



Lecture #10, Part 3

Course Information

1. Course Description

A study of the persons of The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit and their unified teaching of the doctrines of the Bible.

Survey of the Doctrines of the Bible

The Holy Spirit: The New Genesis

Later in John's Gospel, Jesus adds this comment:

John 6:63 (NASB)

⁶³ "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life."

When Martin Luther was debating whether fallen man is utterly dependent upon the Holy Spirit for regeneration, he cited this text and added: "The flesh profits nothing. And that 'nothing' is not a 'little something.'"

The flesh is not merely weak with respect to the power of rebirth. It is utterly impotent. It has no power whatever to effect rebirth. It cannot aid or enhance the Spirit's work. All that the flesh yields is more flesh. It cannot yield an ounce of Spirit. The nothing is not a little something.

Finally Jesus says, "You *must* be born again." If there is the slightest ambiguity with the use of the conditional word unless, the ambiguity completely evaporates with the word must.

John 3:5-7 (NASB)

⁵ Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

⁶ "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

⁷ "Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'"

REGENERATION IN EPHESIANS

In his Letter to the Ephesians the apostle Paul speaks of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit:

Ephesians 2:1-5 (NASB)

¹ And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,

² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now



Lecture #10, Part 3

working in the sons of disobedience.

³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,

⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

Paul provides a graphic description of our spiritual impotence prior to regeneration. He is addressing the Ephesian believers and describing a prior condition in which they all once shared.

He adds the phrase “even as the rest” ([Ephesians 2:3](#)), presumably referring to the whole of mankind.

[Ephesians 2:3 \(NASB\)](#)

³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

He declares that this prior condition was a state of death: “**You were dead in trespasses and sins.**” Again, this death is obviously not a biological death, as he enumerates activities that these dead, persons were involved in.

[Ephesians 2:1-2 \(NASB\)](#)

**¹ And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,
² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.**

The characteristic behavioral mode of people dead in trespasses and sins is described in terms of walking a particular course. He calls it the “**course of this world**” ([Ephesians 2:1-2](#)).

Here the course of this world obviously refers to a course or pattern that is opposed to the course of heaven. The words *this world* refer not so much to a location as to a style or a point of reference. It involves a this-worldly orientation.

Christians and non-Christians alike share the same sphere of operations. We all live out our lives in this world. The regenerate person’s course, however, is guided from above. He has his eye on heaven and his ear attuned to the King of heaven. The unregenerate person is earthbound. His ear is deaf to any word from heaven; his eye is blinded to the glory from on high. He lives as a walking cadaver in a spiritual graveyard.

The course of this world is “**out of the way**” of God ([Romans 3:12](#)).

[Romans 3:12 \(NASB\)](#)

¹² ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE



Lecture #10, Part 3

**BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD,
THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."**

Rather, it follows a path that is “according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience” ([Ephesians 2:2](#)).

Ephesians 2:2 (NASB)

² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

The spiritually dead have a master. Their master sets a course for them that they willingly — even eagerly — follow. This master is called the “**prince of the power of the air.**” This sobriquet of royalty can only refer to Satan, the chief architect of all things diabolical. Paul calls him “**the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.**” Satan is an evil spirit, a corrupt and fallen angel who exercises influence and authority over his captive hordes.

Paul sets forth a principle of life. We either walk according to the Holy Spirit or we walk according to the evil spirit. Augustine once compared man to a horse who is either ridden by Satan or by the Spirit of God.

Paul continues his vivid description of the regenerate person’s prior unregenerate lifestyle:

Among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. ([Ephesians 2:3](#))

Ephesians 2:3 (NASB)

³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

The attention now shifts away from the external course and the external influence of Satan to the internal state of the unregenerate person. Again we see this as a universal condition: “Among whom also we all once conducted ourselves . . .” The key descriptive word of this previous internal condition is the word *flesh*. Here Paul echoes the language Jesus used with Nicodemus.

Ephesians 2:3 (NASB)

³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

The word *flesh* here must not be understood as a synonym for “physical body.” Our bodies per se are not evil, since God made us as physical beings and became a human being Himself. The *flesh* refers to the sin nature, the entire fallen character of man.



Lecture #10, Part 3

Prior to regeneration we live exclusively in the flesh and by the flesh. Our conduct follows after the lusts of the flesh. That refers not exclusively to physical or sexual appetites but to a pattern of all sinful desires.

Paul caps this universal indictment of our fallen state by adding: “**And were by nature children of wrath, just as the others**” ([Ephesians 2:3](#)).

[Ephesians 2:3 \(NASB\)](#)

³ **Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.**

When Paul speaks of “**by nature**,” he refers to our state in which we enter this world. Biological birth is natural birth.

Regeneration is a supernatural birth. Men were not originally created as children of wrath. Original nature was not fallen. Ever since the fall of Adam and Eve, however, the word *natural* refers to our state of innate sinfulness.

Every child who enters this world enters it in a corrupt state. David declared, “**I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me**” ([Psalm 51:5](#)).

[Psalm 51:5 \(NASB\)](#)

⁵ **Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.**

We are all spiritually stillborn. We are born dead in trespasses and sin. In theology we call this inherent sinful condition *original sin*. Original sin does not refer to the first sin of Adam and Eve; it refers to the consequences of that first sin, with the transmission of a corrupt nature to the entire human race.

We are by nature “**children of wrath.**”

[Ephesians 2:3 \(NASB\)](#)

³ **Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.**

How different this sounds from the socially acceptable notion that we are all naturally the children of God! This misguided idea is both longstanding and widespread. It is a falsehood that gains credibility by its frequent repetition. If you repeat a lie often enough, people will begin to believe it.

The lie of saying that we are by nature children of God was a lie that distressed Jesus. He was forced to combat it and refute it in His debates with the Pharisees. The Pharisees raged under Jesus’ criticism and said,

[John 8:41-47 \(NASB\)](#)

⁴¹ **“You are doing the deeds of your father.” They said to Him, “We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God.”**



Lecture #10, Part 3

⁴² Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.

⁴³ "Why do you not understand what I am saying? *It is* because you cannot hear My word.

⁴⁴ "You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

⁴⁵ "But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me.

⁴⁶ "Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?

⁴⁷ "He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear *them*, because you are not of God."

Although the Bible acknowledges that God is the Father of all men in the sense of His being the Creator of all men, there is a special sense in which the Fatherhood of God is defined not in terms of biology but in terms of ethics. ***Obedience*** is the operative word. In the biblical view, our father is the one we obey. The relationship is established not by biological ties, but by willing obedience.

Since the Pharisees obeyed Satan rather than God, Jesus said of them, "You are of your father the devil" ([John 8:44](#)).