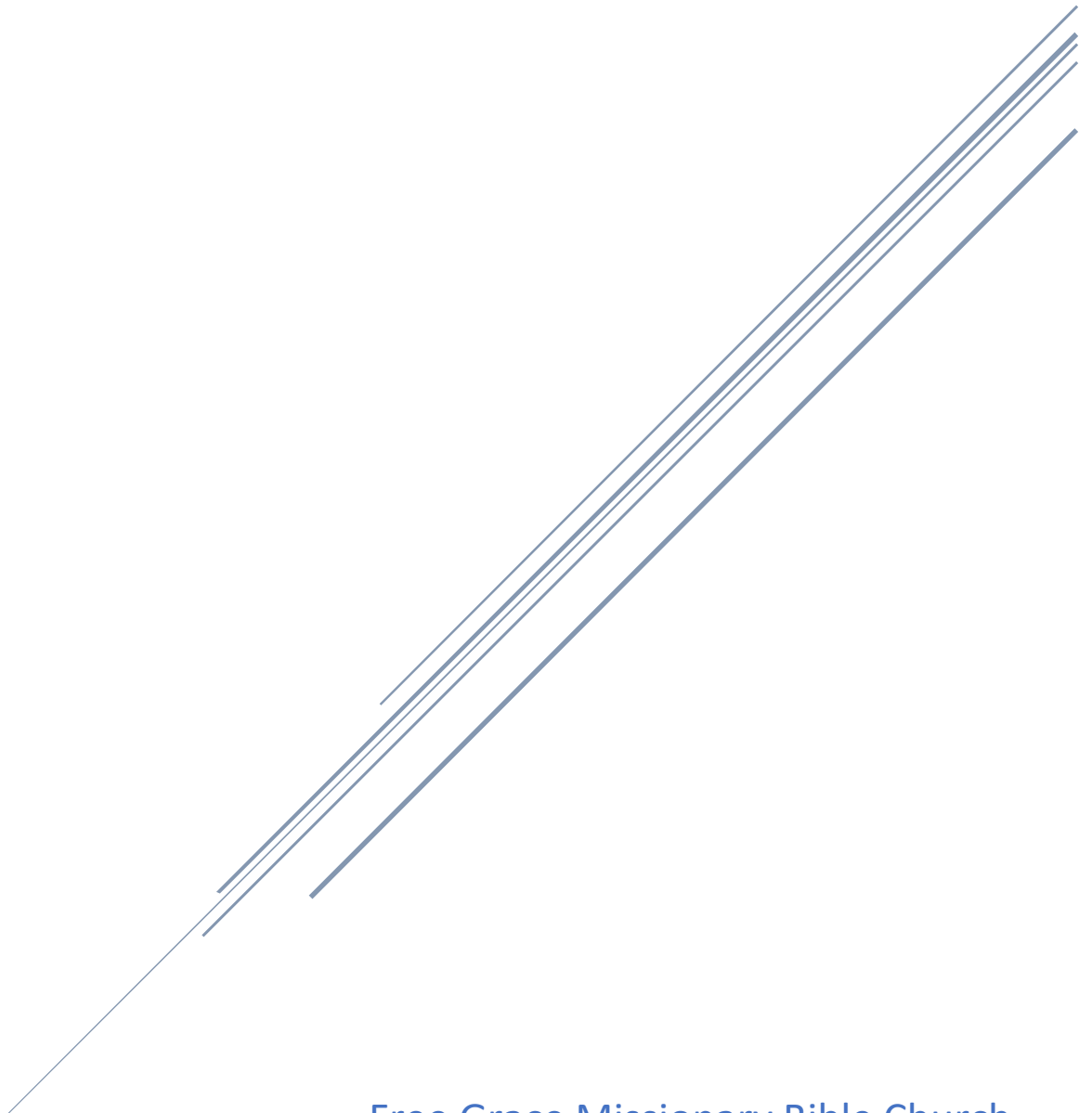


# IRRESISTIBLE GRACE



Free Grace Missionary Bible Church  
Doctrines of Grace

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. ... No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. (John 6:37, 44)

## Man's Condition before God

And you [hath he quickened], who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (Eph 2:1-3)

We begin with a review of total depravity. We're all the way down to I in T U L I P and we even took two sessions to cover atonement – first the doctrine itself and then limited atonement. We need to have though the idea of T firmly in our minds before we explore I – Irresistible grace.

