

Main Idea: Our hearts are naturally dead to the things of God, this is why regeneration is absolutely necessary.

Q# What is regeneration?

= It is God giving us a “heart-change” in which your spirit that is dead to the things of God and is made alive by the Holy Spirit and results in a life change. Ephesians 2:5 pictures it as God “making us alive,”

Titus 3:5 “*change of heart*”

I John 3:14 “*pass from death to life*”

II Corinthians 5:17 “*a new creature*”

John 3:5 “*born again*”

Ephesians 2:6 “*resurrection from the dead.*”

Acts 15:9 “*purifying their hearts by faith.*”

Galatians 6:15 “*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.*”

Regeneration, being saved or born-again involves the connection of the person’s spirit to God. The message of the Gospel is that what sin killed, God made alive.

Q# Why is regeneration so important?

Philip Spencer:

“If one doctrine of our Christian faith is essential, then it is certainly that of regeneration. This is the spring from which everything which is good in our life must flow forth.”¹

Big Questions we will cover today

1. Do I have to turn over a new leaf to come to God?
2. Can I be good enough to go to heaven?
3. What makes the difference between a bad person and a good person?
4. How can I meet God halfway?
5. How good do I have to be to get into heaven?
6. Can you really tell the difference between how a true Christian lives and one who thinks they are a Christian but really are not?
7. What happens to infants, mentally impaired and young children who die?

*The Salvation of the ‘Little Ones’: Do Infants who Die Go to Heaven?² On the website under the “Got Questions” tab.

¹ Philip Jacob Spencer, *Von der Wiedergeburt*, ed., H.G. Feller (Stuttgart: J.F. Steinkopf, 1963), 13. Cited in *The Biblical Doctrine of Regeneration* by Helmut Burkhardt, trans. O.R. Johnston (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1978), 7.

² The Salvation of the ‘Little Ones’: Do Infants who Die Go to Heaven?
<http://www.albertmohler.com/2009/07/16/the-salvation-of-the-little-ones-do-infants-who-die-go-to-heaven/>
Accessed August 21, 2010.

TS: Regeneration is necessary because without this act of God we are:

1) Dead – 2:1

Q# What is my state before becoming a follower of Christ/before regeneration? = DEAD

Q# What is the Bible speaking of when it speaks about us being dead but we are still alive physically?

1) The Description of Death "...dead in sins and trespasses..."

2:1 "trespasses"

2:1 "sins"

2:2 "disobedience"

2:3 "lusts"

2:3 "wrath"

Point = All of these are within the sphere of death.

Q# What is this "deadness" not?

1) We have no knowledge of right & wrong (no conscience) – Romans 2:11-16

11 For there is no partiality with God.

12 For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law;

13 for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.

14 For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves,

15 in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,

16 on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus" (NASB).

We gain several important observations from this parallel passage:

1) Every person is separated from God because of sin

2) Some people have knowledge of special revelation (the Bible)

3) Some people have only general revelation (God revealed in nature and human conscience)

4) Those who reject special revelation will incur a greater judgment

5) Nonetheless, all are under judgment

6) Therefore, all have no excuse

Q# What is this "deadness" not?

2) We have no knowledge of God – Romans 1:18-20

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it

evident to them.

- 20 *For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.*
- 21 *For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*
- 22 *Professing to be wise, they became fools,*
- 23 *and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures” (NASB).*

Point = While all people intuitively have a knowledge of God, this is not sufficient for Salvation.

What “Deadness” is:

- 3) *“Deadness” simply means that our spirit is dead towards the things of God – Eph. 2:1*

EXPL: The death of the spirit; it is the separation of the “part” of a human being that has a relationship with God.

Charles Finney quote pertaining to spiritual deadness spoken of in Ephesians 2:1.

