

REGENERATION COMPARED TO A BIRTH

"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee. Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5)"

In this chapter Christ compares the New Birth with the natural birth. This is easily seen when we read the context with this in mind. Nicodemus came to Christ in the night time seeking to know who He was. Christ immediately began a discourse on the new birth. Nicodemus being spiritually blind asked, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Now Christ did not overlook this frustrating question, but gave answer to it by contrasting and comparing the heavenly and natural birth. "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee. Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." In other words unless you, Nicodemus, have the natural birth- which is the water birth- and the spiritual birth you cannot enter the kingdom of God. I am talking about a different, a greater, birth now; a birth of which the Holy Spirit is the Author. The water here does not have reference to baptism, the Word, nor the Spirit. If it has reference to baptism, it contradicts Scripture elsewhere. I am sure that the word kai, translated "and" here, will not bear the translation "even" in this case. Why should Christ say, You must be born of the Spirit, even of the Spirit? It would be as though a doctor would say, "You must be born of your mother, even of your mother." The context seems to teach that Christ has in mind the natural birth when He spoke of the "water birth." It is a known fact that the natural birth is called the water birth by many.

But this is not the important thing! Men will die arguing as to what the "water" has reference to. The thing that you must not miss in this chapter is that, "You must be born again, (or from above), to see the kingdom of God." These other matters will take care of themselves- but are you born again? If you have not this birth you are dead in your sins; if you have not been born of the Spirit you are an enemy to God, and all His enemies must be cast into the lake of fire. I beg of you, make sure that you have the life of God in you.

This New Birth is as much a birth as the natural birth, and can be compared to it in its character. This birth is called a "begetting", "putting on the new man" and a "seed born of God". I think there are eight ways in which the new birth, or regeneration, can be compared to the natural birth.

1. The New Birth is a Production of a Living Thing.

The New Birth is the implantation of the life of God, called spiritual life, within the sinner. It is an active, living, dynamic principle. The Scriptures call it the new man, the seed of God; as such it is active for God, holiness, righteousness, and is against the Devil, sin, evil and darkness. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." (1John 3:9). "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor; for we are members one of another." (Eph 4:33-25)

The learned Dr John Gill said, "It (the new birth) is expressed by being born again, which regeneration properly signifies: see John 3:3,7; 1 Peter 1:3,23; and supposes a prior birth, a first birth, to which regeneration is the second; and which may receive some light by observing the contrast between the two births, they being the reverse of each other. The first birth is of sinful parents, and in their image; the second birth is of God, and in His image; the first birth is of corruptible, the second birth of incorruptible seed; the first birth is in sin, the second birth is in holiness and righteousness; by the first birth, men are polluted and unclean, by the second birth they become holy and commence saints; the first birth is of the flesh and is carnal, the second birth is of the Spirit and is spiritual and makes men spiritual men; by the first birth men are foolish and unwise, being born like a wild ass's colt; by the second birth they become knowing and wise unto salvation; by the first birth they are slaves to sin and the lusts of the flesh, and are home-born slaves; by the second birth they become Christ's free men; from the first birth they are transgressors and go on in a course of sin, till stopped by grace; in the second birth they cease to commit sin, to go on in a course of sinning, but live a life of holiness; yea, he that is born of God cannot sin; by the first birth men are children of wrath, and under tokens of divine displeasure; at the second birth they appear to be the objects of the love of God; regeneration being the fruit and effect of it, and gives evidence of it; a time of life is a time of open love."

The New Birth is the production of a thing of like nature.

No matter who I meet that knows my father after the flesh, I am recognized as his son. People say that we look alike, talk alike, and even act alike in many things. I was born with his image upon me. This is true of everyone in the natural birth; they bear the same nature. This is no less true in the spiritual. As in our first birth we received the nature of Adam, so in the new birth, we receive the nature of Christ. As a matter of fact, Gal 4:19 states that it is Christ formed in the heart. "His image is enstamped in regeneration; not the image of the first Adam; for the new man is after the image of him who has anew created it, which is the image of Christ; to be conformed to which God's elect are predestinated, and which takes place in regeneration. (Rom 8:29; Col 3:10). The graces of Christ, as faith, and hope, and love, are wrought in the hearts of regenerate persons, and soon appear there; yea, Christ himself lives in them; 'Not I,' says the apostle, 'but Christ lives in me;' he dwells by faith there; Christ, and the believer, mutually dwell in each other.

Regeneration is said to be partaking of the divine nature (2Pet 1:4); not of the nature of God essentially considered; a creature cannot partake of the divine essence, or have that communicated to it; this would be to deify men; the divine perfections, many of them, are utterly incommunicable, as eternity, immensity, etc. nor of the divine nature, or of it in such sense as Christ is a partaker of it, by the personal, or hypostatical union of the two natures in him; so that the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in him. But in regeneration there is that wrought in the soul, which bears a resemblance to the divine nature, in spirituality, holiness, goodness, kindness, etc. and therefore is so called." (John Gill).

The regenerate person will reflect the beauty of Christ; he will grow into a daily likeness of Christ; he will follow the perfect example of Christ; he will love the things of Christ; he will hate those things which are not like Christ; he will relive the life of Christ in his conversation on earth.

