

# Week Nine

Quarter 2

Regeneration

Conversion (Faith and Repentance)

Justification (Right Legal Standing Before God)

# Outline

- Chapter 34 – Regeneration
  - Regeneration is Totally a Work of God
  - The Exact Nature of Regeneration is Mysterious to Us
  - Regeneration Comes Before Saving Faith
  - Genuine Regeneration Must Bring Results in Life
- Chapter 35 – Conversion (Faith and Repentance)
  - A True Saving Faith Includes Knowledge, Approval, and Personal Trust
  - Faith and Repentance Must Come Together
  - Both Faith and Repentance Continue Throughout Life
- Chapter 36 – Justification (Right Legal Standing Before God)
  - Justification Includes a Legal Declaration by God
  - God Declares Us to Be Just in His Sight
  - Christ's Righteousness is Imputed to Us
  - Justification Comes to Us Entirely by God's Grace, Not by Works
  - God Justifies Us Through Our Faith in Christ

# The Order of Salvation

1. Election (God's choice of people to be saved)
2. The Gospel Call (proclaiming the message of the gospel)
3. **Regeneration (being born again)**
4. Conversion (faith and repentance)
5. Justification (right legal standing)
6. Adoption (membership in God's family)
7. Sanctification (right conduct of life)
8. Perseverance (remaining a Christian)
9. Death (going to be with the Lord)
10. Glorification (receiving a resurrection body)

# Regeneration is Totally A Work by God

- Regeneration – a secret act of God in which He imparts new spiritual life to us (sometimes called “being born again” – see John 3:3-8, James 1:18, 1 Pet 1:3)
  - Christians “were born, not of blood nor the will of the flesh nor the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13)
  - “A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you” (Ez 36:26)
- We play no active part in this step
- Which part of the Trinity does it?
  - The Holy Spirit – “born of the Spirit” (John 3:8)
  - God the Father – God “made us alive together with Christ” (Eph 2:5)

# When Does Regeneration Happen?

- Regeneration comes after effective calling (it is the result)
  - “You have been born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God...That word is the good news which was preached to you” (1 Pet 1:23,25)
  - “He chose to give us birth through the word of truth” (James 1:18)
  - Effective calling is thus God the Father speaking powerfully to us, and regeneration is God the Father and God the Holy Spirit working powerfully in us, to make us alive (pg 700)
- Grudem avoids the term “irresistible grace”
  - It has the connotation of not being the result of a voluntary, willing choice
  - He would say that it is a guaranteed, yet voluntary, willing choice

# The Exact Nature of Regeneration is Mysterious to Us

- What we know
  - Somehow we are spiritually dead (Eph 2:1)
  - We have been made alive in a very real sense (born again) (John 3:3,7; Eph 2:5; Col 2:13)
  - Yet, we don't understand how
- Scripture views regeneration as something that affects us as whole persons
  - Our “spirits are alive” after regeneration (Rom 8:10)
  - “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come” (2 Cor 5:17)
- It seems to be an instantaneous, one-time event
  - Some people experience little immediate change, but behavior does change over time
  - Others see an immediate life change

# Regeneration Comes Before Saving Faith

- God's work of regeneration gives us the spiritual ability to respond to God in faith
  - From our perspective it is hard to tell any difference in time
    - Additionally, we are not able to perceive the actual act
  - “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5)
  - “The Lord opened her [Lydia] heart to give heed to what was said by Paul” (Acts 16:14)
- “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor 2:14)
- Because Christians often tend to focus on the results of regeneration...some statements of faith have contained wording that suggests that regeneration comes after saving faith (Evangelical Free Church quote, bottom of 703)

# Genuine Regeneration Must Bring Results in Life

- “No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God” (1 John 3:9)
  - The pattern of life will not be one of continuing indulgence in sin
  - They go from “sinner” to “obedient to Christ”
  - “every one who does what is right has been born of Him” (1 John 2:29)
- Regeneration provides protection from Satan
  - “the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him” (1 John 5:18)
- Regeneration produces fruit of the Spirit
  - “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal 5:22-23)
  - “You will know them by their fruits” (Matt 7:16)
- Note that these results are necessary results of regeneration

