

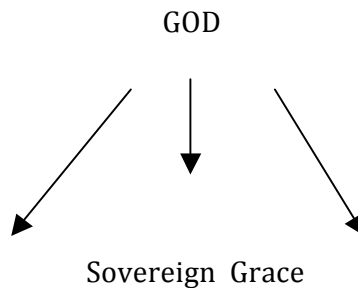
Pneumatology
The Doctrine of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT BEFORE AND IN SALVATION – PART 2

I. The Specific Call

- A. Definition: The specific call is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing sinners of sin and misery, enlightening their minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing their will, He persuades and enables the sinner to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered in the gospel.
- B. Relation to Theology: The specific call is definitely a Biblical subject though its title is theological.
- C. Author of the Specific Call: God the Father is said to give the specific call (1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Tim. 1:8-9). While the specific author is the Father, the subject is dealt with under the work of the Holy Spirit because it deals with the application of the atonement.
- D. Related to the General Call: The specific call goes to certain individuals and always brings salvation. The general call goes to mankind and never results in salvation. See **Chart #2**

CHART #2



ALL MEN

ELECT

Common Grace

Specific Call

General Call

Special Grace

E. Views on the Call of God

1. Pelagian View: I come by myself (incorrect).
2. Semi-Pelagian View: I started to come and God helped me (incorrect)
3. Arminian View: God started to bring me and I cooperated (incorrect).
4. Lutheran View: God brought me and I did not resist (incorrect).
5. Calvinistic View: God brought me to Christ (correct). Calling is an act of God's grace and power just as regeneration, justification and adoption are. We do not call ourselves, we do not set ourselves apart by human volition any more than we regenerate, justify or adopt ourselves. Calling is an act of God and God alone.

F. The Arminian View Further Discussed: The Arminian often speaks of sufficient grace whereby every man is given grace by God to accept or reject Christ. They say that God calls everyone but only a few are obedient and place their faith in Christ. Objection: The Arminian view cannot be sustained from Scripture.

G. Verses on the Specific Call: Rom. 1:1, 6-7; 8:28, 30; 9:11, 24; 11:29; 1 Cor. 1:1-2, 9, 24-25; 7:15, 17-18, 20-22, 24; Gal. 1:6, 15; 5:8, 13; Eph. 1:18; 4:1, 4; Col. 3:15; 1 Thess. 2:12; 4:7; 5:24; 2 Thess. 2:14; 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 1:9; Heb. 3:1; 9:15; 1 Pet. 1:15; 2:9, 21; 3:9; 5:10; 2 Pet. 1:3, 10.

H. Other Terms for the Specific Call

1. Efficacious Grace: It is given this title because it is certainly effectual in revealing the gospel and in leading to saving faith.
2. Irresistible Grace: It is irresistible, not in the sense that it is resisted and all such resistance is overcome but it is irresistible in the sense that it is never resisted.
3. Effectual Call: The effect of this call always results in salvation.
4. Infallible Grace: The word "infallible" places the emphasis within the eternal decrees of God, and the ultimate eventualities of his redemptive program.
5. Particular Grace or Call: This title places the emphasis upon the individual in his receiving and response to this call which always results in salvation.

I. The Necessity of the Specific Call

1. Consistent With an Act of God: Any act of God must be effectual. God's persuasion may be resisted as seen in the general call, but God's acts cannot be resisted in that they are supported by omnipotence and the sovereignty of His will.

2. Consistent With Election and Predestination: It is essential to God's plan that all the elect be saved. Therefore more than a general call is needed to save the elect. Grace must be effectual in bringing the elect to Christ for salvation (cf. Rom. 8:28-30; 2 Tim. 1:9).
 3. Consistent With Total Depravity: A man spiritually dead cannot respond to God unaided. If one accepts the biblical revelation of man's state of spiritual death and total inability, he must accept the specific call as the solution to the problem (1 Pet. 2:9).
- J. Description of the Specific Call
1. It is a high calling (Phil. 3:14).
 2. It is a holy calling (2 Tim. 1:9).
 3. It is a heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1).
 4. Conclusion: The Christian is told to walk worthy of his calling (Eph. 4:1) and to make his calling and election sure by spiritual works in his life (2 Pet. 1:10).
- K. Objections to the Specific Call
1. It is Contrary to Human Effort: Grace that is always effective would require no human effort. Answer: God has still preserved the necessity of believing, and while this is more a human response than a human effort, it nevertheless is man's part in making efficacious grace effective.
 2. It is Contrary to Human Responsibility: If salvation is by God's grace and no man can be saved without the specific call, then God cannot hold men responsible if they reject the Savior. Answer: First, no man has a claim on God's grace and therefore no man can question why He gives it to some and not to others. To contemplate why anyone is saved, not why anyone is lost, is the only proper approach. Second, that in every case where efficacious grace is not experienced, common grace is received. While common grace is not sufficient to regenerate, it is sufficient to reveal God and to condemn if it is not received and recognized as from God. Third, the Bible always holds man responsible for his actions.
 3. It is Contrary to Fair Play: Answer: Any who would charge God with lack of fairness has forgotten that no man, including himself, has any claim on God and His grace. He has also forgotten that the rejection of the many evidences of common grace bring the verdict of "guilty" and free God from any obligation (if He had any at all!) to give further grace.
- L. Summary of the Specific Call

