

What comes first, Faith or Regeneration?

By Nick Bibile

What comes first, is it Faith or Regeneration? Many will say faith comes first then regeneration.

This is theologically incorrect. It's not faith but regeneration comes first. This is the historical biblical position but since lately the church is shifting towards a man centered gospel. Let us see the scriptural evidence. As we need to go to the very basics and to the foundation of God's word. I will highlight certain words of scripture for clarification purpose.

Ge 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof **thou shalt surely die.**

When man sinned against the infinitely holy God, there was not only physical death but spiritual death. What is spiritual death? It means you are dead to spiritual things. You may be physically alive but you are separated from God almighty and dead to spiritual things. When they are spiritually dead, they cannot understand spiritual things.

1Co 2:14 But the natural man received not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

When Adam sinned against God he did not break his little finger and had a fall. Neither Adam was spiritually sick. Many pastors and evangelists say man is spiritual sick. There is not one scripture to support that man is spiritually sick but the scriptures say man is spiritually dead.

Eph 2:1 And you hath he quickened, **who were dead in trespasses and sins.**

Eph 2:5 Even when we were **dead in sins**, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved ;)

The Bible says salvation is of God. Jonah did not go to a theological school but learned in humility in the belly of a fish that **salvation is of the Lord.** (Jonah 2:9) Now how can a physically alive but spiritually dead person hear and understand the gospel? The first initiative is from God as God is the author of salvation. God makes the dead person alive. This is regeneration. The word regeneration means to generate new. It means to be born again. Born again means to have a spiritual birth.

Who gives the spiritual birth? Do dead men have faith? No, it is God the Holy Spirit that makes the dead man alive.

Joh 1:13 **Which were born**, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, **nor of the will of man, but of God.**

The fallen man was dead in sins and now by God's grace he can have a spiritual birth. How does the spiritual birth happen? By the word of God alone. The word of God has the power to bring the spiritually dead person alive. I am going to give two examples.

Ge 1:2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the **Spirit of God** moved upon the face of the waters.

3 **And God said**, Let there be light: and there was light.

There is power in God's word, as he commanded, let there be light and there was light.

Unbelievers who are spiritually dead are in darkness.

Ac 26:17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

18 To open their eyes, **and to turn them from darkness to light**, and from the power of Satan unto God,

2Co 4:6 For God, who **commanded the light to shine out of darkness**, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Col 1:13 Who hath **delivered us from the power of darkness**, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

It is the power of God's word can make the unbeliever to be born again. Now let's see another example. Remember in John chapter 11 we see Lazarus was dead for four days. The dead men don't have any faith. You can preach the gospel to a dead man but he is still dead. Unless God commands the dead man to rise from the dead. Jesus commanded the dead man Lazarus to come forth.

John 11:43 he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

44 And he that was dead came forth.

My friend, there is power in the word of God. The same God's word that commanded light to shine out of darkness, commanded Lazarus who was dead for four days to come forth. There is power in the gospel of God. Murderers, thieves, adulterers, prostitutes, drug addicts, alcoholics, these men and women doesn't have faith, they are dead to sin, yet God's word has power to make them from sinners to saints.

Then how about repentance?

Once God opens the heart of the sinner, then the sinner realize how deeply he had offended God and there is deep sorrow of sin and the sinner is given the faith to repent of his or her sins. First God gives them a new heart, and then there is repentance. Repentance is to have sorrow for your sins and to turn away from your sins. The Bible says repentance is godly sorrow.

2 Corinthians 7:10 For godly sorrow produces a repentance that leads to salvation.

Ungodly man cannot repent. First the ungodly man needs to be born again by the Spirit of God; once you have a new heart there is faith to believe in God and to repent. The spiritual birth is not of ourselves where we can boast but of God's grace alone.

Eph 2:5 Even when we were **dead in sins, hath quickened** us together with Christ, (**by grace ye are saved;**)

Eph 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.

Then what about inviting sinners to Jesus? We are responsible to invite all sinners to the cross. We don't know who is going to be saved by the spirit of God. But as Christians we are called to preach the gospel to all the families of the earth and invite all to the cross. Our job is to preach the gospel and allow God to do the work of salvation. We are only his instruments. We need to call men, women and children to repent. We are to tell them to believe in the Lord Jesus and to repent of their sins.

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