

No.
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"IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS
WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE
RIGHT HAND OF GOD." COL. 3. 1.

REGENERATION.

An Address (revised) at

Forest Gate. E.

6th August, 1912.

by

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An Address by Mr. P. W. Heward,

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1 Peter 1 read.

Now, dear friends, I am sure you will agree with me that 1 Peter 1 is a suitable preface to a little talk about Regeneration. Regeneration was partly our subject last week, for what is the Divine calling? It involves a bringing up out from the dead. What is the Divine quickening? It means a giving of a new life where there was DEATH before. So we have further thoughts on Regeneration, in the usual acceptance of the word; that is to say, the giving of a new life, and a causing that new life to be manifest. The beginning is a hidden work of God, the manifestation is a revealed work of God, and both alike are to the glory of God. Shall we consider God's descriptions of the wondrous change when a sinner is brought out from his dead condition into newness of life? We saw last time that the word "to be begotten" or "to be born" was employed a number of times. There is a new birth, as real a birth as when one is physically born, a real and new beginning, whereas there was nothing of this life before. That is most important. Man does not have a spark of spiritual goodness to fan into flame. He does not have the beginning of a life

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which can be developed. There is no evolution in salvation, any more than in creation. God gives something fresh, and causes newness of life. Let me remind you that we are not adopted children of God, that we are not simply "called" children of God, but that we are BORN children of God, that we may enter into the privilege and live with a dignity of sons of God.

Then, again, the word "create" is used. "If any one is in Christ there is a new creation". We are thus the first-fruits of His creatures. Christ is called the Prince, or the Beginning of the Creation of God, that is, the new creation (Cf. Col. 1. 18). We are His workmanship having been CREATED. Creation again suggests a wonderful change, a wonderful fresh beginning and a wonderful purpose. How glorious is the Divine work that is so described. We think of God's mighty actions in years gone by. Ah, before there were years as we understand them in connection with man, when God first of all spake, and it was done; commanded, and it stood fast. But it is equally a miracle when God in His mercy lays hold of a poor lost sinner and makes that one a new creation in Christ Jesus. God does not refuse the word "create" in such a connection, even when we think of an individual believer, apparently so small! God Himself speaks of a creation, God condescends and adopts language which EMPHASIZES the "tiny" or individual work, in one sense, that means so much to us; ah, and to Him, in the exaltation of His beloved Son.

Then we have the word "to make alive" which occurs, you will recollect in Ephesians 2, - "Made alive together with Christ". It is sometimes translated "quicken", where we read of the Lord Jesus quickening Whom He wills. It is made up of two terms, - "alive", "make", - make alive. This implies death before. It is not only to give life, but to make alive, implying, therefore, that something worse than nothing is originally found in the one who is made alive. 'Tis than God in His wondrous mercy gives that which is better than everything. Then we have further instruction from the simple word "to beget". The compound form twice over in 1 Peter 1, "Begotten again", or "Begotten from above", cf. John 3 "Except a man be born again, or from above" (ἀνωθεν) over again, or from above, or preferably, both. The word "regeneration" itself is "παλις", "again", in front of the word for "begetting" linked with the words for "becoming" and "birth". There is a BIRTH again. This term only occurs twice in Scripture; once here and once in connection with the future kingdom of the Lord when there will be the regeneration as to the earth. Ye that have followed Me, in the regeneration shall sit on thrones; that is, in the future new arrangement of the earth, when Christ is King. Not "Ye that have followed Me in the regeneration;" but "Ye that have followed Me; - stop - in the regeneration shall sit on thrones". The other occurrence is in Titus 3, where we read that God has manifested His love of man. 'Tis not

out of works that are in righteousness which we did, but according to His mercy He saved us, through a washing linked with regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit". Here we see then that regeneration is joined to the word "renewing", and displays God's mercy. There is a new beginning. Something "again". The words, therefore, imply a momentous change; have we experienced it? Mere profession and head knowledge are not sufficient. Have WE experienced this? Out of actual death into actual, real life? If so, how contrasted our lives in the Holy Spirit's power should be with what they were before we were born again.

We can next consider the MEANS used. I need hardly say that the power is of God, and that the first thought is not, What are the means? but, Who is the Cause. But it is well to consider what means God is pleased to employ. We read in Romans 10, Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, I would, however, render that passage very literally. It is "The faith (the true faith) is out of hearing, BUT THE hearing through a word of God", a spoken word, God speaking to the heart. But the context shows that a herald of the truth is frequently employed. Hence we say that the means of regeneration is frequently a part of Scripture, applied with power, though often a part of Scripture emphasized by a God-called preacher, or by human lips in ordinary conversation. God can work without the means that we think necessary, but Romans 10 suggests that He frequently employs these means. In

