



Lecture #10, Part 5

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

REGENERATION IS GRACIOUS

In Paul's exposition of regeneration there is a strong accent on grace. It is necessary that Christians of all theological persuasions acknowledge willingly and joyfully that our salvation rests upon the foundation of grace.

During the Reformation the Protestants used two Latin phrases as battle cries: *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone) and *sola fide* (faith alone). They insisted that the supreme authority in the church under Christ is the Bible alone. They insisted that justification was by faith alone. Now Rome did not deny that the Bible has authority; it was the *sola* they choked on. Rome did not deny that justification involves faith; it was the *sola* that provoked them to condemn Luther.

There was a third battle cry during the Reformation. It was originally penned by **Augustine** more than a thousand years before **Luther**. It was the phrase *sola gratia*. This phrase asserts that our salvation rests on the grace of God alone. There is no mixture of human merit with it. Salvation is not a human achievement; it is a gracious gift of God. This formula is compromised by a synergistic view of regeneration.

It is not by accident that Paul adds to his teaching on regeneration that it is a gracious work of God. Let us look at it again:

Ephesians 2:4-10 (NASB)

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),

⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

⁷ so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;

⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good



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works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Have you ever second-guessed the Bible? I certainly have, to my great shame. I have often wondered, in the midst of theological disagreements, why the Bible does not speak more clearly on certain issues. Why, for example, doesn't the New Testament come right out and say we should or we shouldn't baptize infants?

On many such questions we are left to decide on the basis of inferences drawn from the Bible. When I am bewildered by such disagreements, I usually come back to this point: The trouble lies not with the Bible's lack of clarity; it lies with my lack of clear thinking about what the Bible teaches.

When it comes to regeneration and faith I wonder how Paul could have made it any more clear. I suppose he could have added the words to [Ephesians 2](#), "**Regeneration precedes faith.**" However, I honestly think that even that phrase wouldn't end the debate. There's nothing in that phrase that isn't already clearly spelled out by **Paul in this text or by Jesus in [John 3](#)**.

Why then, all the fuss? My guess is that it is because if we conclude that regeneration is by divine initiative, that regeneration is **monergistic**, that salvation is by grace alone, we cannot escape the glaring implication that leads us quickly and irresistibly to **sovereign election**.

As soon as the doctrine of election comes to the fore, there is a mad scramble to find a way to get faith in there before regeneration. In spite of all these attending difficulties, we meet the Apostle's teaching headon:

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NASB)

⁸ **For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;**
⁹ **not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.**

Here the Apostle teaches that the faith through which we are saved is a faith that comes to us by grace. **Our faith is something we exercise by ourselves and in ourselves, but it is not of ourselves**. It is a gift. It is not an achievement.

With the graciousness of the gift of faith as a fruit of regeneration, all boasting is excluded forever, save in the boasting of the exceeding riches of God's mercy. All man-centered views of salvation are excluded if we retain the *sola* in *sola gratia*. Therefore we ought never to grieve the Holy Spirit by taking credit to ourselves that belongs exclusively to Him.

REGENERATION IS EFFECTUAL

Within traditional forms of Arminian theology there are those who agree that regeneration precedes faith but insist that it doesn't always or necessarily produce faith.



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This view agrees that the initiative is with God; it is by grace, and regeneration is **monergistic**. The view is usually tied to some type of view of **universal regeneration**.

This idea is linked to the cross. It is argued by some that one of the universal benefits of the atonement of Christ is that all people are regenerated to the point that faith is now possible. The cross rescues all men from spiritual death in that now we have the power to cooperate or not cooperate with the offer of saving grace. Those who cooperate by exercising faith are justified. Those who do not exercise faith are born again but not converted. They are spiritually quickened and spiritually alive but remain in unbelief. Now they are able to see the kingdom and have the moral power to enter the kingdom, but they choose not to.

I call this view one of **ineffectual** or **dependent grace**. It is close to what Thomas Aquinas rejected as cooperative grace.

When I maintain that regeneration is effectual, I mean that it accomplishes its desired goal. It is effective. It gets the job done. We are made alive into faith. The gift is of faith which is truly given and takes root in our hearts.

Sometimes the phrase **effectual calling** is used as a synonym for regeneration. The word **calling** refers to something that happens inside of us, as distinguished from something that occurs outside of us.

When the gospel is preached audibly, sounds are emitted from the preacher's mouth. There is an outward call to faith and repentance. Anyone who is not deaf is capable of hearing the words with his ears. These words strike the auditory nerves of the regenerate and the unregenerate alike.