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# True Saving Faith Includes Knowledge, Approval, and Personal Trust (1)

- Conversion – our willing response to the gospel call, in which we sincerely repent of sins and place our trust in Christ for salvation
  - Conversion = turning
  - Turning from sin (repentance) and turning to Christ (faith)
- Knowledge alone is not enough
  - Knowledge is necessary – “how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard?” (Rom 10:14)
  - Even the demons know who God is (James 2:19)

# True Saving Faith Includes Knowledge, Approval, and Personal Trust (2)

- Knowledge and approval are not enough
  - Nicodemus knew the facts, for he said “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him” (John 3:2)
  - Yet, Nicodemus still had to put his trust in Christ for salvation
  - Scripture also indicated that King Agrippa understood and agreed (Acts 26:27), yet he did not have saving faith (Acts 26:28)
- I must decide to depend on Jesus to save me personally
  - Saving faith is trust in Jesus Christ as a living person for forgiveness of sins and for eternal life with God
  - A personal trust in Jesus to save me
    - Faith has the connotation of “irrational commitment”
    - Trust is a better translation in today’s language
  - “To all who received Him, who believed in His name, He gave power to become children of God” (John 1:12)
  - A sense of trust or confidence goes into and rests in Jesus as a person

# True Saving Faith Includes Knowledge, Approval, and Personal Trust (3)

- Jesus speaks of “coming to Him”
  - “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me” (John 6:37)
  - “If any one thirst, let Him come to Me and drink” (John 7:37)
  - “Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt 11:28-30)
  - These all speak of an intensely personal picture of what is involved in saving faith
- Hence, all three elements must be present
  - Knowledge
  - Approval
  - Personal trust
- Faith should increase as our knowledge increases

# Faith and Repentance Must Come Together (1)

- Repentance is a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ (pg 713)
  - Repentance, like faith, is an intellectual understanding (that sin is wrong), and emotional approval of the teachings of Scripture regarding sin (a sorrow for sin and a hatred of it), and a personal decision to turn from it (a renouncing of sin and a decision of the will to forsake it and lead a life of obedience to Christ instead).
  - Mere sorrow for one's actions, or even deep remorse over one's actions, does not constitute genuine repentance unless it is accompanied by a sincere decision to forsake sin that is being committed against God (pg 713)

# Faith and Repentance Must Come Together (2)

- Paul preached “repentance to God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21)
- Paul rejoiced over the Corinthians “not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting...For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death” (2 Cor 7:9-10)
- Only some passages of the New Testament include both
  - Faith and repentance are two sides of the same coin
  - NT authors understood this
  - “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:37-38)
  - “Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19)

# Faith and Repentance Must Come Together (3)

- “God exalted Him at His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31)
- “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30)
- “Do you not know that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” (Rom 2:4)
- The rich young ruler was asked to give up his possessions before following (Luke 18:18-30)
- Jesus stated that salvation came to Zacchaeus when he repented of his thievery and repaid others (Luke 19:1-10)

# Inadequate Preaching Today

- “Believe in Jesus Christ and be saved”
- This is watered down and incorrect
- It is only ½ of the gospel!
- Nothing “happens” with this

# Both Faith and Repentance Continue Throughout Life

- Faith and repentance are not confined to the beginning of the Christian life
  - “Forgive us our sins as we also have forgiven those who sin against us” (Matt 6:12)
  - “Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent” (Rev 3:19)
  - “The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal 2:20)
- The heart attitudes of repentance and faith only begin at conversion. These same attitudes should continue throughout the course of our Christian lives (pg 718)

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# Justification

- What about the guilt of our sin?
- Once Martin Luther realized the truth of justification by faith alone, he became a Christian and overflowed with the new-found joy of the gospel (pg 721)
- This is a divisive issue between
  - Salvation by faith alone
  - Salvation based on good works
- Justification – an instantaneous legal act of God in which He
  1. Thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ's righteousness as belonging to us
  2. Declares us to be righteous in His sight