The subject of the New Birth is passive

In the natural birth the person born is passive. He has nothing to do with his conception, and he is dependent upon others for his birth. This is true of the spiritual birth as well. If we are born of the Spirit, it is His work from start to finish. Some have the strange idea that their faith is the productive cause of their birth. An unborn child cannot act or believe. Neither can one not spiritually born believe, or act acceptably before God. Our faith is the result of our birth, and not the cause of it. One is regenerated before he can repent or believe.

I will here quote from Dr. Kuyper, whose excellent work on the Holy Spirit appeared in 1888, in which he gives an interesting discussion on the subject of regeneration. "In order to hear, the sinner, deaf by nature, must receive hearing ears. 'He that hath ears let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.'

But by nature the sinner does not belong to these ones. This is a daily experience. Of two clerks in the same office, one obeys the call and the other rejects it; not because he despises it, but because he does not hear God's call in it. Hence God's quickening act antedates the sinner's hearing, and thus he becomes able to hear the Word.

The quickening; the implanting of the faith faculty, and the uniting of the soul to Christ, apparently three acts, are in reality but one act, together constituting (objectively) the so-called first grace. In the operation of this grace the sinner is perfectly passive and indifferent; the subject of an action which does not involve the slightest operation, yielding, or even non-resistance on his part.

In fact, the sinner being dead in trespasses and sins, is under this first grace like a soulless, motionless body, with all the passive properties belonging to a corpse. This fact cannot be stated with sufficient force and emphasis. It is an absolute passivity. And every effort or inclination to claim for the sinner the minutest co-operation in this first grace, destroys the Gospel, severs the artery of Christian confession, and is not only heretical, but anti-Scriptural in the highest sense. .

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Having stated this fact forcibly and definitely, it is of the utmost importance to state with equal emphasis, that in all the subsequent operations of grace (so-called second grace), this absolute passivity is made to cease by the wonderful act of the first grace. Hence in all subsequent grace the sinner to some extent co-operates.

In the first grace the sinner is absolutely like a corpse. But the sinner's first passivity and his subsequent co-operation must not be confounded. There is a passivity, after the Scripture, which cannot be exaggerated, which must be left intact; but there is also a passivity which is pretended, anti-Scriptural, and sinful. The difference between the two is not that the former is partially co-operating, and the latter without any co-operation whatever. Surely by such temporizing the churches and the souls in them are not inspired with energy and enthusiasm. No, the difference between the sound and the sickly passivity consists herein, that the former which is absolute and unlimited, belongs to the first grace, to which it is indispensable; while the latter clings to the second grace, where it does not belong.

Let there be clear insight into this truth, which is after all very simple. The elect but unregenerate sinner can do nothing, and the work that is to be wrought in him must be wrought by another. This is the first grace. But after this is accomplished he is no longer passive, for something was brought into him which in the second work of grace will co-operate with God.

But it is not implied that the elect and regenerate sinner is now able to do anything without God; or that if God should cease working in him, conversion and sanctification would follow of themselves. Both these representations are thoroughly untrue, un-Reformed, and unchristian, because they detract from the work of the Holy Spirit in the elect. No; all spiritual good is of grace to the end; grace not only in regeneration, but every step of the way of life. From the beginning to the end and throughout eternity the Holy Spirit is the Worker, of regeneration and conversion, of justification and every part of sanctification, of glorification, and of all the bliss of the redeemed. Nothing may be subtracted from this.

But while the Holy Spirit is the only Worker in the first grace, in all subsequent operations of grace, the regenerate always co-operates with Him. Hence it is not true, as some say, that the regenerate is just as passive as the unregenerate; this only detracts from the work of the Holy Spirit in the first grace. Neither is it true that from henceforth the regenerate is the principal worker, only assisted by the Holy Spirit; for this is equally derogatory to the Spirit's work in the second grace."

This long quotation has not been given for the purpose of filling space, but because we think this to be one of the finest presentations of this truth that we have seen. Also, we have quoted this that you might well ponder the truth contained herein for a better understanding of the Spirit's work in regeneration.

The Subject of the New Birth cannot Resist or Prevent it

Seeing that I have dwelt long on the foregoing observations, I must be brief on those to follow.

In the natural birth of a child, the child cannot prevent his birth, but must come into being at the appointed time. Just so in the spiritual birth. There might be a time of resisting on the part of the sinner when the Spirit begins to awaken him to his sin, but when spiritual life is implanted by the Spirit in the sinner, who is passive, must come into expression in this life. This is contrary to the modern movement of evangelism. It is taught and preached that man may prevent his salvation, that he may drive away the Spirit, and perish. This is contrary to the Scriptures, and reveals that those who preach such are either ignorant of the effectual work of the Spirit, or else they are unwilling to suffer the reproach of the cross by preaching the bare truth of God's Word.

"It is true indeed that the spirit of a man, as he was constituted, before any such work as this came to obtain, was apt enough to resist; but all this aptitude to resistance shall be overcome, whensoever that influence is put forth by which this work is done." (John Howe).

It is an Entire and Perfect Birth

In the natural birth of a child there is an entirety. A child is not born a half-child. He has the full faculties of becoming an adult. They are not developed, but they are there. In the new birth there is a complete salvation. A person is not half-saved. He is saved from the guilt of sin. It would not be a whole salvation to leave the regenerate in the love for sin. The believer may fall into sin, but he will not consent to it; he may be overtaken by sin, but he has the feeling that he has been kidnapped. You say, "What sin does he now hate?" My answer is, "All sin, brother, all sin." He is saved from the power of sin. Sin no longer sits as king on the throne of his heart. Sin is there, but as a thief. He is saved from the presence of sin, though this will not be realized until the resurrection, or death, yet it is so in God's reckoning.

