

We continue with our study of the regeneration of the believers.

As we have seen, regeneration cannot occur unless justification occurred. Justification occurred on the cross, when Jesus paid for our transgressions and sufficiently satisfied the wrath of God for all eternity for all the elect. Regeneration is started in the justified at the time and under the circumstances as ordained by the Holy Spirit. Some are born in households of faith while others come to Christ at a later stage in their lives. The latter are none worse off than the former but (Luke 15:10) there **is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.**

In explaining the relationship between justification and regeneration last week, I said, "Regeneration is impossible without justification and justification is false unless it is followed by regeneration." Pastor Poundstone remarked about the use of the word 'false' in this context, justifiably so. Therefore, I would like to expound on the use to clear up any confusion that may have been caused by that paragraph.

As it stands, the paragraph could lead the reader to assume that if justification is not followed by regeneration, that some ailment befalls the justification, or the justification is falsified because of the absence of regeneration. That is not what the intention was; rather, justification is worked by Christ in the most perfect and sufficient manner and that is unchangeable. If, however, there is no regeneration taking place, it can be argued that justification is absent or those who refuse to change their worldly lifestyles may be proof that they have not been justified. The burden of proof falls on the individual refusing to change from a worldly lifestyle to that of one who has been justified by Christ's sacrifice.

It becomes tough to imagine one could take in the enormity of the price paid for justification and not completely collapse in awe, reaching out with all that is within one to live as far removed from a previous lifestyle. Tough, but not impossible, for the timing and tempo of regeneration lies not with us but with the Holy Spirit. All that is incumbent upon us is to

persistently preach the gospel and nurture, teach, and minister to all.

Mat 28:19, 20 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

It is a delicate matter as we are not allowed to judge whether one is justified or not, and the mere absence of regeneration is not an indication that such a person has not been justified. Who would have given the criminal on the cross a hope of a chance to get to heaven if we didn't overhear his conversation with Jesus?

My statement was made in the forensic sense to show that without regeneration there can be no instance of justification. Regeneration also does not instantly follow justification, as I have said before, but it happens at the time and tempo determined by the Holy Spirit.

Our whole order of evangelism, missionary work, and brotherly judgment is based on this principle that Christ justified the elect but the regeneration comes by the changing of the heart from stone to flesh.

We pointed this out in the beginning of the study when we studied the free will of man, which was not a complete study of the topic, since it influences such a wide scope of Christianity, but it correctly belongs in a study of its own.

We continue our study of regeneration, which is the second of three of sub-purposes why Christ rose from the dead.

His resurrection from the dead was divided into four questions:

1. Did Christ rise from the dead?
2. How did He rise?
3. For what purpose did He rise?
4. What are the benefits or fruits of His resurrection?

We worked on the third question, For what purpose did He rise? which was divided into six purposes:

- a) For God's glory;
- b) Because of the prophecies;
- c) Because of God's decree;
- d) Because of His dignity;
- e) To maintain the office of Mediator;
- f) For our salvation.

We covered all but the last purpose of Christ's resurrection last week, which is that He rose from the grave for our salvation. This purpose can be divided into three sub-purposes:

- i. Our justification.
- ii. Our regeneration.
- iii. Our resurrection and glorification.

- ii. Our regeneration. (cont'd)

We have seen that we cannot divide justification and regeneration, but the latter must follow the former. It is impossible that anyone can be regarded as righteous by the merit of Christ, without being renewed by his Spirit unto a holy life. It is in vain for any, in whom the Spirit of regeneration dwells, not to glory in the free adoption of God; in short, that God receives none into favor who are not also made truly righteous.

The elect have been ordained and created unto holiness of life and the study of good works, but that they must recline on the merits of Christ with their whole soul. Let them enjoy the righteousness of life, which has been bestowed upon them, still, however, distrusting it so as not to bring before God any other trust than trust in the obedience of Christ.

In order that ambiguities may be removed, it is necessary that the Righteousness which we obtain by faith, and which is freely

bestowed upon us, should be regarded as our highest good, so that, as often as the conscience is brought before God, our trust in the merits of Christ alone may shine forth.