This death, therefore, as we see, is a death in sin--not one in which the mind is sunk into utter inactivity--not a state in which no action is possible; but simply one in which the mind acts, and the individual "walks according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air"--the same Satanic agency which energizes in all those who are disobedient to God. It is a death unto God, and to His character and claims. The dead sinner is regardless of God and of God's rightful authority as one physically dead is unconscious of what passes around him; he is borne to his grave, but he knows not by whom;--so the spiritually dead are voluntarily insensible to the great facts of the spiritual world--insensible to God, to truth, and to their own relations to both. They may be intensely alive to the things of the natural world, to everything relating to earthly pleasure; but to God and duty, they are dead. This state, then, is called death figuratively, and yet so accurately does it describe the sinner's real case that it can scarcely be called a figure.”³

Where it all started: Genesis 2:16-17

“The Lord God commanded the man, saying, *“From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; 17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die”* (NASB).

Q# Did Adam and Eve both kick the bucket the very day they ate of the forbidden fruit? No. They physically passed away many years later but were suffered an immediate

³ Charles Finney, *Awakening From the Sleep of Spiritual Death* (The Oberlin Evangelist: Alethia in Heart, September 24, 1851), [CD-ROM].

and devastating spiritual death that was like a sledgehammer upon the precious bond between God and humanity.

*Avatar – the tails that were intertwined with the animals to the “people” through which they were able to both send and receive a plethora of signals and stimuli.
Totally dead to the things of God. The diagnosis here is “unable to respond to stimuli,” to have no desire or appetite for the things of God.

Kenneth Wuest describes this state as:

Spiritual death is the state of separation from God and His life. Death itself is a separation, whether physical, the separation of the person from his body, or spiritual, the separation, of the person from God.”⁴

2 Corinthians 4:3-6

“And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus’ sake. 6 For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”

Q# So if I’m dead to the things of God, what needs to happen?

= We need to be “made alive” by God. 2:5 *“even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),”*

*Learning about and serving God is no longer an Obligation but a Privilege.

Q# Why is it necessary to be “made alive” or “born again?”

= Because the state in which you die is the state that you remain in for eternity. It’s like our standing with God at the time of death is the hardening of the concrete that can never be undone. Thus, if you die with your spirit separated from God through sin (and sin in the Bible is the cause of ALL death and suffering), then there is no more remedy.

Hebrews 9:23 *“It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,”*

Colossians 3:13a *“When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh...”*

Jesus said in Matthew 5:6 *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled”* but without God “jump-starting” in regenerating us, we will not hunger for anything having to do with God (unless we think that we can get something out of it).

Q# Do we really have that little of a desire for the things of God?

⁴ Kenneth Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1997, c1984), in *Logos Library System* [CD-ROM].

Check out Romans 3:10b-18:

“THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

11 THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS,

THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

12 ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS;

THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD,

THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.”

13 “THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE,

WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING,”

“THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS”;

14 “WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS”;

15 “THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD,

16 DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS,

17 AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN.”

18 “THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES.”

Point = This is what we see in the mirror before Christ makes us alive through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

Q# Why is life without a relationship described as “dead”?

Point = God is the source of all life. Jesus said, *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and ¹have it abundantly”* (John 10:10, NASB).

***Objection: But I love my family!**

= Your family will one day be destroyed by death and if you have not pointed your family to the Savior Jesus Christ, your family’s relationships will be extinguished by the “whiteout” of death. But if you have centered your family on Christ then your family will be re-united in heaven after walking through the river of death whereas the family that lives independent from individual relationships with God will be eternally separated from God and one another in the Lake of Fire.

2:1 Καὶ ὑμᾶς ὄντας νεκροὺς τοῖς παραπτώμασιν καὶ ταῖς ἀμαρτίαις ὑμῶν

Notice that ὄντας is the plural, active participle of the verb “to be” or “I exist.” Literally, the Bible is saying that before a person is regenerated they are alive physically but spiritually dead.

And you all continually existing as dead people in your trespasses and sins,

Q# So if we are dead then what killed us? Notice the next phrase: τοῖς παραπτώμασιν καὶ ταῖς ἀμαρτίαις ὑμῶν

Without God we are dead and regeneration is necessary because:

The Cause/State of Death – “your trespasses and sins”

¹Or have abundance

Q# What is the difference between transgressions and sins?