It is a Permanent Birth

A child is born into the world. There comes into existence a life that shall live eternally. Every birth is permanent. Just so with the spiritual birth. Once a person is born of the Spirit of God he is permanently born into the family of God. He can never be plucked from the Father's hand. He has eternal life, he can never die spiritually.

In this Birth there is a Fixed Habit of Soul

In the natural birth the person has a fixed habit of soul to do what is pleasing to the flesh, unless re-created by the spirit. The nature of Adam dominates. The natural man will walk in the ways of the world, and against God, because it is his nature to do so. In the new birth there is implanted a new man that has the opposite habit. "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of him." (1John 2:29). The heavenly born one has the habit of walking in righteousness. He delights in the Lord and lives well pleasing to Him. Doing righteousness is not the cause of the new birth but the result. You are saved by grace, but unto good works. You prove to the world that there is life within by walking in righteousness.

This Birth is a Privilege.

Many natural births are not privileges. But we consider one privileged if he is born into wealth, etc. To be born of God and into His household is the greatest privilege that can be bestowed upon anyone. It is to become an heir of God: "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." (Rom 8:17).

THE PRODUCTIVE CAUSE OF THE NEW BIRTH

"And that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit" (John 3:6)

The Holy Spirit of God is always the Agent of creation. He is the Divine Imparter of life. This was true of the first creation: "And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the waters" (Gen 1:2). According to our text the Spirit is the Author of the new creation, or regeneration. The new birth is compared to the old creation, "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness (in the first creation - Gen 1), hath shined in our hearts (in the new birth), to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (1Cor 4:5-6). This is the washing of regeneration, which is done by the Holy Spirit. "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." (Titus 3:5).

The first chapter of Genesis holds forth a wonderful picture of the history of God's work in man's redemption. (Let me interject here this fact: The Father elects, and determines our salvation; the Son procures it through His blood; the Holy Spirit applies it through regeneration). In the first verse of Genesis we read, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth". This was a perfect creation. This was the perfect world as it left God's hand. When man was created by God he was a perfect and upright being. He had the image of God stamped on him, and he walked in perfect fellowship with God. After man had been created perfect, Satan, who is fallen Lucifer, tempted him against God, and man became a wreck and a ruin. This caused man's nature to lose the image of God, to be filled with darkness, to die spiritually and come under the judgement of God. After man fell into sin it was, and is, necessary that the Spirit of God restore life. **WITHOUT HIS EFFECTUAL CALL, IMPLANTATION OF LIFE AND QUICKENING, THERE WILL BE NO NEW LIFE WITHIN THE SINNER.**

It is incumbent upon me here to point out to you that the Holy Spirit is a Person. He is as much God as the Father and the Son. It is necessary that we recognize him as such and fully acquiesce in His divine nature and personality. He is not just an influence, or power from the Father. He is the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. I want to call your attention to the Holy Spirit as: 1. The Author of the work that precedes regeneration. 2. The Effectual Cause of the new birth itself; and, 3. The Inspirer of the effects of the new birth.

1. The Holy Spirit is the Author of the Work that Precedes Regeneration

This work we term as "awakening" which is nothing more than a conviction of sin. "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness and judgement: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of Judgement, because the prince of this world is cast out." (John 16:8-11). This is brought about by the proclamation of the law for, "by the law is the knowledge of sin." This is one side of the two-edged sword that the Spirit uses to kill the sinner's self righteousness, self sufficiency, arrogancy and pride before he is made alive to God by the Gospel, which is the other side of the sword. You cannot divide the sword of God's Word. There must be the preaching of both these truths (both the Law and the Gospel) in order for the salvation of sinners. If Christ is the Savior of sinners, one must be made to realize his sinful condition before he can benefit from Christ. If the knowledge of sin comes from the law, it behooves us to preach the law, leaving it in the hands of the Holy Spirit to convict sinners. This is the breaking up of the fallow ground before the planting of the seed of the Gospel. This is the work of the Spirit and must precede regeneration.

This awakening is the work of the Spirit on the natural faculties of man, whereby he sees the justice of God and the danger of his own sinful condition. A desire is created to be delivered from this danger. This convicting work of the Spirit may last a longer or a shorter period of time, depending on the character and personality of the individual sinner and the purpose of God.

If the Spirit of God has brought you to this blessed place, where you are conscious of a weight of personal guilt before God, for you own soul's sake do not neglect this work in you. Study the Word of God which alone is able to make you wise unto salvation. Keep company with the children of God that you might compare the work of the Spirit in your life with theirs, and that they might pray for your soon conversion. Don't miss opportunities to attend the house of God, the local church or fellowship, where Christ is loved and honored, and His Word proclaimed. The instruction from the sermons, fellowship with the saints and the atmosphere of worship will aid your soul in its pursuit. Yield absolutely to the Lord Jesus, depending upon Him for your absolute acceptance with God. Throw yourself completely on Him in faith. It is all you can do. He is your only hope now! "Arise, O thou dejected soul, that art prostrate in the dust before God, and trembling under the terror of His righteous sentence against you; for I am commissioned to tell thee, that, though thou hast destroyed thyself, yet, in God is thine help." (Hosea 13:9). "I bring you tidings of great joy (Lk 2:10), which delight my own heart while I proclaim them, and will, I hope, reach and revive yours- even the tidings of salvation by the blood and righteousness of the Redeemer. And I give it to you for your greater security, in the words of a gracious and forgiving God that He is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, and not imputing to them their trespasses." (2Cor 5:19).