# Justification Includes a Legal Declaration by God

- *Dikaioo* – To declare righteous
  - This cannot mean “to make righteous”
  - “When they heard this all the people and the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John” (Luke 7:29)
- “And to one who does not work but trusts Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness” (Rom 4:5)
  - God declares the ungodly to be righteous in His sight, not on the basis of their good works, but in response to their faith
- “Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn?” (Rom 8:33-34)
- It is important to emphasize that this legal declaration in itself does not change our internal nature or character at all (pg 724)

# God Declares Us to Be Just in His Sight

- God's legal declaration is that we are just in His sight
  - He declares that we have no penalty to pay for sin (including past, present, and future)
    - “Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not reckon his sin” (Rom 4:6-8)
    - “As far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us” (Ps 103:12)
    - This makes us morally neutral in God's sight (Adam & Eve)
  - He sees us as actually being righteous in His sight
    - “He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness” (Is 61:10)
    - “The righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe (Rom 3:21-22)

# God Can Declare Us to Be Just Because He Imputes Christ's Righteousness to Us

- God now thinks of Christ's righteousness as belonging to us
  - “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to Him as righteousness” (Rom 4:3, Gen 15:6)
  - “To the one who does not work but trusts Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness. So also David pronounces a blessing upon the man who God reckons righteousness apart from works” (Rom 4:6)
- This is the third time we have seen “imputing”
  - Adam's sin was imputed to all of mankind
  - Man's sin was imputed to Christ
  - Christ's righteousness is imputed to mankind

# Justification Does not Change Us Internally

- Protestantism belief (started with Martin Luther)
  - We could never be declared perfect in this life – sin always remains
  - There would be no provision for forgiveness of past sins (before we were changed internally)
    - “Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:1)
    - “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1)
- Roman Catholics understand justification to be an actual internally-changing event → actually makes you more holy within
  - They do not use the word “imputed”, but “infused”
  - People can experience varying states of justification
  - The logical conclusion is that our eternal life with God is not based on God’s grace alone, but partially on our merit as well (pg 729)

# Justification Comes to Us Entirely by God's Grace, Not on Account of Any Merit in Ourselves

- “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God – not because of works, lest any man should boast” (Rom 2:8-9)
- Grace – unmerited favor
- This is distinct from Roman Catholic teachings

# God Justifies Us Through Our Faith in Christ

- “We have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the law, because by works of the law shall no one be justified” (Gal 2:16)
- God “justifies him who has faith in Jesus” (Rom 3:25, 26)
- Scripture never says that we are justified because of the inherent goodness of our faith, as if our faith has merit before God (pg 730)
- Why faith?
  - It is the one attitude of heart that is the exact opposite of depending on ourselves
  - “That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants” (Rom 4:16)

# What about James?

- “You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone” (James 2:24)
  - Justified here means “to demonstrate or show to be righteous”
  - “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows you hearts” (Luke 16:15)
- “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar?” (James 2:21)
  - Isaac was in Gen 22, well after God “reckoned it to him as righteousness” (Gen 15:6)
  - At that point (Isaac’s near-sacrifice), Abraham was “shown to be righteous”
- Conclusion – James’ point is that a mere intellectual agreement with the gospel is a “faith” that is really no faith at all (pg 732)
  - “Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith” (James 2:18)
  - A person is shown to be righteous by his works, and not by faith alone
- Martin Luther did not understand this when he called James “the Epistle of Straw”

# Application

- Genuine hope to unbelievers
  - Salvation is a free gift received through faith
- God will never make us pay the penalty for sins
  - We continue to suffer ordinary consequences for sin
  - God may discipline us into obedience
  - God will never take vengeance on us for past sins or make us pay the penalty that is due for them or punish us out of wrath and for the purpose of doing us harm (pg 732)
- “There is therefore now no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1)

# Reading For Next Week

- Chapter 37
  - Adoption (Membership in God's Family)
    - Homework – questions 1,3,6
- Chapter 38
  - Sanctification (Growth in Likeness to Christ)
    - Homework – questions 1,3,4,6