**Living Theology Friends1332**

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 **“More on Born Again”**

**Past issues of these letters (230+ so far) may be read at** [**http://livingtheology.com/letters.htm**](http://livingtheology.com/letters.htm) **and I encourage you to catch up with them if you have not received earlier letters. Other writings of mine (over 43 articles and 19 commentaries) are at** [**http://LivingTheology.com**](http://LivingTheology.com) **and I pray they will be helpful. The author is solely responsible for the content of these letters and they do not represent any particular denomination.**

Last week I discussed the definition of a Christian and it involved being born again. I wrote on this topic in letter 1302 but I think it needs discussing again. Since being born again is required to be a Christian, how can one be “born again”? Why do we need to be “born again”? “How do I know if I have been born again?” As in my letter on the definition of Christian, we saw that Jesus told us about the necessity of being born again (John 3:1-6). Jesus made being born again clearly a necessity for entering the kingdom of God. So why is it a necessity? Let’s trace this question back to the beginning. Adam was born in the image of God:

*Gen 1:26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*

But as you know, Adam and Eve sinned and lost this image of God as they died spiritually immediately and ultimately physically. So when Adam and Eve had a child this child was born not in the image of God but in the image of Adam: *“When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.”(Gen 5:3).*

The Bible then carefully traces the genealogy from Seth to Noah. We are descendants of Noah and therefore of Seth. So each of us is created in the image or likeness of Adam, not of God and this is what we mean by saying that we are born with a sin nature. We are born with a sin nature as was Seth and that is why Jesus said that we must be born **again**. Our first birth was a physical birth and yielded a person with a dual nature: body and soul. But God is spirit and to interact with God we must have a spiritual nature also. Being born again means that we now have a triune nature: body, soul, and spirit. After being born again we are triune beings as is God and then we surely are created in the image of God.

This interpretation is not without distracters but it fits the teachings of Jesus. Some people use Gen 9:6 as a proof text that all people of all time are created in the image of God when they are physically born: *“Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man.” (Gen 9:6)* However this verse just says that God MADE man in His image (past tense). Yes, He did make Adam and Eve in His image but Seth was born in the image of Adam who had died spiritually. However because God MADE man in His image that image-holder position is still available and so man is indeed very special of all creatures. But do not get distracted by this interpretation. Just remember the words of Jesus that we MUST be born again to enter the kingdom of heaven.

There are many wonderfully written articles and books on this subject. Here are three excellent references:

1.) The following is from sermon 45, “Born Again” of the collection of sermons by John Wesley:

*“And in Adam all died, all human kind, all the children of men who were then in Adam's loins. The natural consequence of this is, that everyone descended from him comes into the world spiritually dead, dead to God, wholly dead in sin; entirely void of the life of God; void of the image of God, of all that righteousness and holiness wherein Adam was created. Instead of this, every man born into the world now bears the image of the devil in pride and self-will; the image of the beast, in sensual appetites and desires. This, then, is the foundation of the new birth, -- the entire corruption of our nature. Hence it is, that, being born in sin, we must be "born again." Hence every one that is born of a woman must be born of the Spirit of God.”*

2.) The following is from “Regeneration: The Christian is Born Again” by J.I. Packer:

*“Regeneration is a New Testament concept that grew, it seems, out of a parabolic picture-phrase that Jesus used to show Nicodemus the inwardness and depth of the change that even religious Jews must undergo if they were ever to see and enter the kingdom of God, and so have eternal life (John 3:3-15). Jesus pictured the change as being “born again.” Regeneration is monergistic: that is, entirely the work of God the Holy Spirit. It raises the elect among the spiritually dead to new life in Christ (Eph. 2:1-10). Regeneration is a transition from spiritual death to spiritual life, and conscious, intentional, active faith in Christ is its immediate fruit, not its immediate cause. Regeneration is the work of what Augustine called “prevenient” grace, the grace that precedes our outgoings of heart toward God. “*

3.) The following is from another of my favorite theologians, Sinclair Ferguson, in his article on the new birth:

*“How, then, does regeneration take place? Like natural birth, it is not something we ourselves instigate. By nature we are dead in transgressions and sins (Eph. 2:1). God alone is able to bring us to new birth, through the Spirit. He does so through the power of Christ’s resurrection from the dead (1 Pet. 1:3). Just as Christ stood at the tomb of Lazarus and called his name, and the dead man came to life and emerged from the tomb (John. 11:43-44), so Jesus Christ speaks into the death of our hearts, calls us by name, and we respond (John. 5:25; 10:3). As at the first creation, so in the new creation God breathes on us with his Spirit, and we are brought into new life. Regeneration is a sovereign act of God.”*

The born again event is then the same as regeneration and is an act totally of God. Just as we had no part in our physical birth we have no part in our spiritual birth. Without regeneration or being born again there is no hope for us. Praise God for His work in our lives. Only a spiritually alive person will feel the sorrow over sin as he realizes that he has sinned against the Holy God who loved him enough to send Jesus to die for his sins. A spiritually alive person will have a love and devotion to obeying all the commands of Jesus Christ that surpasses all other desires. Just as you know that you are physically alive, you will know if you have been born again for you are a new person. With the new birth, the old sin nature is dead (Rom 6:6; Eph 4:22; Col 3:9) and we spend the rest of our existence here putting it away in our sanctification (Phil 2:12).