This passage begins to clue us in what it means to be totally depraved. A totally depraved person could go to church every week or could lead a life of organized crime. The key thing is that they reject and refuse Christ, maybe not willfully but really because they are spiritually dead. Being spiritually dead means that they are apart from Christ, in whom is life, and therefore live their lives for themselves, as the verses above indicate.

The unregenerate are “dead in trespasses and sins.” That is, Paul begins with the Ephesians and explains to them that they were spiritually dead. They “walked according to the course of this world”. That is, they did not consider anything beyond this world but were limited to the things they could see, taste, touch, and so forth. Satan was working in them – “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” Children of disobedience?!? Satan works in these children of disobedience and leads them to think about anything and everything except the gospel. Satan works in them to make them live their lives according to the flesh. We all lived in the “lusts of our flesh,” that is, we all lived in accordance with the flesh – “fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.” We lived in accordance with the flesh and however our flesh was motivated, whether by raw and rude things or by fine and civilized things, yet it was by things that we were made happy, whether those things were earthly or even spiritual. The only important thing is that those things which were sought after were not Christ, but something else entirely.

Here we have a description of the unregenerate person. It is interesting to describe such a person because they could be anyone. They could be someone who comes to church every week or someone who is really engaged in crime. It is quite difficult to tell, sometimes, if someone is actually regenerate or not – other times it is complete obvious that someone is unregenerate. In either case, it is the matter of union with Christ that is the issue. The unregenerate person is outside of Christ and while he may be all dressed up to play well it may be the case that the person is actually wildly sinful when you don't know them.

Who know!?! We may not be able to tell the difference but we know the difference well. Unregenerate people are outside of Christ and going to bear the guilt for their own shame. Regenerate people have the

amazing grace of being in Christ – their sins are forgiven and Christ’s righteousness clothes them. This difference is critical yet it is not of man’s doing. It is all of God – man is entirely passive in regeneration.

## The Necessity of Regeneration

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. ... Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and [of] the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (John 3:3, 5)

Therefore we come to the necessity of regeneration before there can be any spiritual response. Before a man is born of God, he can neither see nor enter the kingdom of God. One enters the kingdom of God by having faith and therefore it is necessary to be born again in order to have saving faith. The possession of saving faith is the equivalent of being in the kingdom and therefore one must be born again prior to the possession of saving faith.

Jesus said, “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” meaning that a person cannot recognize the kingdom of God before his eyes until he is born again. He may see many things but he will not be able to see the kingdom of God because it requires spiritual eyes to see. One must be born again in order to see the kingdom – if you can see the kingdom today, praise God. If not, see me after.

“Except a man be born of water and [of] the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” means that a person must be born of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit before he can enter the kingdom of God.

We compare Ephesians 5:26 that says,

That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, (Eph 5:26)

So this verse is giving us the two things which are required for regeneration – the Word and the Spirit. When both are present, then regeneration takes place. If a man is not born of the Word and the Spirit then he cannot see or enter the kingdom of God. He is outside, apart, alienated from the kingdom.

Here we have a description of the necessity of regeneration. Every spiritual work begins with the new birth because we are naturally dead in our trespasses and sins. We must be made spiritually alive in order to respond to the gospel. We must be spiritually alive to receive Christ and accept Him as Lord and Savior. A dead person does not trust in Christ for real, perhaps he may in a false way, but not in a real way. It takes a living person to do what needs to be done and so the Holy Spirit uses the Living Word to produce spiritual life in the person. And the regenerate person will close with Christ. The regenerate person will be able to do everything because they are brought into union with Christ.

## Prevenient grace vs. regeneration

In general, prevenient grace is just grace that precedes conversion. This is not necessarily bad since every elect person might experience much grace before conversion. But here we are talking about it in a way that is not right. Here we are dealing with semi-Pelagianism, Arminianism and Wesleyanism which take the concept of prevenient grace to replace being born again. Wesleyanism is the worst of these since it is the closest to the truth. I quote a random web page:

Prevenient grace is the grace of the porch. It prepares our hearts and minds to hear and receive the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to respond in faith.

“This grace convinces them of being sinners who need God for forgiveness,” explains the Rev. Nday Bondo Mwanabute, professor of theology at [Africa University](#), Mutare, Zimbabwe. “The Holy Spirit assists them to come to God and acknowledge God’s will and holiness.”