In this way the righteousness of works, to whatever extent it may exist in us, will never come into conflict with the righteousness of faith. Righteousness of works depends on righteousness of faith, and is subordinate to it, so that righteousness of faith remains in full possession of the salvation of man.

There can be no doubt that Paul, when he speaks of the Justification of man, confines himself to the one point—how man may ascertain that God is propitious to him?

Rom 3:19-25 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; ²⁰because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. ²¹But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²²even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.

Gal 2:16 nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.

Here Paul deliberately explains the impotency of works. He does not say that a quality infused into us; on the contrary, he tells us that righteousness must be sought without us otherwise that certainty of faith, which he so strongly urges everywhere, could never stand.

Even less, could there be ground for the contrast between the righteousness of faith and works which he draws in the tenth chapter to the Romans.

Rom 10:8-11 But what does it say? "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART"--that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, ⁹that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; ¹⁰for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. ¹¹For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."

It is, therefore, a very serious matter and must retain propriety of expression, which carries with it the knowledge of our salvation by the merits of Christ and nothing from us.

We should not be swayed from the true interpretation of these concepts by those who wish to apply different meanings to justification and regeneration. We read in James 2:21,

James 2:21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?

James does not imply that man acquires righteousness with God through works, not even in the minutest degree. That would be to put everything about righteousness in conflict with other passages of Scripture, which is absurd.

But, what is it that James is saying here? On the face of it, it sounds as if Abraham's works caused his justification. Taken in isolation, this verse would seem to support that idea. But we cannot take Scripture passages in isolation; we are obligated to seek the context in all of Scripture.

In verse 23 we read:

James 2:23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God.

James quotes Gen 15:6, which clearly shows that Abraham first believed when God showed him the heavens and said that his descendants would be like the stars, and then, in Gen 22,

fulfilled his faith with the sacrifice of Isaac. First faith, then the works, which perfects the faith. That is what James says in 1:22. Let us read the passages together:

Jas 2:20-24 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? ²¹Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? ²²You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; ²³and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God. ²⁴You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.

Therefore, it is clear that James nowhere speaks of the cause of righteousness, but rather that good works must follow faith otherwise, faith is dead.

What about our confession that we are justified by faith alone in Christ alone? [Five solas: Sola Scriptura (Scripture alone), Soli Deo Gloria (Glory of God alone), Solo Christo (works of Christ alone), Sola Gratia (Grace alone) , Sola Fide (faith alone).]

James clearly seems to say that we are "justified by works and not by faith alone." Once again, if we see this in context, we see that James stresses that faith should not be alone but should be followed by good works to make faith perfect. [James 2:22]

Or, we may argue that faith does not exist unless good works flow from it. Similarly, justification does not exist if regeneration of the heart does not follow it. We say this with the qualification that we don't know when the one would follow the other, so we are to preach, teach, and nurture every one so that we may not become obstacles but rather facilitators to the weak in faith so that they grow and grasp the good works that should follow their faith and the regeneration that follows their justification.

Another benefit of having good works and regeneration as consequences of faith and justification respectively, is that a

man's good works testify to his faith and a regenerated life in Christ testifies about that man's justification.

Who denies that every man proves what he is by his actions? But to count our good works, which is nothing but a testimony of our faith, and our regenerated life, which is nothing but a testimony of our justification, as meriting salvation in the sight of God is absurd.

Therefore, in order that we won't allow anyone to sway us from our firm conviction by assuming that some isolated passages, taken out of context, mean something other than what the gospel preaches, we must always observe whether reference is made to God or to men. We know, with an unwavering certainty that the cause of our salvation is in God alone and totally and utterly so. Any reference to men in that respect is false.

Moreover, we agree that the righteous are called the children of God, in respect of holiness of life, as well as in respect of a pure conscience. But, since no work, if weighed in the Divine balance, will be found otherwise than maimed and even defiled by impurities, we conclude, that this name of righteousness, when given to works, is founded on free pardon. Believers, therefore, are righteous by works, just because they are righteous without any merit of, or without any respect to works, seeing that the righteousness of works depends on the righteousness of faith.