This is the best news that ever was heard, the most important message which God ever sent to His creatures; and though I doubt not, that living as you have done in a Christian country, you have often heard it, perhaps a thousand and a thousand times, I will, with all simplicity and plainness, repeat it to you again. If thou, O sinner, shouldst now for the first time feel it, then will it be as anew gospel unto thee, though so familiar to thine ear; nor shall it be grievous to me to speak what is common, since 'for you it is safe' and necessary (Phil 3:1). They who are most deeply and intimately acquainted with it, instead of being cloyed and satiated, will hear it with distinguished pleasure; and as for those who have hitherto slighted it, I am sure they had need to hear it again . . .

I do therefore testify unto this day, that the holy and gracious Majesty of heaven and earth, foreseeing the fatal apostasy into which the whole human race would fall, did not determine to deal in a way of strict and rigorous severity with us, so as to consign us over to universal ruin and inevitable damnation; but on the contrary, He determined to enter into a treaty of peace and reconciliation, and to publish to whomsoever the Gospel should reach, the express offers of life and glory, in a certain method which His infinite wisdom judged suitable to the purity of His nature and the honor of His government. . . He determined to send His own son into the world, 'the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person (Heb 1:3), partaker of His own divine perfections and honors, to be, not merely a teacher of righteousness and a messenger of grace, but as a sacrifice for the sins of men; and would consent to His saving them on no other condition, but this, that He should not only labor, but die in the cause.

Accordingly, at such a period of time as infinite wisdom saw most convenient, the Lord Jesus Christ appeared in human flesh; and after He had gone through incessant and long continued fatigue, and borne all the preceding injustices which the ingratitude and malice of men could inflict, He voluntarily 'submitted Himself to death, even the death of the cross.' (Phil 2:8); and having been 'delivered for our offenses was raised again for our justification.' (Rom 4:25). After His resurrection He continued long enough on earth to give His followers most convincing evidences of it, and then

'ascended into Heaven in their sight.' (Acts 1:9-11); and sent down His Spirit from thence in to His apostles, to enable them, in the most persuasive and authoritative manner, 'to preach the Gospel;' and He has given it in charge to them in part of His office, that it should be published 'to every creature.' (Mk 16:15); that all who believe in it may be saved by virtue of its abiding energy, and the immutable power and grace of its divine Author, who is 'the same yesterday, and today, and forever.' " (Philip Doddridge- "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul. 1702-51).

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE EFFECTUAL CAUSE OF THE NEW BIRTH

From this preparation the Holy Spirit brings the sinner into actual life. This we term the New Birth. This is the quickening of the sinner, which is the implantation of a new nature born of God, having the life of God within it, which is eternal life. This is the work of the Holy Spirit within the sinner, and the sinner is passive in the first grace. This is the work of the Lord for us, and not our work in co-operation with God.

1. In regeneration there is the giving of knowledge.

The natural man cannot understand the things of God (1Cor 2:14); therefore it is necessary that the Spirit implant a divine knowledge, which is the illumination of the Spirit. This is His work in us, and He is called the Spirit of knowledge; "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." (Eph 1:17).

2. The Faith Faculty is another divine gift of the Spirit imparted to us in regeneration.

Faith is the arm that lays hold on Christ. "We having the same Spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak." (2Cor 4:13).

3. Love is an outstanding gift of the Spirit in regeneration.

This love faculty is received from the Holy Spirit as a gift. The natural man is destitute of this divine love. "For God hath not given us the Spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (2Tim 1:7).

4. Hope is another divine gift

implanted at the time of regeneration. "Now the God of Hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." (Rom 15:13).

5. Joy is another factor of the new birth

and is made effectual only by the Holy Spirit; "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom 14:17).

6. The Fruit of the Spirit is another important factor in regeneration

and is effectual in the believer only through the power of the Spirit; "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal 5:22-23).

7. The Implantation of a Holy Nature

that desires holiness in practice is a phase of the Spirit's work in the new birth, and He is spoken of as the Spirit of holiness; "And declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." (Rom 1:4).

The above qualities are made effectual in the believer's heart through the power of the Holy Spirit alone. As a result these become the evidences of a spiritual life. In other words, if the above qualities are found within our hearts it is evidence that the Spirit of God has worked effectually upon us. If these things are not found, no matter how loud we profess, we are none of God's. We need yet the effectual work of God's Spirit on our hearts. The child of God will hear the words of Christ, and desire to obey them. If you are rebellious against the Word of God, it is because you are yet in the "gall of bitterness." The regenerate will have faith in Christ. The saved will love all men, especially those of the household of faith; will have the hope of the soon-coming of the Lord Jesus; will rejoice in the Lord; will manifest the fruit of the Spirit; and will walk in a life of constant holiness. You may search the reality of your profession by the above Scriptures and statements.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE INSPIRER OF THE EFFECTS OF THE NEW BIRTH

I will, under this head, give you very brief statements concerning this point of the message.

There are certain effects that grow out of this new birth.