1 Peter 1 there is the same thought, "Begotten not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible". Then we have the mention of the word of God, "Through a word of God". There is an ALLUSION to the Scriptures, and it would seem that these are frequently used as the MEANS of regeneration in its manifest aspect; just as in the parable of the Sower there is no evidence of life until the seed is received, though there must be a work of grace in the preparation of the ground first. The seed is the word, and its reception is followed by the manifestation of a change. In accord with this we remember the testimony of the Lord Jesus "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life". As to the use of a human preacher, we remember that Paul in 1 Corinthians 4. 15 and Philemon 10 speaks of himself as having begotten Corinthian believers and Onesimus; - not that he desired they should call him their father, for the Lord distinctly forbade such titles as "Father" and "Rabbi" in Matthew 23; but Paul was the means of their receiving life, - only the means, only the instrument, but the God-honoured instrument. How important, then, if saved we should seek to be the Lord's servants, and to be the means of the salvation of other souls.

Our third point concerns the one quickened, before, and after this marvellous work. First shall we consider him physically, next mentally, and then spiritually? First physically. Before one is saved, and after he is saved, is there a change physically? There is not, in one sense, until

the body shall be glorified. "We WAIT FOR the adoption (or placing as sons), the redemption of the body", but though the body is still dead because of sin, it should be presented a living sacrifice, and, therefore, after salvation there should be the lighting up of the countenance, though at the same time the deepening of solemnity when one realises hell, eternity, salvation, and the glory of God. The change physically MAY be linked with an extra physical strain, for Satan opposes those who are the Lord's people, but he will not be allowed fulness of power. The Lord still has His angels to whom He gives instructions that they may keep His people in all their ways. (Hebrews 1. 14.)

Mentally, the one who is born again, is before quickening and afterwards, the same, in the sense that the mental apparatus, as the physical apparatus, is unchanged. God does not give a new mind in the physical sense. He does blessedly in the spiritual sense; but He does not give a new mind in the physical sense. Yet I think a Christian should have a more powerful mind than an unsaved one. Do not misunderstand me. I do not mean in every case. Here is one who is saved late in life. I do not expect that one will at once become "cleverer" than any unsaved one, but even the aged believer may have the mind strengthened in some way, beyond what it was before, even though Satan would seek to distract. If you ask me why, I will put it thus:- When one is brought to the Lord, and there is given a peace of mind, and a realisation

of nearness to the Lord, and of knowing Himself, there is a concentration, a new plan of life, a call to freedom from worry and not only so, there is a renewed enthusiasm, and all these things must affect the mental faculties. Moreover, the Bible is the most educational book in the world. Mentally it trains, though its spiritual training is more important. Again the believer may be expected to wait upon God for mental blessings as well as spiritual, but the bare fact of salvation (No thanks be unto God, I must not say this, it is never bare, it is never unfruitful, - never the bare fact of salvation) - salvation does not alter the entire state of the mind. There is still the same physical apparatus, but there is a change. There are still the same mental powers, encouraged, strengthened, it may be, but the same mental powers. Yet we would not omit one application of 1 John 5. 20 in this connection. The believer does not, however, forget everything he knew before, and start a fresh mind with a fresh blank to fill it up gradually. Ah, the believer sometimes finds after salvation, that he wishes he could forget such things that marked failure before, but they seem at least awhile fixed there.

Now we can consider the change spiritually. Here the change is vast. Though the person is the same person physically and the same person mentally, there is a complete alteration spiritually, and that alteration because of something given; an alteration, further because of something cleansed. A new spirit is given, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit with it.

Moreover, the heart is cleansed. The inner experience is made anew, a new mind, and as we have seen an understanding is granted, a spiritual understanding. (1 John 5. 20). The person is the same person, else there would be no such thing as salvation. If God simply condemned US, and gave us a new personality, there would be no salvation. We should be different people afterwards. God does not act thus. He SAVES. The new spirit is not saved, that is given; but the soul is saved. We, as individuals, are saved. The believer before is one who is dead; after, when he has really become a believer, by the grace of God he is alive. Everything is fresh spiritually, let everything be fresh in the daily life for God. Enoch walked with God!

The RELATION of this quickening to conversion is deeply important. Many people will tell you when they were born again; at least, when they felt they were born again, - perhaps with a glibness which is altogether unsatisfactory. But a goodly number of people can't tell you seriously when they were converted, and conversion sometimes takes place several times. You will see from this statement that the Divine quickening and conversion are quite distinct. Quickenings precedes conversion. Conversion is the TURNING which results from quickening, as the word itself signifies; and it is possible for one to be turned more than once, but never to begin a new life more than once. The quickening of Psalm 119 is enlivening. God never saves to lose, nor quickens after-