This applies both to those who will become believers and those who will not so there is still the human will which is involved. That is, Wesleyans and other Arminians believe that the human will must be persuaded to hear and to believe the gospel and then regeneration takes place because though we are spiritually dead, prevenient grace comes along and allows us to do spiritual things. Regeneration follows faith according to these theologians. Faith can come from a person who is dead because prevenient grace allows them. I suppose one could say that it makes the dead person temporarily alive. Since it applies to those who accept Christ and those who do not it must be a temporary form of life that is introduced to work around the fact that regeneration first means God chooses. Well, God does choose and Scripture is clear about this. We follow in the way that has been laid out for us – the reprobate goes his own way to perdition but the elect are regenerated along the way and called and will be justified and glorified. But this is all God’s work. We merely respond.

Jesus said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” and so there is no way that prevenient grace is the truth. Regeneration or being born again must come before one can even see, let alone enter, the kingdom of God.

## The Nature of Regeneration

In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. ... 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. (2 Cor 4:4, 6)

These marvelous verses show us the way in which God regenerates us. We begin though with the condition of the unregenerate person. The god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not lest the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them. Satan has not blinded the eyes but has blinded the minds of them. They turn aside from the truth of the glorious gospel of Christ. These are the people of the world; these are the people on the streets. We go out to them but Satan has gotten there ahead of us and has blinded their minds. They are not interested in the gospel; they turn aside at every point.

The secret of the gospel is that the inside action of God is needed. “Ye were sometimes darkness” (Eph 5:8) means that we were completely darkness, no light at all. That is Satan’s work that results in blinded minds. But now we are told that God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts. Darkness is the condition of Satan but the Lord enters and there is light. And what a light is shone! The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is shone in the heart. How marvelous is that! But it is what is needed. The glory of God is the central aspect of revelation, it is the central aspect of reality that is missing from the reprobate. There is no knowledge of the glory of God in the reprobate. He is completely deficient of this knowledge. This knowledge reveals to the person many things – one’s own

sinfulness, the glory of God, the mercy of God in opening a way. But the most important thing, at this stage, that the glory of God reveals is the sinfulness of the heart. As we see ourselves in the light of God's glory, we see how sinful we are, how wretched, how miserable and we see how glorious God is, how perfect, how righteous. This light of the knowledge is in the face of Jesus Christ. It is Christ who is formed in us who brings this light. This is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27). This is, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Gal 4:19). We understand that this is the work of the Holy Spirit in forming Christ in the heart.

And it is in the context of the word that we understand this to be happening. We understand that the gospel word is come upon the person but finds them lost and unable to respond. Then, God commands the light to shine inside of them. It is not just any light but the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. And the source is not just anything but the very face of Christ. This is Christ being formed in the person in conjunction with the word on the outside convincing the person to flee to Christ, to take up refuge in Him, who is not only within the heart but outside of the person, in the gospel message. The person uses the light from God, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ to lead him to Christ. It is for the glory of God that he comes to Christ. It is for the glory of God that his sin is taken away. It is for the glory of God that this person is saved.

This is the best picture we have in Scripture of regeneration. This indicates the desperate condition that exists before regeneration – that the light of the gospel comes upon those who are deaf, dumb and blind to it. They are unable to respond because their minds are blinded. So, regeneration is an inside job. It opens the heart, the Lord shines light into the darkness. It gives knowledge to the person. It gives the very specific knowledge of the glory of God which is desperately needed by the sinner. And this light comes from the face of Jesus Christ. This light gives the inner direction to the soul to be able to reply to the outer gospel message. Because Christ is formed within, the person is enabled to respond to the gospel that comes from without. And he does invariably. This is irresistible grace – there is no way that the person will not come to Christ because He is formed within the person in conjunction with being offered from the outside.

## The Efficient of Regeneration

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, [even] to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:10-13)

It is important to realize that God alone regenerates us. In this verse we are given the many things which do not contribute to our regeneration. It is not of blood, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man – that rules out everything on man's side. Here it is not of bloods (it is in the plural): not of our ancestry in any way. It is not of the will of the flesh – the individual has nothing to do with regeneration. There is no free will that comes into the picture. The person is complete alienated and opposed to God. Nor is it the will of man – parents, relatives, children, etc. It is not of nationality; it is not of the person and it is not of another person. That leaves God.

Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. (Rom 8:30)

Here we have the connection with what we have covered in previous weeks. Here we have the calling but it is those whom the Lord predestinated that He calls. Calling is the fuller view of regeneration – it is not just the regeneration but also the response. Regeneration in the strictest sense of the word, that is, as the begetting again, takes place in the sub-conscious life of man, and is quite independent of any attitude which he may assume with reference to it. Calling, on the other hand, addresses itself to the consciousness, and implies a certain disposition of the conscious life. This follows from the fact that regeneration works from within, while calling comes from without.

