

REGENERATION AND RESTORATION

John 3:3

“Except a man be born from above he cannot see the Kingdom of God.”

Galatians 6:1

“Brethren if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”

In the first of these two verses the Lord speaks to and concerning a sinning sinner. To such an one God’s one imperative is, “You must be born anew.” In the other verse the reference is to a sinning saint. Do not be startled by the statement, for saints do sin. Every regenerated sinner is a saint. All saints do not behave as becometh saints, but it is not behavior that makes a saint out of a sinner. It is the Holy Spirit, the grace of God, and the blood of Him who suffered without the gate that He might sanctify the people with His own blood. Many saints are overtaken in a fault or a sin, that is, they side-step into sin. It is the duty of spiritual saints to restore their fellow-saints who have slipped into sin. But we should know the difference between the regeneration of a sinner and the restoration of a saint.

There are many saints today in mental distress, in anguish of soul, because in a moment of weakness they have stumbled into sin and they are ignorant of God’s way back to fellowship and peace. In many such cases spiritual saints are somewhat responsible for shirking or neglecting their part in the restoration of the stumbling and ignorant saints. One of the important principles in “rightly dividing the word of truth” is to know which Scriptures are to be applied in the case of an unsaved sinner and which in the case of a sinning saint. A very common mistake among believers is the application to sinners of the first chapter of the First Epistle of John. This Epistle is addressed to those who believe on the Name of the Son of God. I John 5:13.

In this First Epistle of John we find recorded the blessed message of the Lord to and for the saint who has been overtaken in a sin: “If we confess our sins. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” I John 1:9. These words are not addressed to a sinning sinner, but to a sinning saint. God’s message for the sinner is Romans 10:9—“Confess that Jesus is Lord, thou shalt be saved.” Doubtless you have observed that most saints quote I John 1:9 in dealing with sinners, but remember, these words are addressed to those who believe on the Name of the Son of God, as are also the other verses of this first chapter. Christian preachers are sometimes to blame for the state of utter despair to which some of God’s children have come because of their erroneous teaching.

Here is a most important and heart-searching question: “How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?” Romans 6:2. We understand by this question that those who have been born again should not live in sin. God does not grant unto any saint the liberty to sin. “These things are written unto you that ye sin not.” I John 2:1. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” I John 1:8. “And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” I John 2:1. “And He is the Propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” I John 2:2. Notice the difference. Jesus Christ an Advocate for the sins of the saint. Jesus Christ the Propitiation for the sins of the whole world. The sinner must come to the Propitiation for regeneration. The saint must come to

the Advocate for restoration. Christ on the cross died for the sins of the world, so that sinners might be declared righteous, without a cause, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus Whom God hath set forth to be a Propitiation through faith in His blood. Romans 3:24 to 26. All thus declared righteous by this Propitiation immediately become saints. No unrighteous sinner has an advocate with the Father, But every saint has an Advocate, the Lord Jesus at the right hand of God, the One who is able to save to the uttermost, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for all who come unto God through HIM.

What kind of sinner can come to the Propitiation and find forgiveness of sins, salvation, redemption and righteousness? Is there any limit or exception because of the degree or quality of sin? Hear the answer, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Romans 5:20. The answer is Much More Grace." So any kind of a sinner can become a saint by coming to Calvary. Then if it is true that any kind of a sinner dead in trespasses and sins can find "Much More Grace" in and by the one offering of the Son of God on the Cross, what about that same "Much More Grace" for the saint who side-steps into sin? Romans 5:9 and 10 and 17.

When the Lord Jesus was washing the feet of His disciples, He said to Peter: "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." John 13:7. The second verb "know" differs from the first and suggests that this Apostle would know after the resurrection of Christ from the dead; that the Holy Spirit would lead him into the truth of the significance of the washing of the feet of the disciples by the Lord Jesus Christ. In this same connection the Lord likewise used two different Greek verbs, translated "wash," in the tenth verse. "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet." The thought here is, that a disciple has been washed all over once for all and after this once-for-all washing, he needs only the washing of the feet. In this same connection the Lord also said, "Ye also ought to wash one another's feet." In as much as the Lord plainly declared that washing feet had a far deeper meaning than simply the application of water and drying with a towel, every saint should study the significance of washing the feet of other saints in order that the Word of the Lord might be obeyed.

