

REGENERATION

“Placing his hands on Saul, he said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord – Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here – has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ —ACTS 9:17

Though Saul of Tarsus met Jesus on the Damascus road, he did not in truth become a Christian at that point. The definition Paul gives of a Christian is one in whom lives the Spirit of Christ. In Romans 8:9, he says, “And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.” The immediate consequence of Paul’s encounter on the Damascus road was not regeneration, which is the receiving of new life, but revelation, the receiving of new understanding.

The immediate result for Paul was a state of blindness that lasted three days, which symbolized the darkness of his soul in the natural state of separation from God. In Damascus, God spoke to a man named Ananias and sent him to the house where Paul was staying. Saul had experienced a vision of Ananias coming to him and placing his hands on him in order that the work of God, which had begun on the Damascus road, might be completed.

After Ananias came to Paul, two things took place, both of which constitute the ingredients necessary to spiritual birth; Paul’s sins were forgiven and he received the gift of the Holy Spirit. The decisive issue that precipitated Paul’s change of heart was the

discovery that Jesus Christ was alive. Christ being alive has, to Paul, both an objective and a subjective aspect. Objectively, he summarizes the irreducible content of the Gospel to “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

The objective truth of the resurrection of Christ must also become a reality in subjective experience. Writing to the Galatians, Paul says, “But when God, who set me apart from my mother’s womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me...” (Galatians 1:15). Paul is saying that the revelation of the risen Christ to him became the revelation of the risen Christ in him. Having been raised from the dead, Christ’s purpose is to impart His resurrected life to the believer experientially. Paul tells us, “Christ, who is your life” (Colossians 3:4); “Christ in you, the hope of glory (1:27); “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20).

Jesus is not only the giver of life, but the life itself. The reception of this life constitutes regeneration. It is being born again of the Holy Spirit, and given new life – the life of Christ to indwell us.

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for indwelling me and giving me your life, which I pray will take over mine.

TO REFLECT UPON: Having been regenerated by the life of Christ, what changes have I noticed most in myself?