wards to take away that quickening and quicken a second time. If anyone is in Christ there is a NEW CREATION, and the gift of God is ETERNAL life. As to the word "Conversion" or the word "turning", John was sent that he might turn the disobedient (Luke 1. 16). We read in Acts 9 how that those in Lydda and Saron TURNED to the Lord; and in Acts 11. 21, we read "The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and TURNED unto the Lord". Then in Acts 15. 19 we read of those who from among the Gentiles had turned unto God. Acts 26. 18-20. "To open their eyes, and to TURN them from darkness to light... that they should repent and TURN to God and do works meet for repentance". 1 Thes. 1. 9. "Ye TURNED to God from idols". In connection with this turning, we have the very word "convert" used in connection with that oft-quoted passage of Isaiah 6 where we read Israel would not look to the Lord; they had blinded themselves, and were increasingly blinded, lest they should turn, lest they should be converted. Contrastedly we read in Luke 22. 32 concerning Peter "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren", and in Matthew 18. 3 "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven". So, dear friends, we see that conversion is the first manifestation, or a further manifestation, of a new life, and if we in any way wander from the Lord, we have need of a further conversion, a further turning, in the enabling of the Holy Spirit; though undoubtedly there is one special

conversion in most lives when a believer is first brought to turn from the things of the world. Ah, he should not need another conversion anything like that. If he needs a very manifest second conversion it shows there has been a sad turning back to Egypt with its iniquity and its vain attractions. Oh that we may not become like the LOST silver in the house, after the precious blood of Christ has been poured out for us.

Finally, we can consider difficulties . Most difficulties as to regeneration are because there is a general tendency to ask "Why?" and to ask "How?" WHERE GOD IS SILENT. We do not know why God loves and saves one, when another, no worse than that one, is left in sins. We do not know fully HOW God saves, any more than we know all the "how" of natural life. There are limits of human knowledge even as to earthly things, and greater limits as to spiritual things. We can remove many of our questions if we remove many of our questionings, and if we remove much that is questionable from our lives. We need to have more of that quiet acceptance of the words of God. If we are ignorant, let us not be ashamed to CONFESS our ignorance. If it is a wrong ignorance, let us be ashamed of it; but if it is ignorance because God has not revealed, let us be thankful for God's wisdom, and thankful for the test of our FAITH. If we knew everything, and could find out everything, we might become prouder than we are. Let me mention in this connection, and impress upon your hearts, dear friends, that regeneration, or the quickening of the dead, is that which

is hated and opposed much at the present time. You may say that such is a strange statement. I believe that nearly all the attacks that people make on election are really attacks on two things; one, on the fact that we sinned in Adam; and secondly, on regeneration. Everyone who acknowledges those two things, is caused to acknowledge election. Election harms nobody. It only plucks some out from death and doom. Most, in reality, object to the Divinely revealed fact that we sinned in Adam, and are counted in Adam, and they say "Why"? The apostle teaches reverence in Romans 9 and in Galatians 4. 9. We know but parts of His ways. I do not expect to be able to understand why God has made all His judicial arrangements as He has. Election comes to pluck us out from the ruin in which we are counted with Adam. Why are we counted there? "Why should we ask WHY?" is a better question, for our faulty reasoning must be laid low before the wisdom of our glorious God. In like manner is it with regeneration. If regeneration is the beginning of a new LIFE, if a new birth is the commencement, why is it you and I are saved, if in mercy we are saved? Means could not PRODUCE or antedate a beginning. If salvation were development, the use of certain means might be brought before us. If we had a spark of spiritual goodness in our*selves and others did not, we might say the reason is that I had a spark of goodness that I improved; but if there is a new beginning, there is necessarily a new creation as the cause of our believing. If salvation is a new birth

we HAVE received something beyond others, otherwise there is no such thing as regeneration, but only evolution and development and improvement and education. If there is not election, souls are MADE Christians, not BORN Christians, but if they are born, then there is such a fact as God's electing grace toward who deserve nothing, in wondrous condescending love, and we bow the head and worship. Moreover, the new birth teaching of God's word is the answer to all human methods of preaching. If salvation is by human means which are to be emphasized beyond all else, then we feel inclined to adopt our own means and our own plans in Gospel preaching; but if salvation is by Divine quickening, and we adopt our own means to produce it, how foolish we are. Think of what it means. We dare to adopt certain actions and arrangements which we know cannot produce life, but we think they are more likely to produce it. Why, my friends, there is no "likelihood" at all in connection with it. Regeneration is a new birth, a work of God,^{and} if we adopt our likely means we presumptuously say, I think God's plan will be more likely to succeed thus! Oh let it not be so. Will He approve of my arrangements rather than His own? The thought is almost blasphemy. Let us humbly seek to adopt God's methods. If there were improvements, we might have our own arrangements, but as improvement only leads to earthly advantages, and affects degrees of punishment, and as there is no such thing as the spiritual improvement of man, but a new birth, let us keep to God's arrangements, God's will, God's

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work, and then God will supply what WE cannot supply, even that newness of life by His own gracious and perfect working.

Precious indeed, is the claiming power of God, glorious are the trophies of the blood of Christ, to awaken our praise and trustful obedience, as befits those who are born from above.