Then by the use of the two different verbs, translated "wash," the Lord wanted to teach the truth that a sinner can be washed all over but once, the act and experience of being born again, of being regenerated; which act can be experienced but once. It would be as impossible for any man to experience two regenerations, that is, to be born twice of God, as it would be for a child to enter the second time into its mother's womb for a second physical birth. A man can be born when he is old, but regeneration can never be repeated. "Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for Her; that He might sanctify and cleanse Her with the washing of water by the Word." Ephesians 5:25 and 26. How did and does the Lord wash the Church with water? By the Word. This is first of all, a once-for-all washing, and then a continual washing. But read carefully these words: "According to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration." Titus 3:5. This is the way the Lord makes a saint out of a sinner. The washing of regeneration. A sinner can never become a saint but once; he can never receive the washing of regeneration but once. He can and should be washed for sanctification, for cleansing after he experiences the once-for-all washing, through faith in the once-for-all sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, who appeared once in the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Hebrews 9:26. When the sinner receives Christ, he is born of God. John 1:11 to 13. Then and there he receives the Holy Spirit, whereby he cries "Abba Father."

Is it reasonable or sensible or scriptural to believe that the great love wherewith God hath loved us would be any less for the erring saint than for the sinner dead in trespasses and sins? Your answer may be, "No but God expects both to repent to turn to Him for forgiveness." But

the fact is, that the sinner turns to God through Christ on the cross and the erring saint turns to God through Christ in Heaven. And Christ now appearing in the presence of God, according to Hebrews 9:24, is there for saints only. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith He hath loved us, Even when we were dead in faults (the same Greek verb translated fault in Galatians 6:1), hath made us alive together with Christ." Ephesians 2:5. Because of His great love and matchless mercy God is ever willing to make a living saint out of a dead sinner. This is a Supernatural task and accomplishment. Salvation is of the Lord. Every sinner is dead in faults. Every saint is potentially dead to faults or sins. Every saint does not always do what every saint should always do or can always do by the grace and power of God, that is, walk in newness of life, putting off the old man and putting on the new man. A saint overtaken in a fault is a different person than a sinner dead in sins. The sinner needs to be regenerated; he needs to be washed all over. The sidestepping saint needs restoration; he needs to have his feet washed. Christ does this. "Ye that are spiritual" should also wash one another's feet. Yes, Christ and His spiritual saints are to work in partnership in the matter of restoration. The disciple cannot do the work of Divine forgiveness and restoration. Neither can Christ do the work that the disciple should do in giving forth the Word, in praying and in dealing with the stumbling saint in the spirit of meekness, thus washing his feet. Just as spiritual saints have the responsibility in the matter of regeneration of a sinning sinner, in giving forth the message of salvation, they have an equal responsibility to their brother in the Lord who has sidestepped into sin. How many spiritual wrecks can you think of that might have been saved for the Lord, had spiritual Christians obeyed the Word of the Lord, and instead of having criticized, condemned and slandered some saint who had erred, washed his feet in the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ? There is too much washing of feet with scalding water.

