



“Regeneration” ~ September 1, 2019

OPEN

T. H. Everett said, "A man should never plant a garden larger than his wife can take care of." When a tree buds in the spring, or when a grafted plant is placed in a rootstock, the assumption is life present to cause growth.

When it comes to **regeneration** we are not just talking about God making something new from something old. We are talking about the Holy Spirit creating life where there was once death!

Paul wrote to Titus to give him instructions for his pastoral work in Crete (see Titus 1). In Titus 3:1-11 we have a three part explanation of regeneration.

DIG

[1] Regeneration is required because of our dilemma - vv. 1-3

Humanity is dead in trespasses and sins – it is universal (see Ephesians 2:1-3 and I Corinthians 2:14). Apart from the life of Jesus Christ, we are spiritually cut off from a relationship with God – the state of being un-regenerate. So it is very interesting that Paul advised Titus to “remind them” to do what is good and right. The problem is that outside of Christ, people do not act in these ways. What must Christians remember? We also were once in need of spiritual heart transplant!

Dallas Willard wrote in *Renovation of the Heart* (NavPress, 2002), “The greatest need you and I have...is *renovation of our heart*. That spiritual place within us from which outlook, choices, and actions come has been formed by a world away from God. Now it must be transformed. Indeed, the only hope of humanity lies in the fact that, as our spiritual dimension has been *formed*, so it also can be *transformed*.” (14)

Are you are responsible to help someone grow in Christ? Remember where you once were and be patient. Are you are trying to act like a Christian? Serve from your regeneration, not from your own resources.

[2] Regeneration provides our deliverance - vv. 4-7

God does not save us on the merit of our deeds but because of His mercy. In these verses we see His merciful deliverance in three ways.

1. The Father’s goodness and generosity - v. 4

2. The Spirit’s regenerating and renewing - v. 5

3. The Son’s justifying and adopting - vv. 6-7

M. Craig Barnes writes in his book, *When God Interrupts* (IVP Books, 1996), “Of course, Jesus’ words are scandalous to those who are used to saving their lives. But if preachers keep offering Christian principles for becoming more effective and successful in a world that is heading in the wrong direction, we will simply help our people run faster from God.”

[3] Regeneration provides us with our destiny - vv. 8-11

What is our destiny? God’ declares it clearly in Ezekiel 11:19-20, “I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God.”

This is the great promise of regeneration. However, the ever present danger for the Christ-follower is a lifestyle of “externalism”. Notice in verse 8 that Paul urged Titus toward great confidence in his teaching. Why? Dead hearts, having been divinely regenerated, are destined to act in ways pleasing to God. Paul told Titus to advise his congregation to “*engage in good deeds*” (v. 8) but to “*avoid foolish controversies*” (vv. 9-11). This is made possible by regeneration.

In a recent [Facebook post by John Cooper](#) (Skillet lead singer) he reacted to the falling away of influential Christians such as popular Hillsong songwriter Marty Sampson. Cooper notes the tragedy of an emotion-driven faith, rather being Word-based faith. The tragedy of rejecting Christ stems from a very loose grip on the fundamental truth of regeneration. Living the faith is only possible when we have been re-animated to new life.

REFLECT

This fall we are welcoming people to fully understand regeneration through the [Christianity Explored](#) course.

In his powerful book *Mere Christianity*, author C.S. Lewis gave this description of God’s work of regeneration.

Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make any sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of - throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were being made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself.”