This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until being quickened and renewed by the Holy Ghost, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.

Now we have the which goes out to all men. It is the free call of the gospel, which goes to elect and non-elect. The Scriptures say "For many are called, but few are chosen" (Mat 22:14) but there they mean call in a general way – such that indeed many are called by people unto Christ but many are not elect. The Scriptures say that "few are chosen" which means that fewer than those who are called are chosen. Some who are called are not chosen. But in Romans 8:30 we have the golden chain of salvation. All who are predestinated are called, and all who are called are justified, and glorified. That means that everyone who is called in the sense of v. 30 is effectually called.

The difference between the two calls is that in the effective one, the internal work of the Holy Spirit regenerates the person and causes the person to respond. It is all of grace that we are saved because the Holy Spirit regenerates us, gives us life – and with this life we choose Christ, the only thing that is reasonable to do. More on this later...

## The Instrument of Regeneration

Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures. (James 1:18)

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. (1 Peter 1:23)

For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet [have ye] not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. (1 Cor 4:15)

We turn now to the instrument which is used by God in our conversion. We have here in James, the following:

The efficient of regeneration – God, He, the Father of Lights.

The impulsive or moving cause – His own will

The instrument of regeneration – the word of truth

The final cause – that we should be a kind of first fruits.

We don't see people converted while they are reading the newspaper or some magazine or watching a movie. People are converted when they read the Scriptures or when they hear the gospel presented to them. It is the gospel which is instrumental to their conversion – there is no salvation apart from the gospel.

We have in these three verses, three words which indicate instrumentality is expressed – “**with** the word of truth” (James 1:18), “**by** the word of God” (1 Peter 1:23), and “**through** the gospel” (1 Cor 4:15). “With” means that it is something in addition to the central thing. “By” indicates that it is through this thing that the action took place. “Through” indicates that the thing was a conduit of some sort by which a thing was accomplished. Each of these prepositions indicates that the word of God is something used by God. It is necessary to the outcome but is not in itself the main thing. God is the main thing and the Word of God is secondary. God uses His word to bring about certain effects – namely the regeneration of the hearer. That’s what all these verses are about. God uses His word in a very specific way in the regeneration of the unbeliever, and the word is itself very specific.

To begin with, the word is not the word of history though there is a critical historical aspect to the gospel. It is not the word of the law, though there is also an aspect of the law which is essential to the gospel. It is not church history or theology for that matter but the very specific account of the gospel.

What is it that men need to hear to be converted? It is the “word of truth” that comes to a person. “Incorruptible seed” ... “the word of God”. It is “the gospel” that comes on the outside of a person. It is this message which must be present when a person is saved. God uses the gospel on the outside when He is going to regenerate a person. His grace works on the inside to bring a person to newness of life but it is in the gospel that sets the parameters of the conversation.

The gospel that must be expressed involves the law. We must be convinced of our sin because our sin is against the law. It may take much law to convince a person that he is a violator of the law but this is the essential first part. For what good does it do to convince a person that Christ died for him if he does not believe that he is a sinner. The death of Christ must seem a pathetic thing to those who do not view themselves as sinners. We must recognize ourselves as in the need of what Christ has to offer which is redemption from the curse of the law. We must recognize ourselves as debtors to the law, to bearing the wrath of God for an entire eternity.

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. (John 16:7-11)

And so we see that conviction is not necessarily part of conversion. That is, people other than those who are converted experience this reproof for sin. But no one can experience conversion without this recognition that we are sinners because we believe not on Christ.

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:18)

The sense of sin that we need to have from these verses is that we need Christ, we are desperate for Christ. We are sinners because we believe not on Christ – that is the reality of it from the perspective of the sinner’s reality. He is a sinner because he believes not on Christ. He must become aware of that.

Second, the person must receive Christ as dead and living again – the person must receive the Living Christ because offered to them. The understanding of Christ as having died for sinners must be clearly

understood. Christ's death must be made personal to the individual. The word has to come alive to the person but in general the death of Christ and His resurrection must be preached.

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, [that] shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew [it] unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew [it] unto you. (John 16:13-15)

Here we have the rest of the work of the Spirit in relation to the salvation of sinners. The Spirit of God works on the outside so-to-speak of the person in teaching him about Christ. How Christ died and how he arose from the dead and what he accomplished by His death. It is His death which opens the way to the Father. When we come into union with Christ – “*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1). “He hath made us accepted in the beloved” (Eph 1:6). “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph 1:7). “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation” (Eph 1:13).

