

This is our final lecture of the regeneration of the believers.

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)

In order that we understand our regeneration more fully – as this is the proof of our salvation – a short overview of the process, as we understand it from Scripture is in order.

All creation, including the fact that only a small proportion of men are chosen for eternal grace, can have any meaning only as a means of glory and majesty of God. To apply earthly

standards of justice to his sovereign decrees is meaningless and an insult to His majesty, since He and He alone is free, which means He is subject to no law. His decrees can only be understood by us or even be known to us in so far as it has been His pleasure to reveal them. We can only hold to these fragments of eternal truth; everything else, including the meaning of our individual destiny, is hidden in mystery which is both impossible to pierce and presumptuous to question.

For the damned to complain of their lot would be the same as for animals to bemoan the fact that they were not born as humans. Everything of the flesh is separated from God by an unbridgeable gulf and deserves of Him only eternal death, except for those for whom He decreed otherwise for the glorification of His majesty.

We know that only a part of humanity is saved, the rest are damned. To assume that human merit or guilt play a part in determining this destiny would be to think of God's absolutely free decrees, which have been settled from eternity, as subject to change by human influence, an impossible contradiction. Nothing in creation can subject the Creator in any possible manner or in the minutest of detail.

With the more accurate interpretation of the Scripture which occurred during the Reformation, many believed that the Father in heaven of the New Testament, so human and understanding, who rejoices over the repentance of a sinner as a woman over the lost piece of silver she has found, was gone and His place taken by a transcendental Being, beyond the reach of human understanding, who with His quite incomprehensible decrees has decided the fate of every individual and regulated the tiniest detail of the cosmos from eternity.

Reality is that the Father in heaven requires of His chosen to become godly rather than to demand that God be human and understanding. Demanding that God become human and understanding would be tantamount to demanding that God complies with the wishes of man, the dead, which is absurd.

God's grace is unchangeable, since His decrees cannot change, and it is as impossible for those to whom He has granted it to lose as it is unattainable for those to whom He has denied it.

It is for the Christian the most important thing in life: his eternal salvation and following this path forces every Christian to meet a destiny which has been decreed for him from eternity. No one can help him; No priest, no minister, and no counselor. No sacraments can help him either, for though the sacraments had been ordained by God for His glory, and must be scrupulously observed, they are not a means to the attainment of grace. Observance of rites and ceremonies, indulgences, and other 'sacred' rites is of no value for the attainment of grace.

No church can be helpful to the Christian either, even though participating in a church and be subjected to its correct ministry of the gospel, diligent administration of the sacraments and exercise of discipline is a prerequisite for a participant. We say *participant* because even the doomed may be participants, but for different reasons. This participation requires that the participant subjects himself to the teaching and discipline of the church not to attain salvation, which is impossible, but for the Glory of God and for the assurance of the participant that God has bestowed upon him that grace that leads to eternal life. Grace for salvation is only obtained by God's eternal decree and to whom it has been dispensed is a mystery, which cannot be resolved in this life.

So, how could the participant in a church be sure that he received God's grace and is saved? It is proper for the participant to pursue this assurance and set his mind at ease as to the surety of his soul. But, is such a surety possible if the fact that grace has been received remains a secret? Yes, it is possible because the consequences of this rich and mighty grace, able to pardon sins, raise the dead and bridge the chasm that exists between things of the flesh and the Almighty God, have a visible property; a property that can be experienced, proven, and measured. The presence of the consequence is proof of the cause.

In nature many things operate in the same manner, such as the observance of invisible signals prove that a source has transmitted them, such as radio and television signals. No one would be foolish enough to argue that there is no radio transmitter when the transmission can be clearly heard on the radio.

From what we have said here, two distinct types of church can be inferred. First, there is the church (congregation) that God established before creation when He decided that certain people would receive the grace of salvation. It is a mysterious band of God's children who, themselves, do not know who they are. For lack of a better word, they are referred to as the invisible church. Then we see that there are those who congregate on Sundays to listen to the gospel, celebrate the sacraments, and obey the church's discipline. They are referred to as the visible church.

All the members of the invisible church are of the elect and there can be no one of the damned be included in their number. The visible church's membership may include members of the damned. Who is of the elect and who not?

The Scriptures have been given in the manner and with the integrity which we studied earlier. The Christian is required to believe that every word of the Scriptures is divinely inspired and inerrant. The Scriptures teach that God has selected those who would be taken up into heaven already before creation as part of His eternal decree, as we have said before.