1. We are given Assurance that we are members of the family of God.

This assurance is the witness of the Spirit with our spirit. Apart from His divine influence there can be no assurance. This assurance is brought about by the in-dwelling presence of the Spirit, which called an earnest, or down-payment of our full salvation (Eph 1:14; 2Cor 5:5). This is not a presumptuous, carnal security, but a divine assurance founded upon our relationship with the living Christ.

2. As a result of the New Birth the believer receives an Earnest of the world to come.

This is brought about by the Holy Spirit who implants within us a growing dissatisfaction for this present world, and a hope for that which is to come. "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom 8:23).

3. Regeneration will result in the Mortification of sin

which will serve as an evidence of the new birth too. Mortification can only be effective through the Holy Spirit. It is our duty, but through the Holy Spirit; "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." (Rom 8:13).

It is necessary that we understand our relationship to the Holy Spirit, and His part in the plan of salvation, or we will not have the full joys of spiritual life. May God shed His mercy upon you to enlighten your eyes, and give you understanding in the great matters of salvation.

The Nature of the New Birth

"And that which is born of Spirit is spirit." (John 3:6)

All men are in one of two conditions: They are either dead, or alive. There is no in-between. Every person who has any activity, or signs of life is alive. All who are dead, are dead. This is true in the spiritual realm as well. Every person is either alive unto God, or dead in sins. If one is alive to God, there will be evidences of this life - this is the only way that we may inspect ourselves as to whether we are alive or not. One may be a hypocrite, and imitate the life of a believer, and yet be dead; therefore the outward action or behavior is not so much the standard, but the inward desires, attitudes, loves, hatreds, etc., are the things that we must judge ourselves by. A hypocrite might abstain from sin, but he will not hate sinning. A hypocrite might pretend to love God, but in his heart is enmity towards Him. A hypocrite, regardless of his outward action, is under the dominion of sin. In the word of another, "The dominion of sin consists in its prevailing sway over men, and their voluntary subjection to it; hence deliberate consent to acts of wickedness, or to sinful thoughts and feelings proves that sin reigns in the heart. The habitual practice of sin shows its dominion over the heart. Delight in the ways of iniquity implies the uncontrolled authority of sin and a willing subjection to it; hence it is said of the servants of sin 'that they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations.' Impatience of Christ's government and service, weariness of serious exercises and pious habits, and love of amusement, indicate a heart subject to the dominion of sin."

This is not so with the true believer. His hunger is for holiness; his desire is to be like the Lord Jesus; his hatred is for sin. It is true the believer many fall into sin, gross sin; but he cannot reflect on it without shame and sorrow. There will come, as a result, a determination to guard against the commission of sin in the future. He cannot consent to sin. It is against his will that he sins. There will be a universal and particular opposition to sin; the former is hatred of all sins, the latter is a determination to rule out every false way. A new creature in Christ cannot live in the old life. He has received a heavenly birth which delights in the source of its life.

Now to point out several characteristics of the New Birth:

1. The New Birth is a Distinct Thing

"And put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." (Col 3:10). The new birth is not a reformation of the old sinful creature. God does not re-make, or change the corrupted nature of man,

but re-creates within the sinner a new nature. Our verse said, "renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." This new nature is super-added. As a result of the Fall of Adam, man lost his image of God, and received wrong views about God, himself, the world and sin. He is now bent, at best, toward a religion of works and self-righteousness, and cannot know the true God. In the new birth God does not repair the old fallen, corrupted nature, but creates a new heart, called the new man. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."(Ezek 36:26)

2. The New Birth gives a New Influence to the Sinner

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2Cor 5:17) In becoming a new creature the sinner, saved by grace, has:

First. New Desires. His desire is no longer to serve the flesh, and glory in self. There is now a desire to serve the Lord; there is a desire to grow in the likeness of Christ; there is now a desire for holiness, and a thirsting to be filled with it. There is a desire to overcome the world, and not be conformed to it. There is a desire to witness as to what Christ has done.

Second. The believer has a new conversation The things of his old life have passed away. He is a changed creature. His walk of life is no longer in the paths of unrighteousness, nor in the counsel of the ungodly, nor does his walk lead to the seat of the scornful. He no longer visits the places of his old life. He no longer finds pleasure in the amusements of the world, and his talk is no longer on subjects that gratify the flesh, or cast reflection on his Lord.

Third. The believer has a new occupation. He has declared war on sin. You say, "What sin?" I answer, "All sin!" The believer is against everything that is wrong and does not give glory to the Lord. Although he is taken up with being against that which is outwardly wrong, yet, his main occupation is fighting against inward corruptions that lie within his heart.

Fourth. The believer has new companions. He does not have to drop his old sinful friends, they will drop him when they see the manifestation of the work of the Spirit within his heart. The believer cannot run with 'the old crowd.' Their likes and dislikes are not the same. The old companions think that the believer has 'gone fanatical over religion.' He is not 'the good time guy' that he once was. Believer, I say to you, if you run with your old sinful companions it is because your life is not separated. It might be that you are, in reality, just an empty professor of religion, and have never been born of the Spirit. If you stand for the honor of Christ, the world will not stand with you!

Fifth. The believer has a new family. A young lady fell under conviction under my preaching. When the Lord saved her she said, "I did not know that Christians could be so wonderful." I said, "You have a large family now, and they all love you. One's family is always wonderful." The spiritual tie is always more binding than the blood tie of your natural family. The proof of this is seen in how many have renounced their families to be faithful to Christ.

