

From Death to Life



What Is Man? (Part 4)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue with our theme for this week, "What Is Man?" The same book which asks this questions also answers it, and that book is the Bible!

In our previous studies we've seen that the Bible reveals man as a triune being created in the likeness of a triune God. The word triune means three and yet one. The Bible reveals the triune nature of God as Father, Son and Spirit: three persons yet one God. And the Bible reveals the triune nature of man as three elements yet one personality. The three elements of man being spirit, soul and body.

Yesterday we studied what happened when man turned away from God in self-will and rebellion. This produced a radical change in man's total personality. And we summed up, the change in the three main areas of man as follows: man's spirit died, it was alienated from the life of God; man's soul became infected by rebellion, there's a principle of rebellion latent in every human soul; man's body became subject to corruption, decay, sickness, and ultimately and inevitably death.

In the Bible, the combination of rebellious soul and body that united against God's appointed inner ruler, man's spirit, from that time onwards is called, technically, the flesh or the body or the body of sin. But when we read these phrases, we need to understand that they do not refer merely to man's physical body but to that combination of soul and body united in rebellion against God the flesh.

Today I'm going to speak about the remedy provided by God and revealed in Scripture. Thank God there is a miracle by which man's spirit can be brought back from death to life. This miracle is called rebirth or regeneration. Jesus Himself was the first one to speak about this miracle in plain terms and He emphasized that it was absolutely essential that there was no other way that man could ever recover from the effects of his rebellion, except through rebirth or regeneration. This is very clearly brought out in the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, the Pharisee, in John 3:3-7:

> "Jesus answered and said to him [Nicodemus], 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, [or reborn] he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Nicodemus said to Him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? He

> cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?' 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. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again [or you must be reborn].'" (NASB)

You see, Jesus emphasized this experience is absolutely essential. There is no substitute, there is no alternative. Now Nicodemus was a good man and a religious man, but he absolutely didn't understand what Jesus was talking about. He though perhaps Jesus was talking about a second physical birth. But the answer of Jesus indicates that He was referring not to a physical birth, but to a spiritual rebirth. Being of the Spirit of God, being reborn. And this is the experience by which life from God is restored to man's dead spirit.

We could compare what Paul says in Ephesians 2:4-5:

> "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, [Notice we were spiritually dead] made us alive together with Christ [made us again spiritually alive with Christ] (by grace you have been saved) [that's salvation through God's grace, being made spiritually alive with Christ.]..." (NASB)

And we have to understand, and it's very important to emphasize this, no system of law or religion can do this. No system of law, no religion, however good, however sound, can give spiritual life to a man who is dead spiritually in transgression. Paul brings this out so clearly in Galatians 3:21:

> "If a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law." (NIV)

You see, a dead person needs one thing above all else, that's life. Not rules, not religion, but spiritual life. And the Bible reveals this is received only by faith.

Now, how does regeneration take place? What is the process? I want to outline it for you very, very simply. First of all, the new life comes out of a seed. The seed is the Word of God. 1 Peter 1:23:

> "For you have been born again, [reborn] not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God." (NIV)

And in Luke 8:11, Jesus says:

> "The seed is the word..."

So the Word of God received by faith into our hearts is like a seed. And as is the nature of the seed, so is the nature of the life that comes out of the seed. The seed is divine, the life is divine. The seed is eternal, the life is eternal. The seed is incorruptible or imperishable, and so is the nature of the life that comes out of it. But it takes the supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit to cause that seed to germinate. It's received into the human heart by faith, but it takes the Holy Spirit to bring out the life that's latent in the seed.

And so Jesus speaks, as we've already heard in John 3:6, He says:

> "...that which is born of Spirit [capital "S" the Holy Spirit] is Spirit..."

So it's the Holy Spirit that moves in where the Word of God has been received in faith, and causes that seed to bring forth the latent life that's in it. Just as we know in the natural a seed can contain life potentially, but that life may never germinate unless it is subjected to the right processes. So the seed of the Word of God contains in it potentially the life of God, but it takes the supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit to bring that life into expression.

