparts “spiritual life” where there was only “spiritual death.” Only God can raise the physically dead to life. Only God can raise the spiritually dead to spiritual life.

5. The Bible speaks of Christians having experienced “**regeneration.**” Titus 3:5 describes Christians, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of *regeneration*, and renewing of the Holy Ghost...”

III. The essential nature of regeneration⁴

1. **Regeneration consists in the implanting of the new principle of the new spiritual life in man.** Prior to the impartation of this life, fallen man was disposed toward sin. He desired to rule his own life pursuing the desires of his own fallen heart. But with the new birth a new principle becomes predominant in him. The one who is regenerated now has a bent, a disposition toward holiness. Because of the work of the Holy Spirit in this new life principle imparted to him, he now has a disposition Godward. He desires to please God above his desire to please himself. Or we might say that he is brought to the place that he would please himself most by knowing that his thoughts and actions pleased God. In this way *the whole man* is permanently changed and affected.

a. This change is wrought in a man’s *intellect*. Consider the difference between the natural man and the spiritual man in 1 Corinthians 2:14f:

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.

Here the natural man is the unregenerate man. The spiritual man is the one who has been born anew.

The Scriptures describe regeneration as “a new man” that He has created in us, according to which we are to conform our lives. We read in **Colossians 3:9ff**,

Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, ¹⁰and have put on the new *man* who is renewed *in knowledge* according to the image of Him who created him, ¹¹where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ *is* all and in all.

⁴ For this section I am indebted to Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (The Banner of Truth, 1958), pp. 468f.

b. This change is wrought in a man's *will*. We read in Philippians 2:12f, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for *it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*" And in 2 Thessalonians we read of Paul's desire that these Christians would be directed by God in the way they should live. "Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ" (2 Thess. 3:5). And we also read in the doxology of the Epistle to the Hebrews:

²⁰Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, ²¹*make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight,* through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Heb. 13:20f)

c. This change is also wrought in a man's *feelings or emotions*.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶*In this you greatly rejoice,* though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, ⁸*whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory...* (1Pe 1:1 NKJ)

And so, the whole man is affected and influenced by this work of regenerating grace performed by a sovereign God. He performs this work of grace in the souls of all of His people that He has purposed to save from eternity.

2. Regeneration is an instantaneous change of a man's nature. Regeneration does not happen gradually or in degrees. One moment the sinner is unregenerate, in his sins, governed by sin, and the next moment he is a new creature in Christ Jesus. Since this is an instantaneous event, regeneration cannot be a gradual process or gradual change in a person. That is true of God's grace in sanctification, but not in regeneration. "There is no intermediate stage between life and death; one either lives or is dead."⁵

3. Regeneration is a change that occurs imperceptibly by the one who receives life. In other words, a man does not know directly that he has been born again, because it is a secret and mysterious work of God, therefore, it is not directly perceived. A man can know that he has been born again indirectly, only by its effects. A man knows he is born again for he discovers new and different longings and delights. He loves the triune God. He loves God's people. He loves God's Word. He loves God's ways.

IV. The effects of regeneration

Regeneration is the singular turning point in the life of an individual. Every good and perfect change wrought in him begins with this work of grace. **John Gill** set forth the effects of the new birth in his *Body of Doctrinal Divinity*:

A principal effect of it; or, if you will, a concomitant of it, is a participation of every grace of the Spirit. Regenerate ones have not only the promise of life made to them, but they have the grace of life given them; they live a new life, and walk in newness of life: they partake of the grace of spiritual light; before, their understandings were darkened; but now they are enlightened by the Spirit of wisdom and

⁵ Ibid.

revelation, in the knowledge of divine things; they were before, darkness itself; but now are made light in the Lord. In regeneration is laid the beginning of sanctification, which is carried on till completed, without which no man shall see the Lord; for the new man is created in righteousness and true holiness; the principle of holiness is then formed, from whence holy actions spring. The grace of repentance then appears; the stony, hard, obdurate, and impenitent heart being taken away, and an heart of flesh, susceptible of divine impressions, being given; on which follow, a sense of sin, sorrow for it after a godly sort, and repentance unto life and unto salvation, which is not to be repented of: faith in Christ, which is not of a man's self, but the gift of God, and the operation of the Spirit of God, is now given and brought into exercise; which being an effect, is an evidence of regeneration; for "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ", and especially that believes in Christ, as his Saviour and Redeemer, "is born of God" (1 John 5:1), and such have hope of eternal life by Christ; while unregenerate men are without hope, without a true, solid, and well-grounded hope; but in regeneration, they are begotten to a "lively hope", and have it; a good hope, through grace, founded upon the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ, which is of use to them both in life and death. Regenerated persons have their "hearts circumcised", which is but another phrase for regenerating grace, "to love the Lord their God with all their heart and soul" (Deut. 30:6), and though before, their carnal minds were enmity to God, and all that is good; now they love him, and all that belong to him, his word, worship, ordinances, and people; and by this it is known, that they "have passed from death to life", which is no other than regeneration, "because they love the brethren" (1 John 3:14). In short, regenerate persons are partakers of all the fruits of the Spirit; of all other graces, besides those mentioned; as humility, patience, self-denial, and resignation to the will of God. And they are blessed with such measures of grace and spiritual strength, as to be able to resist sin and Satan, and to overcome the world, and every spiritual enemy; "For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world", the god of it, the men in it, and the lusts thereof; "Whosoever is born of God, sinneth not", does not live in sin, nor is he overcome by it; "but he that is begotten of God, keepeth himself" from Satan, and his temptations, from being overcome with them; "and that wicked one toucheth him not": being clothed with the whole armour of God, which he has skill to wield; he keeps him off, and at bay, so that he cannot come in with him; he holds up the shield of faith to him, whereby he quenches all his fiery darts (1 John 5:4, 18).