Sixth. The believer has new ambitions. He sees, God, self, Christ, the Word, sin, and fellow Christians in a new light, or, I should say, through new eyes. Whereas at one time he presumed on God, and did not view Him as righteous, he now sees that God is full of mercy, yet righteous and hating sin. He wishes to please God, and to walk in His way. He sees himself no longer as something good, but knows the pit of corruption in his heart. He sees that man is sinful, and he is the greatest sinner of all. He sees that man deserves Hell, and he, the greatest degree of it. He sees Christ as the only hope of salvation for sinners. He knows that salvation is of the Lord, and that He can show mercy to whom He will show mercy. He makes no demands on the Lord, but lies at His feet as a broken rebel pleading mercy from the hands of his sovereign Lord. He now knows that he has sinned against the Lord of heaven, and that any consideration from such a One is mercy!

The New Birth is Universally Diffused in its Subjects

The apostle Paul prayed that God would sanctify the whole man (1 Thess 5:23) "Just as sin reached through the whole man, making him a 'man of sin,' so the new birth must effect the whole man, 'making him a man of righteousness.' In Rom 3:10ff is given an example as to how sin reaches the whole man. Just so, according to this same spreading, and diffusion of sin, which is here called flesh; so must that be of the Spirit too, enthroning Himself in the every inwards of

the soul, and having His residence there; whilst from thence He diffuses His energy and vital influence, through all parts and powers of the man; and leavens the whole lump."

The New Birth is an Excellent Thing

It is "of a very high and great excellence, which is here called spirit. It is a most pure essence, and noble production, agreeable to its productive Cause. How vain a thing is all this material world, if you abstract and sever spirit from it? What a sluggish dull lump were all this mass of earth, and all the matters of the world, without spirit? If you could imagine such a distinct thing as a spirit of nature, and we know there operations which some call by that name, which in Scripture are simply ascribed to this same Spirit who is here spoken of under the name of spirit." To be born into the most noble family in the world is still to be born of the flesh which inherits the corrupted nature of Adam, and to fall under the curse of the law, and the wrath of God. For an outcast to be born of the Spirit is more noble than to be born of a king.

The New Birth is a Restoring Thing

John Howe, a great Puritan said, "It (the new birth) being a thing of a very high excellence, must needs not only render the spirit of a man into which it is put, a great deal more excellent than it was; but it was withal designed to restore it to its pristine excellence, and make it what it was, or what it ought to be. It is by this work of production in the spirits of men that souls are said to be restored; "Thou restorest my soul" (Ps 23:3). So far as this work hath taken place in me He hath brought me back and made me to return, where I was and ought to have been. It is therefore the very rectitude of the soul, or setting it right again: "Create a right spirit within me." (Ps 51:10)." In the fall of Adam man lost his likeness to God. In the new birth this is restored, yea, and more, in that that which is restored can never be taken away.

The New Birth is a Divine Thing

in 2 Peter 1:4 the new nature that is imparted to us in this birth is called a 'divine nature.' The reason for this is, the new birth is not produced by nature, but is a birth from above. The Holy Spirit is the Applier of this birth. It is a birth where the image of God is restored within the sinner, and where the sinner is created in righteousness and true holiness.

The New Birth is a Dependent Thing

This new nature received in regeneration is absolutely dependent on the Lord who created it. The believer pants for holiness, and thirsts for Christ, and a full knowledge of Him. The 'new man' is dependent on God for his growth and happiness, and ever clings to Him.

Sinner, have you this living principle within you? Examine yourself in light of the above statements. Are you a new creation in Christ? Do you love righteousness and hate sin? Does your heart pant for God- not just for His gifts, blessings and favor, but for God Himself? Are you dependent upon God for your subsistence? Do you have this excellent birth? Make every effort, leave no stone unturned, to make your calling and election sure! To die without Christ is to suffer eternally apart from Him in Hell Do you see yourself a sinner? Do you feel the working of God's wrath against you? Flee, sinner, flee to Christ Who is the sinner's Refuge!

THE NEW BIRTH- AN ACT OF GOD'S GRACE

"The wind bloweth where it listeth (pleases), and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8).

Our texts states, beyond a doubt that, salvation is the activity of sovereign grace. The Spirit, compared to the wind, moves where, and upon whom, He pleases. He quickens into life only those marked out by the Father in election and predestination for life. The new birth is the work of God within, and upon man, and man is passive in the first grace. Salvation is of the Lord from beginning to end. (Jonah 2:9)

"That we may proceed with greater clearness and certainty in our following enquiries, it is necessary to consider what is implied in the term 'grace.' The primary and principal sense of the word is, 'free favor,' 'unmerited kindness.' In this acceptance it is most frequently used in the Inspired Volume; and thus it is to be understood in the words of the Holy

Ghost under consideration. Grace, in the writings of Paul, stands in direct opposition to works and worthiness- all works and worthiness of every kind, and of every degree. This appears from the following passages. "Now to him that worketh the reward is not reckoned of grace, but of debt. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." "For by grace are ye saved . . . not of works, lest any man should boast." "Who hath saved us . . . not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace." (Rom 4:4,16; Eph 2:8-9; 2Tim 1:9).