Since man, as creatures, is unable to influence God's decrees or His will, it stands to reason that man would be totally incapable of working for himself a way into heaven without God having decreed that it would happen in that manner. Since God, as the Author of all of creation, decreed the outcome, He also decreed the means by which that outcome would be achieved. Man's rebellion against God in the Garden of Eden caused a permanent chasm between God and man and the only possible reconciliation would be to punish man for the rebellion so that there can be forgiveness and reconciliation, which God worked by assuming the nature of man, as He has done on various

occasions on a temporary basis, as we read in Gen 18 and other places, and absorb the full wrath of God. This God-man, Jesus Christ, is very human and very God and has suffered the punishment for man's rebellion on the cross, atoning for their sins and working justification for the elect. God has, after all, the humanity and the understanding to rejoice over the repentance of every sinner through Jesus Christ. God was never gone.

The elect now received their justification and righteousness but they still do not know it because who are of the elect remains a mystery. The Scriptures teach where and how man should look to determine whether they have received the grace of salvation. To assist, comfort, teach, and illuminate them, Jesus Christ sent his Holy Spirit to the elect to regenerate them, to reborn them, at the right time. Even this rebirth is a mystery and no outward experience, regardless how dramatic, is conclusive of such rebirth, as Satan may masquerade as an angel of light.

The elect view any religious or emotional experience with a measure of suspicion to avoid distracting in the smallest detail the acknowledgement due to God alone. Considering all emotional experiences as taboo is also not correct, but considering all emotional experiences as consequences and not causes, is the key. Even then, emotional expressions are toned down to avoid boasting and pride from infiltrating the emotions and in so doing sinning against God. Self-control is key.

So, one can be assured of justification when one is convinced of one's fallen state (something the reprobate is incapable of doing); one is convinced that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the promised Messiah and that the price He paid was sufficient to forgive the sins of all of mankind but given only to those whom God has chosen; that this forgiveness not only means that Jesus has paid the debt owed to God but that the blessings He obtained by His sacrifice He also bestowed upon the elect, which are justification, righteousness, and a saving faith, among other.

Having acquired this knowledge, the elect has now broken with the bondage that lawlessness and sin brings, and assumed the

freedom that bondage in Christ brings about. This ascent to godliness is brought about by the Holy Spirit in manners and times only known to Him, which commences with rebirth or regeneration.

The reprobate receives the same information, live in the same circumstances, but they are not convinced of their fallen state and thus denies the necessity of atonement and all the other means that God provided for the elect. It is they, who question God about fairness when His eternal, unchangeable decrees are discussed. If they believed their fallen state, they would have been overcome with grief having lost their eternal life – but that is a characteristic of the elect.

Now, good works follow righteousness, not before. Works without righteousness are moot and sinful, not because of the works but because the works are not for the glory of God.

The Christian who engages in good works for the glory of God and not for own recognition, who eagerly endeavors to produce the fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; [Galatians 5:22, 23] has that assurance that God bestowed justification upon him by His eternal decree because these fruits are not possible in those who have not been justified. And if a member of the elect is confronted with the struggle of not bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit, the struggle is already a sign that the Holy Spirit is working with his heart.

The Christian should have no doubt about his salvation provided he bears the fruits of the Holy Spirit (which is evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit) and believing that he belongs to Christ because of what we have said before. Because those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, we will also walk by the Spirit, which means we should not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.

This appears to say that the process of bearing fruit of the Holy Spirit is a final, completed process. Far from it. In some it may start in small changes and grow, providing complete assurance

from step one because even that small step is impossible for the reprobate with the convictions we enumerated earlier.

The Holy Spirit provides the elect with the knowledge necessary to understand the mysteries in which their salvation is folded, to preserve them.

Col 2: 1- 10 "My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is. So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, Rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority."

2Peter 3:18 "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen."

When someone lives in Christ, broken as our efforts may be, he becomes godlier through the process of knowledge, repentance and forgiveness and distances himself from his old nature, not destroying it, is when the angels rejoice over the repentance of a sinner.

In this study we used the terms *righteousness* and *justification* used almost interchangeably. But what are the differences between them and how does this affect us?

Next week we will look at the six questions about righteousness:

Adult study of Jesus Christ

1. What is Righteousness in General?
2. How Manifold is Righteousness or Justice?
3. In What Does Righteousness Differ From Justification?
4. What is Our Righteousness before God?
5. How Does the Satisfaction of Christ become our Righteousness, seeing that it is without us?
6. Why is the Satisfaction of Christ Made Ours, or Why Does God Impute it Unto Us For Righteousness?