*"There is something special about the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and minds of God's elect which will forever remain inscrutable. Not only does He convince and enlighten our minds. Not only does he offer the enablement sufficient for willing faith, but He actually and successfully persuades, and He actually renews the will so that the act of saving faith takes place, not by the energy of the flesh, but by the power of the Holy Spirit. This act of effectual calling is wholly of the grace of God, and its effectiveness is not in the slightest degree creditable to the one who is saved." (J. Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of Christian Religion*, Vol. II, p. 166).*

II. **Regeneration**

- A. Meaning: Regeneration means to impart life (Titus 3:5; Matt. 19:28).
- B. Scriptures: John 1:13; 3:3-8; 5:21; Rom. 6:13; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:5, 10; Titus 3:5; James 1:8; 1 Pet. 2:9).

- C. Definition: That sovereign act of God whereby he imparts eternal life to an individual, bringing salvation to that person.
- D. Need of Regeneration: The unsaved man is totally depraved and has no capacity or ability for spiritual things because he is spiritually dead (Rom. 8:8; 3:10-11; 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:4-5; Eph. 2:1).
- E. Necessity of Regeneration: Apart from this initial work of the Holy Spirit one can neither enter or glimpse the Kingdom of God (cf. John 3:3-5). It is regeneration that separates a lost man from a saved man. NOTE: There is a great difference between religion and regeneration.
- F. Nature of Regeneration
1. It is a Sovereign Work of God: This act of regeneration is totally and completely an act of God (John 1:13; James 1:18). God is the source and cause of eternal life.
 2. It is Supernatural: If God accomplished regeneration, then it is a supernatural work of God apart from any other means or agencies.
 3. Its Author is the Holy Spirit: While it is true that regeneration can be ascribed to the Father (James 1:18) and to the Son (John 5:21; 1 John 5:12), apparently the main agent of the Trinity responsible for regeneration is the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5).
 4. It is Apart from the Human Will: It is logical that if regeneration is an act of God, then the human will is passive in the action. In the new birth the human will is not opposed to regeneration and wills by divine grace to believe, but this act in itself does not produce the new birth. It is not that the human will is ruled aside, nor does it do away with human responsibility to believe. It is rather that regeneration is wholly a work of God in the believing heart.
 5. It is Not Experienced: Regeneration is a spiritual work of God; therefore, it is not physical, nor is it experienced, nor is it dependent upon experience, for anything that is spiritual is not physical and cannot be felt. Regeneration gives the source of eternal life and the Christian experiences the results or the effects of regeneration but not the act itself. PONT: One does not have to feel any different before or after regeneration. Undue emphasis upon feeling takes away from simple, confident, faith in the person of Jesus Christ.
 6. It is Inseparable from Salvation: Lutheran, Roman Catholics and Episcopalians teach that if regeneration is not experienced there is no valid reason why infants cannot be regenerated and still not be saved. This viewpoint is not true to Scripture for the emphasis is "believe and receive eternal life," not "you have been regenerated as an infant, now believe." Also the book of 1 and 2 John speaks of a number of definite results that automatically follow regeneration; consequently it would be impossible to be regenerated and not exhibit these fruits of regeneration (cf. Results of Regeneration - J below)
 7. It is Inscrutable: As to why the Holy Spirit regenerates some and not others is a mystery and inscrutable to the human mind. We must accept the fact of regeneration by faith because it is revelation. We should never try to "unscrew the inscrutable." (cf. John 3:8).
- G. Figures Used to Portray the New Birth
1. Physical Birth (John 3:3-8): The parents, not the child, are the cause of life and birth. No baby desires life before it is conceived. Birth always results in action, but life must come first. John Murray says,

“. . . we are instructed by our Lord that for entrance into the kingdom of God, we are wholly dependent upon the action of the Holy Spirit, an action of the Holy Spirit which is compared to that on the part of parents by which we were born into the world. We are as dependent upon the Holy Spirit as

we are upon the action of our parents in connection with our natural birth. We were not begotten by our father because we decided to be. And we were not born of our mother because we decided to be. We were simply begotten and we were born. We did not decide to be born. This is the simple but too frequently overlooked truth which our Lord teaches us. We do not have spiritual perception of the Kingdom of God, nor do we enter into it because we willed or decided to. If this privilege is ours it is because the Holy Spirit willed it and here all rests upon the Holy Spirit's decision and action. He begets or bears when and where He pleases." (John Murray, Redemption Accomplished and Applied, p. 99).