Now once this seed is caused to germinate and the life comes out of it, then that life reproduces the nature of Jesus Himself. Jesus, the personal word, is produced out of the preached word when it's made alive, caused to germinate by the Holy Spirit. So it's very, very important to see that the new life, the new nature, the new spiritual being that comes out of the rebirth is the very nature of Jesus Himself, the personal Word of God received through the preached Word of God.

See what Paul says here in Romans 8:9-10:

> "However you are not in the flesh [you are not under the control of the old rebellious nature] but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong in Him."

You see, that which is produced in us by regeneration is the Spirit of Christ. And without the Spirit of Christ, we do not

belong to Him. We may be religious, but we don't have life. And then Paul goes on:

> "And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness." (NASB)

The body is under sentence of death. It's headed for death. That's the ultimate end of the physical body until the resurrection. But within that body the spirit is brought to life because of the righteousness of Jesus Christ imparted to us by faith. I want to read those words again because they are all so relevant.

> "However you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you [We're no longer under the control of the old carnal nature.] But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. [That's the only thing that makes us true Christians.] And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness." (NASB)

There's a death of the old, but there's a rebirth of a new spiritual life within. I've just got time to speak briefly about the new relationship with God that is produced out of this new spiritual birth, out of regeneration. It's stated very vividly and very simply by Paul in one verse in 1 Corinthians 6:17:

> "But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him." (NASB)

That's where it's so important to see the difference between spirit and soul. It's never the soul that's joined to the Lord. It's the spirit of man that was created for union with God, that died when its union with God was cut off, and through regeneration is restored to the capacity for union with God. So the regenerated spirit is reunited in direct union and fellowship with God.

Let me also compare the words of Jesus in John 6:57:

> "Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me." (NIV)

There's a kind of chain. The Father sent Jesus, and Jesus depended on the Father for His ongoing life; His unbroken union with the Father. But Jesus says, "The one who believes in Me is going to depend on Me for his ongoing spiritual life, just as I depend on the Father."

So it's the restored union with God through Christ of man's regenerated spirit that imparts to him this new eternal life. So the ultimate purpose of regeneration is to restore man's spirit to its union with God. Cut off from God it died. Restored to God it's made alive again. And it partakes of the eternal life of God in dependence on Jesus, as Jesus in turn is dependent on the Father.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be speaking about the new life that results from regeneration.

Radio Program

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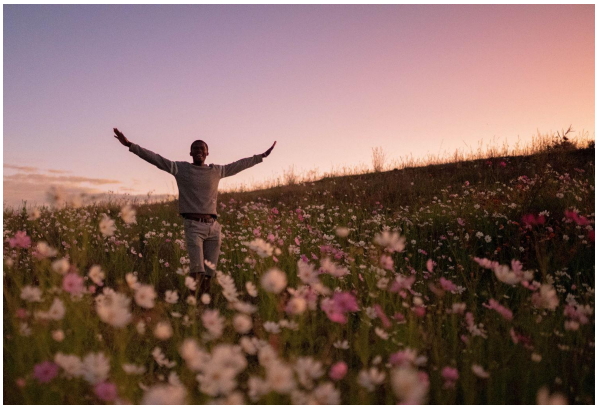

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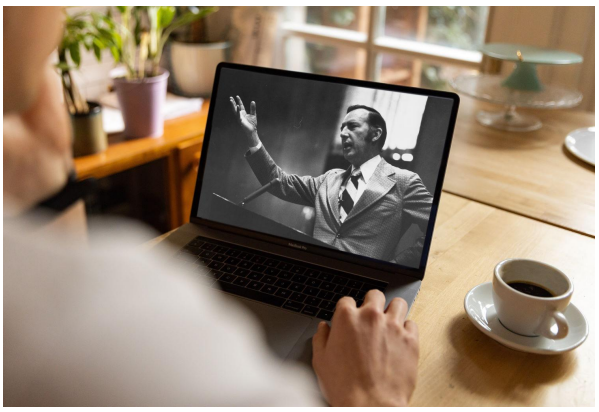

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