

Gift of Salvation Series: The Power of REGENERATION Ezekiel 36:26-27

If you were called upon to go and share a message about Jesus Christ and explain how to be saved, born-again, and live the life of a believer, what would you share?

Let me add that you will be facing, as your audience, 2,000 antagonistic, gang members who:

- All have killed in cold-blooded murder, with their own hands, at least one person (and then went on to eat the dead body, I might add);
- All are presently, actively involved in some form of deep, black witchcraft;
- All have both a heavy drinking and drug addiction history; and
- All are addicted to living in some form of sexual perversion: either incest, adultery, or fornication.

Also added to the audience will be several hundred unwed mothers, plus countless divorced and unfaithful women, as well as some legions of hardened children who live in those broken homes. (And I am not describing America although we are fast approaching this state!)

Next time you think anyone is too far gone, too hopelessly lost, too far into sin, remember the doctrine of regeneration, the power of God to take spiritually dead sinners and change their hearts into His holy temple.

If you would even agree to such a meeting and teaching time, we still need to ponder, what message do we give to people when we are:

Reaching Our Hopelessly Enslaved World

Add to this opportunity the question, what would you teach them if they asked you to stay in a camping tent, on the ground, in the middle of their village for a month and present more messages about Christ?

The power of Christ's regenerating Word, even in that type of atmosphere, permeated by sin, means God's grace allows anyone who will believe the power to say no to sin and yes to walking in His Spirit. Just like the pioneer missionaries found in ancient times, God can change lives even in cultures dominated for centuries by immense evil.

Well, that crowd of thousands of incestuous, drunken, murderous cannibals, totally naked, living in alcohol and drug induced sexual frenzies, hating and hardened is exactly the situation that faced one of the most well documented missionaries¹ of the past 100 years.

Whenever it seems like the challenge of challenging and then discipling those steeped in sin, with the sanctifying work of the Spirit is too hard, I always remind myself of one of the heroes I have admired since childhood—C. T. Studd. He was a lone missionary who taught those hopelessly enslaved people the power of God to regenerate and completely change them from the inside out.

The year was 1910, the place Central Africa, and the man was Charles T. Studd. What was his plan? He started in the Gospels and preached to them the message of Jesus straight from the Gospels. The message of the new birth, of the new heart, and of a Savior who loves so much He will forgive any and all sins.

And what happened? That lone man witnessed one of the greatest workings of the Holy Spirit since Pentecost. Tens of thousands were completely changed from the inside out! And 21 years later in 1931, there were scores of local churches, pastored by converted pagans, training homes with married couples raising godly children! What is the secret to his incredible success?

The Power of Christ's Regenerating Work

Twenty-six hundred years ago God explained regeneration in Ezekiel. Turn there with me and see what He says in Ezekiel 36:26-27:

I WILL give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you (that is when God gives us the good heart of Christ's parables in Mark 4:8, 20);

I WILL take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh (that is when God removes the hard, crowded, and shallow hearts);

I WILL put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes (that is when God gives us the power of His Spirit so we can do what God expects);

and YOU WILL keep My judgments and do them (that is when we act on our responsibility to respond in the fruitfulness that God expects from us).

¹ Norman Grubb, C. T. Studd, Cricketer & Pioneer Christian Literature Crusade, Fort Washington, Pa.: 1933, pp. 59-62; 216-217.

There is no heart God can't change. There is no life, no past, no sin, no stain, no failure, and no habit that God can't change if you will let Him. Are you letting the Lord change you? Are you responding? Is Jesus Christ controlling you more each day?

Nowhere on earth was the regenerating power of God's Spirit more needed than the land to which CT Studd gave his life. Here was a man, born in 1858 to an incredible successful English family. He lived with vast real estate and business interests all over the British Colonial Empire. Then in the 1880's, CT inherited a substantial amount of money—several hundred thousand dollars in that day, tens of millions of dollars in ours.

Yet, on January 13th, 1887, CT and his wife wrote nine checks and gave away my fortune as carefully as a businessman invests in some 'gilt-edged' securities. They chose safe and high yielding securities in the Bank of Heaven.

This was no fool's plunge on their part, but a public testimony before God and man that they believed God's Word to be the surest thing on earth. God promised an hundredfold interest in this life, not to speak of the next. This became a reality for all those who believe God's Word and act on it. Listen to:

A Testimony to the Power of Regeneration

In Africa when I began to invest in the natives in 1910 I arrived to villages of black skinned, naked cannibals who were totally given over to witchcraft. By night they spent their time with orgies to the demons, worshiping the gods of darkness in every impure act imaginable. To the pulsating beat of the drums, dancing by dim and flickering fires passion gave in to beast-like frenzy. Sometimes it was incest, sometimes it was adultery, sometimes it was murder, always it was hard, godless and cruel.

