

Bryan Station Baptist Church

INDEPENDENT

ESTABLISHED 1786

MISSIONARY

THE PIONEER BAPTIST

"Preaching The Same Truth We Preached Before Kentucky Was A State"

REGENERATION OR THE NEW BIRTH

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BY: C. D. COLE

John Ruskin (1819-1900), English art critic, author and political economist, said that "the first and last and closest trial question to any living creature is, "What do you like?" Go out into the street and ask the first man you meet, what his taste is, and if he answers you candidly, you know him, body and soul. What we like determines what we are, and is a sign of what we are. . . ." If the taste Ruskin speaks of applies to moral and spiritual things, then he has something, and his words are sober truth. Man has moral as well as physical taste. What one likes as a moral being--what he likes in relation to the true God and His word--determines what he is as a moral being and is a sign to others of what he is. One can know himself, and others can know him by this taste-test. Moral taste is moral desire and moral desire determines moral deed.



Location: 3.3 miles out Bryan Station Road. Right on Briar Hill Road.

Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
 Worship Service 11:00 a.m.
 Evening Service 7:00 p.m.
 Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting 7:30 p.m.

Air-Conditioned Nursery Provided

Pastor Alfred M. Gormley
 Ph. •299-1430 347 Sierra Drive
 Lexington, Ky. 40505

David's moral taste is revealed when he says, "One thing I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple" (Ps. 27:4). Also, when he says, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Ps. 42:1,2). This desire for God shows the Psalmist to be a man after God's own heart. Dr. Broadus gives a three-fold test of personal character: What one reads when he is tired, what he thinks about when he is alone, and where he goes when he is away from home.

This taste-test reveals the necessity of regeneration for every man. Man, in his natural condition, does not like God--the God of the Bible; he does not long for God's presence as David did; he rather shuns God, as Adam and Eve did when they sinned and hid themselves from Him. The natural man has no taste for the things of God. The carnal mind is enmity against God. Man in his natural and fallen state would not enjoy heaven if he should go there. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. Regeneration is the only remedy; every man must be born again--born from above--made a new creature--if he is to see or enter into the kingdom of God.

THE NATURE OF REGENERATION: Regeneration is that aspect of salvation in which the dead sinner--the sinner with all the faculties of the soul in moral ruins, and paralyzed towards God and holiness, being unable to please God--is made a child of God with a taste for the things of God.

Regeneration, therefore, may be defined as the gracious work of God in the human soul by which the heart is enabled to love God, the mind is enabled to understand the gospel of Christ, and the will is brought to choose Christ as both Lord and Saviour.

Regeneration is not the bringing of a person into existence; it is the birth of one already in existence; therefore, a second birth. Nor is it the bringing of any new faculties or parts into existence. The unregenerate man has as many parts or faculties to his being as the regenerate man has. No part of man was annihilated in the fall, but all parts were ruined or depraved. The soul of man is endowed with heart and mind and will, and the unregenerate man has all these faculties, although in a ruined or depraved state. He has a mind and can think and understand, but he does not like to think about God, and cannot understand the things of God; he has a heart so that he can and does love, but he does not love God; he has a will so that he can and does choose, but he does not choose Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Regeneration is essentially a changing of the fundamental taste of the soul. By taste we mean the direction of his mind and bent of his affections, the trend of his will. And to alter that taste is not to impart a new faculty, or create a new substance, but simply to set upon God the affections which hitherto have been set upon self and sin. To borrow an illustration from Dr. Strong: The engineer who climbs over the cab into a runaway locomotive and who changes its course, does so, not by adding any new rod or cog, but by simply reversing the lever. So in regeneration God is reversing the lever of the soul. He is changing the taste so that a man loves what he once hated and hates what he once loved.

Regeneration is not the removal of the sinful nature, but the giving of a new nature--a sinless nature. The saved man has been born two times, and has a two-fold disposition or nature. This creates a conflict between the fleshly and spiritual natures. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:17).

THE NECESSITY OF REGENERATION: The depravity of human nature makes the new birth necessary. The physical birth produces no qualities that are pleasing

to God. "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Paul reminds the Jews that being the fleshly descendants of Abraham did not make them the children of God. Man has the inherited corruption of a fallen nature. David was not casting reflection upon his mother's virtue, but was confessing to inborn depravity, when he exclaimed, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." A man may say, "I know I do things that are wrong, but I have a good heart after all." But God gives a different verdict. Christ taught that the human heart was the very fountain of all that is sinful: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:21-23). The human affections are misplaced. Man naturally loves the things that are contrary to God. He must be born from above in order to love God. "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is (Gk. has been) born of God, and knoweth God" (I John 4:7).

The human will is antagonistic to God. God's will should be supreme in every life, but man by nature is dominated by self-will. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." In the life of Christ, the one perfect life, the will of God was supreme: He came not to do His own will, but the will of the Father.

Moreover, man by nature, is in a state of moral darkness, ignorant of the things of God. He cannot understand the things of the Spirit: "For they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14). There must be a spiritual birth before there can be a spiritual understanding.

The writer once heard of a little girl with a defect of vision from birth. Her parents were slow to realize that she could not see many objects which were familiar to others. She was almost grown before an oculist was consulted. He advised and performed an operation, and the child was kept in a dark room for many weeks. One bright and balmy night she stepped out alone upon the lawn. Instantly, she rushed back into the house in a glow of excitement. "Oh come," she cried, "And see what has happened to the sky." Her parents hurried out with her, but saw nothing but the familiar glory of the stars--something she had never seen before. Nothing had happened to the sky, but something had happened to her eyes. So the unregenerate man has the eyes of his understanding darkened in respect to spiritual and saving truth. The stars of the gospel truth shine brightly in the firmament of God's word, but the lost man does not see them. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost" (II Cor. 4:4).

THE EFFICIENT CAUSE OF REGENERATION: The position of the writer is, that the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit is the efficient cause of regeneration. The power of the Holy Spirit is immediate, that is, it does not depend upon or flow through anything, not even the gospel itself. The gospel is hated and rejected as foolishness until direct power of the Spirit changes the governing disposition of the heart. As some one has said, "Our natural hearts are hearts of stone. The word of God is good seed sown on the hard, trodden, macadamized highway, which the horses of passion, the asses of self-will, the wagons of imaginary treasure, have

made impenetrable. ONLY THE HOLY SPIRIT can soften and pulverize the soil. The gospel is good seed, but good seed cannot make good soil. Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but God must give the increase.

This special call of the Holy Spirit is necessary because the gospel call--the word only--is not sufficient for the conversion of the lost man. "Knowing, brethren, beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost...." (1 Thess. 1:5). The gospel is suitable and sufficient as the means of conversion, but there must also be an agent with power to effect it. There must be the Divine workman as well as Divine equipment. The word is a good sword, but there must also be an agent to wield it. And the word is said to be the sword of the Spirit. In the call that goes unheeded we have the gospel and the preacher; in the effectual call we have the gospel, the preacher, and the Holy Spirit. And it is the Holy Spirit who makes the gospel effective in the conversion of the sinner.

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WHEN YOU GET SO you are glad when others are praised, happy when others succeed, pleased when others are called on while you are not, pleased when others lead while you follow, glad to be second or fifth or last, if that is the way it falls, rather than first; if you can hold while others climb, stay by the stuff while others win the battle; in short pray for the glory of Christ in the church no matter who gets the earthly glory, then you may have graduated into that class known in the Bible as 'he that is spiritual.' And if you achieve this character, it is likely that the Lord will use you for some skillful tasks which cannot be chalked up on a blackboard.