As the word 'mercy,' in its primary signification, has relation to some creature, either actually in a suffering state, or obnoxious to it; so grace, in its proper and strict sense, always presupposes unworthiness in its object. Hence, whenever anything valuable is communicated by the blessed God to any of Adam's apostate off-spring, the communication of it cannot be by grace, any further than the person on whom it is conferred is considered unworthy. For, so far as any degree of worth appears, the province of grace ceases, and that of equity takes place. Grace and worthiness, therefore, cannot be connected in the same act, and for the same end. The one must necessarily give place to the other, according to that remarkable text: "If by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." (Rom 11:6). From the apostle's reasoning it is evident that whatever is of works is not of grace at all; and, that whatever is of grace, is not of works in any degree. In the apostle's view of things, works and grace are essentially opposite, and equally irreconcilable as light and darkness. Besides, when Paul represents the capital blessings of salvation as flowing from Divine grace, we are led to consider the persons on whom they are bestowed not only as having no claim to those benefits, but as deserving quite the reverse- as having incurred a tremendous curse, and as justly exposed to eternal ruin." (Abraham Booth).

Grace is the Moving Cause of the New Birth

When God determined to regenerate some to eternal life, it was grace, and foreseen works, or faith, that moved Him to this determination. God could have left us all in our sin, and could have confined us all to the pits of Hell, and remained just and holy; but He, being a God of redemption, and having the attributes of mercy and love, chose some to eternal blessing. His grace moved Him to make us fit in the Lord Jesus, and not anything within us that won His pity. Three things make it evident that grace is the moving cause of our salvation.

First. The definition of the word "grace." From the quotation above we see that grace is the free, undeserved favor of God toward the ill-deserving and unworthy. It is made clear in 2Tim 1:9 that the moving cause of salvation is grace, and not our works: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." We have in this verse:

1. The Author of salvation- God. "Who hath saved us"
2. The experimental cause- The effectual call of the Spirit, "holy calling"
3. The efficient cause- God's own purpose in election, "according to his purpose."
4. The moving cause- "grace"
5. The meritorious cause- "In Christ Jesus"
6. The time when salvation was purposed- "before the world began"
7. What is not the cause of our salvation- man's own righteousness, "Not according to our works"

Second. The very word "Gospel" gives us evidence that salvation is by grace. The Gospel is the revelation of God's love toward sinners in the death and resurrection of Christ. The word "Gospel" means "good news." It is good news to a sinner, who has been awakened to his lost condition by the Spirit and the law, that his guilt has been laid on Christ, and that the law and justice of God found full satisfaction in Him. If you tell the sinner that he must save himself, or help to save himself, you have not given him good news. But if you tell him that salvation is a free gift in the Lord Jesus you have given him the best news that ever fell upon the ears of a miserable Hell-deserving sinner!

Third. The very terms of the Gospel prove that salvation is apart from the works of man. "Repent and believe" are the demands of the Gospel. Yet the Word of God tells us that repentance and faith are gifts from the Holy Spirit - given in His quickening of the sinner into life. Only those that have received these gifts will be saved. There are no works implied in repentance and faith, but one is the negative aspect, or a turning from, while the other is the positive side of the same truth, i.e. a turning toward . Repentance implies a change of mind on the account of sin, toward God, sin and self, and includes within it a hatred for sin, a forsaking of sin, and a sorrowing on account of sin. Faith is a positive gift that cannot be separated from repentance, and is that act whereby the sinner lays hold upon Christ and His justifying righteousness as his very own.

SALVATION IS BY EFFECTIVE GRACE

The grace of God will produce certain effects within the sinner brought into life by the Holy Spirit. It is by these effects of the new birth that we prove we have life from God. It is only by realizing that our life and desires are in accord with the record of God's Word that we have full confidence in our salvation.

First. In the New Birth the thoughtless sinner is made to think.

It has been a source of joy to me of late to watch careless sinners, who never gave thought about their soul's welfare, come under conviction, and become very serious minded about eternal things as a result. There in God's vineyard where I am privileged to labor for the Lord, many are under conviction. Some of these never gave attention to the things of their souls until now. They now deeply think upon the eternal truths of salvation, and this is a good sign of the work of life in them.

Second. In the New Birth the blasphemous begin to pray and worship the Lord.

In my own salvation this was so evident. I professed that there was no God; I laughed at those who worshiped. After several days of reading the Word of God, the Holy Spirit brought me into life, and the blasphemer became the worshiper.

Third. The New Birth humbles the proud. When one is brought under Holy Spirit conviction, sees himself as a damned sinner, without hope, and deserving Hell, all pride is lost. This person is humbled to the extent that he will accuse himself of being the greatest sinner in the world. He will not be able to understand how the Lord could save such a person as he. This humility causes him to take sides with God in judgement against himself. It is blessed to watch the proud brought low. If this never happens there will not be salvation. The proud never see their need of the Lord Jesus as Savior. The proud are never willing to confess themselves to be sinners! But sinner, if you are ever saved you will be humbled. God has regard unto the humble.

Fourth. The New Birth causes the worldly-minded to become heavenly-minded. The world will be held in contempt in view of heavenly things by those born of the Spirit. Whereas his treasure was laid up in the world, it is now in Heaven. Therefore his heart is where his treasure is. The saint places little value on the materials of this world; his hope is not in possessing things, but being possessed by the Lord Jesus Christ. His citizenship is now in Heaven, and he walks as a pilgrim and a stranger here.