In the spiritual realm, desire for God and holiness must be preceded by life.

2. Creation (Eph. 2:10; 2 Cor. 5:17-18): The Christian is a creation or re-creation of God, the Creator. The figure of creation indicates that regeneration is creative in its nature and results in a fundamental change in the individual, a new nature being added with new capacities.
 - a. The world did not cause or desire its creation; but once created, it became alive with activity and response in a multitude of ways.
 - b. The two factors in creation were the will and word of God. By His word and will a material universe was realized. Today God is re-creating men for the spiritual world (James 1:18).
 3. Resurrection (Rom. 6:1-13; John 5:25-29; Eph. 2:1-5): The favorite Biblical figure of regeneration is that of life from the dead. Perhaps this is because of its completeness and accuracy. Lazarus is a classic example, showing that men do not resurrect themselves (John 11).
- H. Relationship of Regeneration to Conversion
1. Regeneration deals with the divine sovereignty of God, and conversion with human responsibility
 2. Regeneration is the origination of life; conversion is the evolution and manifestation of life. Regeneration is wholly an act of God; conversion is wholly an activity of man.
- I. Relationship of Regeneration to Faith: This is a difficult problem but not beyond human understanding. There are two basic viewpoints in Calvinistic circles concerning the relationship of faith to regeneration.
1. Faith Precedes Regeneration: This camp says that the Scriptures present the individual as believing and then receiving life (cf. John 3:16; 5:25-29). They acknowledge that saving faith is a gift from God but say this precedes regeneration.
 2. Regeneration Precedes Faith
 - a. How can the unsaved man, who is dead spiritually, respond by faith? He must have life shot into him so that he may believe in Christ.
 - b. Regeneration preceding faith is consistent with total depravity, election and predestination.
 - c. 1 John 5:1 indicates that a person believes that Jesus is the Christ because of regeneration.
 - d. Lazarus is an example of regeneration preceding faith (John 11).
 3. Conclusion: We don't have all the answers to this problem as to the time of regeneration, but from the human responsibility side of salvation, a person must respond by faith to have eternal life. However, from the divine aspect of salvation, life may be shot into the individual before believing. These two

concepts are so closely related that it is best to say that they occur simultaneously. Logically regeneration precedes faith.

J. Effects or Results of Regeneration

1. Background: Regeneration is the basis of all change in the heart and life of the Christian. It is a stupendous change because it is God's recreative act.
2. Practical Righteousness (1 John 2:29).
3. Not Having a Habit Pattern of Sin (1 John 3:9).
4. Love for the Brethren (1 John 4:9).
5. Believing on Christ (1 John 5:1)
6. Overcoming the World System (1 John 5:4-5).
7. Perseverance (1 John 5:18).
8. Triumph Over the Devil (1 John 5:18).
9. Conclusion: Regeneration results in a changed life and progressive sanctification in the Christian life. Regeneration demands change. Life, when imparted, must grow or there is no life! Murray says,

*When we put these text (those in 1 John) together they expressly state that every regenerate person has been delivered from the power of sin, overcomes the world by faith in Christ, and exercises that self-control by which he is no longer the slave of sin and the evil one. That means, when reduced to its simplest terms, that the regenerate person is converted and exercises faith and repentance. We must not think of regeneration as something which can be abstracted from the saved exercises which are its effects. Hence, we shall have to conclude that in the other passages (1 John 2:29; 4:7; 5:1) the fruits mentioned—doing righteousness, the love and knowledge of Christ, believing that Jesus is the Christ—are just as necessarily the accompaniments of regeneration as are the fruits mentioned in 3:9; 5:4, 18. This simply means that all the graces mentioned in these passages are the consequences of regeneration and not only consequences which will sooner or later follow upon regeneration, but fruits which are inseparable from regeneration. We are warned and advised, therefore, that while regeneration is the action of God and of God alone, we must never conceive of this action as inseparable from the activities of saving grace on our part which are necessary and appropriate effects of God's grace in us." (Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, p. 103-104).*