Regeneration to the beginning of the work of God whereby He transforms us into the ones that He has predestined us to become.

V. The nature and evidence of regeneration

What specifically is the evidence that we have spiritual life? What are the marks that we have had a work of grace performed in us that is absolutely essential if we are to be saved?

1. Love for His Word/truth

2 Thess. 2:10f, "And with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, *because they did not receive the love of the truth*, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie..."

Psa. 119:97, "Oh, how *I love Your law!* It is my meditation all the day."

Psa. 119:113, "I hate the double-minded, *but I love Your law.*"

Psa. 119:127, "Therefore *I love Your commandments* more than gold, yes, than fine gold!"

2. A hatred of error

Psa. 119:104, "Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore *I hate every false way.*"

Psa. 119:128, “Therefore all Your precepts concerning all things I consider to be right; *I hate every false way.*”

3. Love for righteousness

1 John 2:29, “If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.”

4. Hatred for unrighteousness

When the life of God is imparted to the soul, that individual finds himself loving the things that God loves and hating the things that God hates. David could write, “I hate and abhor lying, but I love Your law” (Psa. 119:163). We read of what God hates in Proverbs 6:16ff: “These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: ¹⁷a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, ¹⁹a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren. (Pro 6:16 NKJ)

5. Love for God and His Son

1 John 5:1, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loves him that begat loves him also that is begotten of him.”

6. Love for God’s people

1 John 4:7, “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loves is born of God, and knoweth God.”

1 John 3:14, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not [his] brother abideth in death.”

7. Victory over sin

1 John 3:9, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”

8. A Separation from the “world” that is opposed to God

1 John 5:4, “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world-- our faith.”

9. Victory over Satan

1 John 5:18, “We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keeps himself, and *that wicked one touches him not.*”

10. Obedience to the Commandments of God

Ezekiel 36:24, “For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. ²⁵Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ²⁶I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷I

will put My Spirit within you and *cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.*”

11. Repentance (turning) from sin toward God and faith in Jesus Christ

Regeneration is the cause for repentance and faith, not the result of repentance and faith. Regeneration comes first, and then saving faith follows. One does not believe and then become born again. One is born again by the grace of God and the evidence of that life from God is seen in repentance and faith.

VI. The implications of this doctrine

1. How desperate we are in need of the grace of God!
2. How earnestly and jealously we should guard the role of the Word of God!
3. How very prayerful we should be for ourselves as we witness and for others who hear!
4. How diligent we should be to preserve and employ the means of grace God has prescribed!
5. How careful we should be to ascribe all glory to God!

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION & APPLICATION⁶

1. Have you been born again? Is there evidence of the new birth in your life? Do you remember a specific time when regeneration occurred in your life? Can you describe how you knew that something had happened?
2. If you (or friends who come to you) are not sure whether you have been born again, what would Scripture encourage you to do in order to gain greater assurance (or to be truly born again for the first time)?
3. Have you thought before that regeneration is prior to saving faith? Are you convinced of it now, or is there still some question in your mind?
4. What do you think about the fact that your regeneration was totally a work of God, and that you contributed nothing to it? How does it make you feel toward yourself? How does it make you feel toward God? By way of analogy, how do you feel about the fact that when you were born physically you had no choice in the matter?
5. Are there areas where the results of regeneration are not very clearly seen in your own life? Do you think it is possible for a person to be regenerated and then stagnate spiritually so that there is little or no growth? What circumstances might a person live in that would lead to such spiritual stagnation and lack of growth (if that is possible), even though the person was truly born again? To what degree does the kind of church one attends, the teaching one receives, the kind of Christian fellowship one has, and the regularity of one's personal time of Bible reading and prayer, affect one's own spiritual life and growth?
6. If regeneration is entirely a work of God and human beings can do nothing to bring it about, then what good does it do to preach the gospel to people at all? Is it somewhat absurd or even cruel to preach the gospel and ask for a response from people who cannot respond because they are spiritually dead? How do you resolve this question?

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.
(Eph. 3:20f)

⁶ These questions are not original with me, but I cannot recall where I obtained them in order to give credit to their author.