THE NEW BIRTH IS BY INVINCIBLE GRACE

The power of God, exerted in the regeneration and conversion of sinners, is invincible. I make use of this term rather than the word irresistible, because when the latter is taken in its natural import, it does not express what is the fact. Resistance is made to the grace of God, not only by the finally impenitent, but also by those who ultimately yield to it. In particular, when they begin to feel convictions of sin, they often endeavor to suppress them, or resort to improper expedients for relief: "going about" for example, "to establish their own righteousness, and not submitting to the righteousness of God." (Rom 10:3). In these instances they are chargeable with opposition to grace. Those, therefore, who speak of irresistible grace, mean that it cannot finally be resisted; that it will overcome all the efforts of corrupt nature to counteract its design; and that it will ultimately render sinners obedient to the faith. But this idea is more properly expressed by the term, invincible. Man must submit in the end to the power of God; and this will be more evident, if we consider that His power is not only sufficient to compel the more refractory to yield, although with the greatest reluctance, but that it can take away the spirit of opposition, and so influence the hearts of men, that this submission shall be voluntary.

Were we to say that the grace of God is not invincible, we should be under the necessity of adopting the opinion, which we have already proved to be unscriptural, that there is a power in man to comply, or not to comply, with the call of the Gospel. We should take the work of conversion out of the hand of God, and commit it to man himself. After God had done all that He could do for our salvation, it would depend upon ourselves whether the intended effect should follow. Hence the result of the dispensation of the Gospel would be altogether uncertain. It would not be known beforehand whether all would believe, or all would disobey. If the grace of God was effectually resisted in every case; and consequently, although Christ shed His blood that He might bring sinners to God, and the whole economy of grace has been instituted with a view to carry His design into effect, it might happen that not an individual of the human race

would be saved. The very possibility of such an issue, by which the scheme of redemption would be frustrated furnishes a strong presumption in favor of the doctrine, that the grace exercised in the conversion of sinners is not of such an equivocal character, that it may or may not accomplish its design, but that its operation is mighty and efficacious, bearing down all opposition, and "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

The great objection against the invincibility of Divine grace is, that it is subversive of the liberty of the will. It seems inconceivable to some, that a man should be free, and at the same time should be infallibly determined to a particular purpose. But, the objection proceeds upon a misapprehension of the mode of operation. The idea occurs of external force, by which a man is compelled to do something to which he is averse. It is not considered that the power of grace is not compulsive; that it puts no force upon our minds; that, instead of disturbing our mental constitution, it goes along with it; and that, in a manner at once natural and supernatural, it secures the concurrence of the will. True liberty consists in doing what we do, with knowledge and from choice; and such liberty is not only consistent with conversion, but essential to it; for if a man turn to God at all, he must turn with his heart. God does not lead us to salvation without consciousness, like stones transported from one place to another; nor without our consent, like slaves who are driven to their task by the terror of punishment. He conducts us in a manner suitable to our rational and moral nature. He so illuminates our minds that we must cordially concur with His design . . . His power, although able to subdue opposition, is of the mildest and most gentle kind. While He commands, He persuades; while He draws, the sinner comes without reluctance; and never in his life is there a freer act of volition than when he believes in Christ, and accepts of His salvation." (Dick's Theology 1764-1833)

THE NEW BIRTH IS BY RENOVATING GRACE

In 2Cor 5:17 we read, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The sinner made alive through the work of the Holy Spirit is renovated, or re-created into anew creature. He has now a new life, friends, citizenship, desires, views, etc. This renovation is two-fold:

1. There is the illumination of the mind. As we see from Dick's statement, God never works in a manner of coercion, but gently persuades the sinner's mind. He makes the sinner willing in the day of His power. This willingness is brought about through illumination. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2Cor 4:6). "I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." (Acts 26:18). Paul describes the sinner as one without illumination, or understanding; "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." (Eph 4:18). The first work of the Spirit in the conversion of the sinner is to open his blinded heart to certain truths. He is made to see the true nature of his heart, the danger that he is in, and the guilt of sin that will drive him into Hell; He is made to see the Lord Jesus as the wisdom of God that can provide forgiveness; God the Father who is satisfied in the work of Christ; and the necessity of the Holy Spirit's work upon his heart. He, through this illumination, is persuaded- which is brought about through the preaching of the Gospel- to trust the mercy of God for his salvation.

2. There is the illumination of the will. God never forces man against his will, but works upon the will from within through the truth and the power of the Holy Spirit. The will is the servant of the mind, and once the mind is renewed and illuminated, the will moves out towards the Lord Christ who is seen in all His beauty. In conversion the sinner is made willing to do the good pleasure of God. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Phil 2:13).

In conclusion, "Regeneration is the effect of preventing grace, or of grace which precedes our endeavors, and operates alone. Conversion is the turning of the soul to God, and is expressed by our seeking the Lord; our coming to Him, our forsaking our evil ways, and turning to Him; and by other phrases which import activity, and alludes to the motion of the body in changing its place . . . In this view, the sinner co-operates with the grace of God. He does not aid grace or render it effectual by the exertion of his own natural power, but he yields to it, goes along with it, and works under its influence". (Dick). These statements are of the utmost importance, and will save the reader confusion in the study of the salvation of the Lord. There is a first grace, regeneration, quickening, or implanting the new nature in the sinner; where the sinner is acted upon as a dead corpse. Logically, this the first work of God and precedes the other phases of salvation. The second grace, where the sinner co-operates with God, is where the sinner, who has new life, and a new

will, is urged to seek the Lord in conversion. It is important to see that all this is one great act of God, and we merely list it logically for the benefit of our finite minds.