By day there was hatred and guilt. Stealing others wives, sometimes murdering and eating even their own relatives. Think of a culture that was always hateful, always mean, always deceptive, always harsh and always cruel. Always enduring a mind tormented by lives of shame and filth.

That was the picture at my arrival in 1910 to the northeast corner of the Belgian Congo and the 22 tribal settlement areas.

- Is it possible to change the entire disposition of a murderous cannibal?
- Is it possible to see a lifetime of lust, filth, gross immorality and debauchery stop?
- Is it possible to see murderers become loving, cannibals become tender, adulterers become faithful, demonized become holy?

The regenerating power of the Gospel of the Cross says yes to all these and much more. In 21 years of constant labors CT and his team saw God totally transform each of those villages. By the hot, steamy summer of 1931 CT's congregation had exploded. They sat for hours, listening to his Bible teaching, numbered in the thousands of former headhunters. Their bodies, formerly the habitation of dark, foul fiends from the pit—are temples of the Living God.

Before their beloved father in the faith they sit in an immense sea of white-toothed smiles. With faces turned heavenward they sing of the sweet by and by and that beautiful shore they will someday see. Passed now are the years of darkness and savagery. The former enemies sit shoulder to shoulder. No weapons of war are left, only the bond of love.

But these final days in July would be the last sight of his dear saintly converts Studd would get on earth. After his message uttered between gasps for air, with every ear strained to catch each word, he is carried back to his hut. Exhausted, he rests for the day; though only his Savior knew it was his last.

In the night the Faithful Shepherd who had led him to China, then India and finally to the very heart of Africa—took CT home after a 21 year ministry in the Congo. In the morning only the shriveled earthly tent of his body was left. But around that hut and to the furthest reaches of the jungles and on mission stations around the world, the footprints of this giant can be found today.

In Africa at his death there were 30,000 fellowshipping in the churches, born again, baptized and disciplined saints whom C.T. found in 1910 as naked, murderous, grossly immoral cannibals butchering each other in the darkest jungles of Africa. That is:

The Reward of Sharing The Gospel of Regeneration

That should remind all of us again that...

The Only Thing We Can Take
To Heaven are People

Just think about what has resulted from the life-investment C.T. Studd made when he opened the Word, and taught the truths of grace-energized living to those people.

Today, at this very moment, they all are singing around the Throne of the Lamb, clothed in white raiment and worshipping Jesus Christ with their spiritual father C.T. Studd. Can there be anything greater than taking people with us to Heaven that we have been a part of bringing to Christ? I don't think anything can compare to that hope, joy, and crown of rejoicing (I Th. 2:19-20) as Paul calls those we bring with us to Heaven!

And that is the power of God at work within us and through us as we serve the Lord each day! As a believer, regeneration is God's greatest work within you. As one who shares the Gospel, this is the power of God in salvation to reach anyone, anywhere, no matter how bad they've been.

We need to grasp:

The Power of Understanding the Work of Regeneration

Now join me in several other passages, where the new beginning truths of regeneration are opened to us by God.

- *John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name”.*

Because Jesus regenerated me—I am a Child of God. Say that aloud with me

- *Romans 8:2, 9 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. 9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.*

Because Jesus regenerated me—I am a Free From All SLAVERY. Say that aloud with me

- *1 Corinthians 3:16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”*

Because Jesus regenerated me—I am a Temple of God. Say that aloud with me

- ***1 Corinthians 12:27 “Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.”***

Because Jesus regenerated me—I am a member of Christ's Body. Say that aloud with me

- ***2 Corinthians 1:21 “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God”.***

Because Jesus regenerated me—I am anointed and sealed by God. Say that aloud with me

- *Ephesians 2:1, 10* "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them".

Because Jesus regenerated me—I am a Divine Masterpiece. Say that aloud with me

You have heard of a piece of art being an original "masterpiece" or actually painted or made by a master like Michelangelo or Da Vinci. Well—we who believe are God's Word masterpieces; we are even signed by the Author Himself!

- ***Philippians 4:13* "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me".**

Because Jesus regenerated me—I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Say that aloud with me

- *Colossians 1:13* He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love".

