

The New Birth #2

Direct Operation Of The Spirit?

The fourth of the five points of Calvinism is the doctrine called "irresistible grace," the theory that says that God sends His Holy Spirit in the heart of His "elected one" to create faith, which action sinners cannot resist, it is "irresistible"; this despite the fact that Stephen accused his hearers thusly: "*Ye do always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do ye*" (Acts 7:51). It is very important that one understands what it means to be born of the Spirit.

There are at least three verses that teach the same thing on this subject of the "New Birth": John 3:5; Eph. 5:25f; and, Titus 3:5.

Consider first John 3:5: "*Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*" One must be born of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God!

Next consider Eph. 5:25f: "*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word.*" The church (those who compose it is the idea) is cleansed by the washing of water with the word. Finally, consider Titus 3:5: "*According to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.*"

Who doubts that "*entering the kingdom of God,*" "*cleansed and sanctified,*" and "*saved*" are equivalent terms, the result of one who has been born again? We submit that "*the water*" (John 3:5), "*the washing of water*" (Eph. 5:26) and "*the washing of regeneration*" (Titus 3:5) are equivalent terms as well, a reference to water baptism. We may rightly conclude that "*the Spirit*" of John 3:5, "*the word*" of Eph. 5:26, and "*the renewing of the Holy Spirit*" of Titus 3:5 are also equivalents.

"*Renewing*" is the noun form (*anakainosis*) of the Greek verb (*anakainoo*) which means "to make new." The "*renewing*" of the Holy Spirit is the work the Spirit does in making the inward man a new man, a new creature. The "*word*" of Eph. 5:25f tells how the Spirit effects His "*renewal.*" The word is called the Spirit's sword, i.e., agent, Eph. 6:17. As the Spirit's agent, the word is responsible for what the Spirit is said to do. The Spirit begets and so the Spirit's word (or the gospel) is the agent in that begetting (John 3:6; 1 Pet. 1:23; James 1:18; Psalms 119:50, 1 Cor. 4:15).

Since *"the entrance of thy word giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple"* and *"faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God"* (Psalms 119:130; Romans 10:17), the Spirit, through the agency of His word, gives light, understanding, produces faith and hence is one of two elements that result in a new birth. To be born of the Spirit refers to the faith that is begotten in the sinner's heart as a result of gospel preaching. The faith that results in salvation comes ONLY by hearing the Word of God, it is not the result of direct, independent action of the Holy Spirit upon the sinner's heart.

What Does It Mean To Be Born Of Water And Spirit?

It has been shown that the water of the "New Birth" is a reference to water baptism. Since one cannot enter into the kingdom of God except he be born anew, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God except he be baptized in water. This same truth is taught in Eph. 5:26: the washing of water is directly connected with cleansing as salvation is connected with the washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5). All other scriptures which deal with the purpose for water baptism agrees. Jesus said, *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"* (Mark 16:15f). Peter said, *"Repent ye, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins"* (Acts 2:38). Ananias said, *"And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord"* (Acts 22:16). Water baptism saves (1 Pet. 3:21). One must be "in Christ" to be saved and a new creature and it is baptism that puts him into Christ (2 Tim. 2:10; 2 Cor. 5:17, Rom. 6:3f; Gal. 3:26f). Must one be baptized to be saved? Yes, for that is what the Spirit, through His Word has said.

Will water baptism "alone" save? No. The efficacy of water baptism is dependent upon faith. Paul wrote, *"Having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God ..."* (Col. 2:12). Since one is raised up with Christ through faith in the working of God, in the absence of faith no true resurrection results in water baptism. One cannot please God without faith for faith sanctifies, cleanses the heart, justifies and saves (Heb. 11:6; Acts 26:18; Acts 15:9; Rom. 5:1, Eph. 2:8). But just as baptism alone cannot save, neither can "faith alone" save. Faith must work through love, faith without works is dead; faith alone does not save (Gal. 5:6; James 2:20, 24).

Conclusion

There is nothing mystical about the "New Birth." God purposed salvation for man before times eternal, sent His Son to die and be resurrected that salvation might become reality, had the Apostles, guided by the Holy Spirit preach

the terms of salvation having been sent by Jesus with these words: *"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned"* (Mark 16:16). Now God waits for man's response. The next move is yours. With Ananais, we say: *"And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord"* (Acts 22:16). When you are baptized with full assurance in your heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, you will have been born again, *"born of water and of the Spirit."*

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