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? (Rom 10:13-14)

Therefore we understand that the word is necessary yet not sufficient. People must hear the gospel – Paul is clear about this. The gospel must go forth. This is why the Scripture says they must hear about Him to call on Him. For how shall they believe on Him of whom they've never heard? Yet it is the internal work of the Holy Spirit which allows a person to come to Christ in the midst of the gospel call. It is the forming of Christ within by the Holy Spirit which enables a person to come to Christ. That newness of that life – perfect and glorious (yet small) – is what drives a man to accept Christ. Others are left to themselves.

## The Effects of Regeneration

To whom God would make known what [is] the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: (Col 1:27)

There are a lot of effects of regeneration. In effect, all the Christian life is an effect of regeneration. This verse introduces the very first thing with the hope of the very last thing – Christ in you is the hope of glory. And truly it is – there is nothing else which discriminates as obviously as that. Christ in you is not something that we can do – we are completely helpless when it comes to bearing ourselves again. We cannot bear ourselves again – we need Christ in us and that is the work of the Holy Spirit.

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Gal 2:20)

This simple fact that “Christ lives in me,” is so profound that Paul struggles to express it. It is new life – we have our own life but we also have the life of Christ, which is our life. Paul says, “I live” but then



immediately adds, “yet not I, but Christ lives in me.” But then it is the life which he lives in the body. This is the mystery that we experience who are born again. It is “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. (Eph 4:23-24)

And have put on the new [man], which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: (Col 3:10)

Here we have the put-off / put-on passages which express this fundamental aspect of our salvation. We put off the old and put on the new – we do this following conversion but at conversion is when the initial change takes place. Before we are born again, we have no righteousness and no true holiness. We also have no true knowledge. It is the Holy Spirit who creates those things in us or who reforms us or remakes us at regeneration.

We have the three most fundamental aspects of our personality: knowledge, righteousness and true holiness. These are the three aspects of human nature which were created by God originally and which were lost at the fall. This is the image of God and the recreation of it or the reestablishment of it is the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. The Shorter Catechism says that “God created man male and female, after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness and holiness, with dominion over the creatures” and that is what is reestablished here at regeneration.

These Ephesians and Colossians the apostle writes to, were already made new men, or were new creatures. But to put on the new man, is to walk in our lives and conversations agreeably to the new man, or work of grace upon the soul; as to put off the old man, respects the former conversation, or a not walking as formerly, and agreeably to the dictates of corrupt nature, so to put on the new man, is to walk according to the principles of grace and holiness formed in the soul: and of this new man it is said that it is formed of knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness.

For this [is] the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: (Heb 8:10)

Here we are presented with the new covenant – the covenant of grace by which the Lord regenerates His people. It is evident when we compare the two covenants that the old covenant had the law bringing wrath upon the person. That is, the person was under the condemnation of the law and could not keep it. Now they are counted as having fulfilled the law, kept it perfectly, and the law is written on the heart. This makes the law a friend, though Paul’s first experience with the law was terrifying – “O wretched man that I am” (Romans 7:24) yet the law was not trying to “get Paul” – rather the law was doing what the law does best, driving people to Christ. Paul wrote that “the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ” (Gal 3:24) and the law written on the heart does have this effect.

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (Rom 7:24)

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Rom 8:1)

We understand that the soul must flee to Christ – He is our only hope. But naturally we hate Christ – we might love His kindness and His grace but soft pedal His fierce wrath showing that we don’t really love

His honor above all things. But when we have the law written on the heart, we become broken creatures. We are consumed with our sin and the wrath of God that is coming upon us. The law becomes to us a living thing which is quite monumental to us when we are outside of Christ. There is only one way for a person who has had the law written on his heart – he must flee to Christ.

Notice that Paul in Romans 7:24 says, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” and in Romans 8:1 “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus”!! This is a marvelous change which the law was instrumental in bringing about. Paul was made so miserable by the law after it had been written on his heart, that he could not bear it. It is agonizing to have the law written on the heart and to be outside of Christ. There is the great sense of sin because the law is closer than ever before and it condemns sin – the law cannot peacefully coexist with sin. And so the law drives the sinner to Christ for the extinction of the outer penalty – or as Christ bore the wrath of God for the penalty of the law, there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.

This is the difference made by regeneration. The call goes out to all, to as many as the words will travel to, and be heard, but only a small number are actually converted. The difference is altogether because of God. We preach the gospel to all but the Lord must regenerate them. When the Lord does regenerate someone, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. ... No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.” (John 6:37, 44-45)