In Galatians 5:4 we read of certain men who are "fallen from grace." These religious sinners are not to be confused with the man of Galatians 6:1 who is overtaken in a fault. The religious sinner is one who seeks to be justified by the Law of Moses; that is, he mixes religion with the Gospel of Grace as a means of establishing righteousness with God. He is fallen from grace. There is not the slightest suggestion that he has gone back to his former evil or sinful habits such as drunkenness, adultery, lying, stealing or any kind of worldliness. It does not mean that he is backslidden into immoral habits or that he has lost his zeal for God and His service. Neither is there the assertion that all such religious sinners have lost their salvation. But the point is, that so many Christians have the idea that "falling from grace" means going back into sin and losing one's salvation. There is no Scriptural authority for such an idea. Neither is there any Scriptural authority for teaching that the saint who slips aside into sin loses his relation to God. He will most certainly lose the joy of his salvation, will lose close communion and fellowship with the Lord. Such a saint can be restored, but restoration is not being saved over. A sinner can never become the child of God but once. Perhaps, in your own heart and mind you can see no difference between a sinner dead in sins and a child of God living in sin. You have not the mind and heart of God. All who profess the name of the Lord have not been born again, but we have this assurance that the Lord knoweth them that are His. It is a fact that many a born-again person has side-stepped into sin. And it is your business and my business, if we can qualify for the task, to restore such an one, considering ourselves lest we also be tempted.

We might again ask the question, "what is the difference between the blind man in II Peter 1:9 and the blind man in John 3:3?" The first man refers to a saint, while the second man refers to a sinner. Surely there are many saints who are near-sighted Christians, they are blind and cannot see afar off. The sinner is blind and needs regeneration. He needs to be born from

above before he can see spiritual things. The saint needs to add to his faith so that he will not be blind. Let us carefully study these several verses in Peter's Second Epistle; beginning with the fifth verse:

“And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; And to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; And to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.”

When a saint abounds in virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness and love, he is certainly a spiritual saint and he is most fruitful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Christian life should be one of addition. Many sinners are trying to add these things to their unbelief to please God. “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” A sinner is saved by grace through faith. It is faith that saves him; rather than what he adds. His faith makes him a saint. Adding these things makes him a fruitful saint. He is purged from his old sins the very moment he receives Christ, the very moment he believes that Christ took his place in judgment on the Cross and was raised again for his justification. Every justified sinner is forever freed from the penalty or wages of sin, which is death. He has passed out of death into life. All believers are justified from all things in this respect, and therefore all believers have the same standing in the matter of salvation from the penalty of sin. But they differ very much as to their walk in the Spirit, as to their state.

We must admit that it is a sad case when a saint has failed to add to his faith and has come to the place where he has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Such a believer knows nothing of the joy of salvation. Inwardly he is a miserable creature, although he is blind and cannot see afar off. He is seeing the things that are temporal. They are blinding him. He is barren and unfruitful; saved so as by fire. He is missing the blessed peace of God that passeth understanding. He will miss rewards hereafter. He is not the man of the First Psalm, for he is not meditating in the Word of God night and day. He has failed to add virtue, knowledge, temperance, godliness and love. The very next verse in this first chapter of Second Peter declares: “If ye do these things, ye shall never fall.” II Peter 1:10. God does not tell his child that he must do something to keep from losing his salvation. We are kept by the power of God through faith. The Word does not say, “if ye do these things, ye shall never fall away from regeneration or salvation.” “Ye shall never stumble.” It is one thing for a regenerated man to return to a lost state. It is quite a different thing for him to sidestep into sin or stumble. But those who think that such an one is again eternally lost after having been saved, should carefully read Hebrews 6:6, and note that it would be impossible to renew such an one unto repentance. However they should be all the more eager to restore such an one.

Dear friend, you should know just where you are today, right now. Have you been born from above and added to your faith so that you are a spiritual saint? Or having been born again, have you failed to add these things or perhaps side-stepped into sin? You need to be restored? The risen Lord will forgive you and fully restore you. Do you not know some spiritual saint to whom you can turn, in case some spiritual saint does not hunt you up? Or perhaps you belong to the largest class, the great multitude of sinners. You need not restoration. It is not a matter of adding. For you, there is one imperative. . . “Ye must be born anew.” Your need is regeneration. This is available for you at any time. All that is required is faith in the Redemptive Work of

Jesus Christ, God's Son. Now is the accepted time. Today is the day of salvation. Act now. Act quickly. Act wisely. Act.