Because Jesus regenerated me—I am a Citizens of Heaven. Say that aloud with me

- ***Colossians 2:10* "...and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power".**

Because Jesus regenerated me—I am complete in Christ. Say that aloud with me

- ***Titus 3:5* "...not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit."**

Because Jesus regenerated me—I am washed, given a fresh start, and new beginning. Say that aloud with me

- ***1 John 5:18* "We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him".**

Because Jesus regenerated me—I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me. Say that aloud with me

One of the greatest elements of our salvation is regeneration—when we entered God's family, received a new heart, and became God's habitation. We came alive, beginning to

live the everlasting life—that forever separates us from the lost, who remain in everlasting death.

Regeneration is most important because it marks the dividing line between saved and lost, eternal life and eternal death, eternal sonship to God and eternal alienation from God. That is the fact that:

OUR REGENERATION IS MIRACULOUS

Regeneration is when God comes down to the site of the worst disaster in the Universe—us sinners, and completely removes the deadly elements at the core of our being.

Biblically speaking we receive a new heart in regeneration. The first complete explanation of this process is in Ezekiel 36:26-27 when God says that He will give us who come to Him through Christ a “new heart”. The Scripture goes on to say that He takes away the bad heart we had and replaces it with a brand new one that He made that is just right for the Lord Himself to come and live within.

Regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the divine nature and divine life are given (John 3:3–8; Titus 3:5). Regeneration occurs when God sovereignly acknowledges a person’s belief of the gospel (John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997.)².

Regeneration is the most dramatic change in a new believer; when we are “born again” we enter the family of God. (*Re-* means “again,” and *generation* means “birth.”)

START A NEW SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

If you have never tried this I’d encourage you to start a new dimension of your spiritual life by opening your gifts. Let me share with you one of the more wonderful spiritual exercises you can ever do.

As you begin each day, each month, and as we come to the end of this month—as you begin a new year, one of our greatest privileges is to open and enjoy the gift of salvation God has given to us. By faith we please God when we believe what He's said about us. We need to not live by what others say or have said about us all your life.

² Some argue that since a man dead in trespasses and sins cannot believe, God must first regenerate him in order that he may then believe. But, if that were true, that is, if he already had been regenerated and thus been given the gift of eternal life, then why would he need to believe? The two must be simultaneous (Ryrie, Charles C., *A Survey of Bible Doctrine*, (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press) 1972.).

Satan is the Accuser and wants us to only remember all the many times we have fallen; Satan delights in the days, weeks, or months he can keep us condemning ourselves for what we've done. That is his plan, so don't fall for it. Resist Satan as you believe the truth; speak the truth; and preach the Gospel to yourself.

And when ever we fall down, God says to just turn back to Him and repent, confessing our sin immediately--and believe that what God has promised in His salvation. We are forgiven, justified, regenerated, reconciled, adopted, redeemed, and sanctified. That makes us precious in His sight, special in His plan.

One of the most powerful habits you could grow is to take this list of the ramifications of having received the only gift everyone really needs and rejoice by faith in your great salvation!

Keep this list in your Bible, at home, on your computer, put one on your mirror where you start your day, and in your car. Where ever you need to keep reminding yourself of what great things God has promised and done through Christ's death for us!

Slowly as you understand and lay hold on these truths a life-changing transformation take place in our minds, and then in our emotions, and finally throughout our entire life as we live each day based on God's eternal truth.

Appendix:

The Results of Salvation's Mighty Work

Through seven divine works of God, guilty sinners are made ready for dwelling in the Presence of God forever; and their bodies formerly slaves to sin instantly become the very dwelling place, and temple of God.

How does God do all that? He does it through the seven elements that make up the Gift of Salvation. Do you know that you have received the gifts only God can give?

THE GIFT OF FORGIVENESS— CRITICAL NEED #1

Because of our sin—we are all debtors to God's Righteousness; so we need forgiveness.

In FORGIVENESS: **God removes my debts.** Ephesians 1:7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the **forgiveness of sins**, according to the riches of His grace.

Have you **experienced the relief of knowing that all your sins, everyone of them—past, present, and future, are GONE?** Your sins are paid for, and your eternal life is purchased—and you have the receipt in your hand, written in the very blood of the One who paid the price. Christ's record of that payment is forever settled in this book the Bible!

THE GIFT OF JUSTIFICATION— CRITICAL NEED #2

Because of our sin—we are all guilty convicts in God's sight; so we need justification.

In JUSTIFICATION: **God changes my State.** Romans 5:1 Therefore, *having **been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.***

Have you experienced **the peace of justification, all guilt removed, all punishment forever taken away from God's sight?**

THE GIFT OF REGENERATION— CRITICAL NEED #3

Because of our sin—we are all dead in our trespasses and sin; so we need regeneration.

In REGENERATION: **God transforms my Heart.** Ezekiel 36:26-27 *I will give **you a new heart** and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.*