= A transgression is “*a false step, a trespass*,”⁵ in other words, a direct violation of God’s standard whereas to sin is “*to miss the mark, do wrong, sin*,”⁶ hence, falling short of God’s standard.

Romans 4:25 “*He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification*” (NASB).

*Notice the identity of the cause “*your*,” not God’s or some third party.

Romans 3:23 tells us “*for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.*”

John Stott clarifies the subject of this description:

The apostle’s description is not that of ‘some particularly decadent tribe or degraded segment of society, or even of the extremely corrupt paganism of his own day’. Rather, it is ‘the biblical diagnosis of fallen man in fallen society everywhere’.⁷

And you all continually existing as dead people in your trespasses and sins,

Their bodies, minds, and wills seem to function totally in harmony with what we know as society (except for the socially awkward) but there is an eerie silence in their spirit towards God. What a freaky picture!

So the next question naturally arises: What killed us? I mean, what is the cause of our spiritual deadness. Check out verse 1 again “*...your trespasses and sins.*” What is the difference between trespasses and sins? Simply put, trespasses are those things that we shouldn’t do that we do and sins are the things that we should do that we don’t do. But why is it that we find ourselves in the midst of personal transgressions and sins before God? It’s pretty simple; our heart is radically depraved. Now at this point the metaphor used here drills deep into the reservoir of biblical truth. Please understand that you are not a sinner because you sin, you sin because you are a sinner. It’s not the actions per se that define what you are but your nature and furthermore, your nature will eventually make itself known. You’ve seen this haven’t you? People realize there is a problem and they try Behavior Modification (that always fails by the way).

*ILL – Imagine a Tiger that is fully trained. You can never totally trust it because at the very base level it has the nature of a wild, untamed predator.

Q# How did we get into this position? = ORIGINAL SIN

■Romans 5:12 “*Wherefore, as by one man (Adam) sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:*”

Q# So then did God cause sin?

=No. James 1:13

“*Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be*

⁵R.L. Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries: Updated edition* (Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc. 1998, 1981), in *Logos Library System* [CD-ROM].

⁶Ibid.

⁷ Stott, 71, cited in *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Peter T. O’Brien (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1999), 156.

tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.”

Q# Did God structure or “jerry rig” reality in such a way that sin was “engineered at a distance” or by proxy?

= No. James 1:14-17

14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin¹ is accomplished, it brings forth death. 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. 17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or¹ shifting shadow” (NASB).

Point = Human capacity to sin or choose God was there at the beginning.

Q# So Adam sinned and sin entered into the human race like a spiritual/genetic kind of leach that reciprocated itself and burrowed into the very spiritual pipeline of humanity itself so that EVERY person is born with a sinful nature?

= Yes.

Q# HOW IS THAT FAIR?

1. To be human is to have the ability to recognize good and evil AND choose which one to embrace.

This was the case of Adam and Eve before sin entered the human race BUT it is not the case with you and I. Yes, we can still recognize good and evil but we have a bent and inclination to evil because our hearts are evil.

*Our hearts are like a vehicle that is out of line – you have to continually readjust your steering just to stay in the road.

Point = Likewise, our nature is naturally bent towards sin and away from God.

It’s not hard to understand this really. Ever wondered why it comes natural to place yourself first and others last? Some of you have probably developed the quality of putting others first but there is probably no one who was pre-wired to allow others to go first without some amount of self-discipline and restraint to reach that point. Why is it more difficult to give than to receive?

*Just look at society. Some of the things that we have in place to restrain the evil of the human heart are:

- A. Contracts
- B. Locks
- C. Police
- D. Jails/Prisons

***OBJECTION: It’s not human nature that’s bad! It’s society!**

= The whole is made up of the sum of its parts. Since every society is comprised of people and every society is corrupt (while the degrees of depravity vary), it follows that the problem stems from the people who make up that society.

¹Lit is brought to completion

¹Lit shadow of turning

***OBJECTION: What if we can re-arrange a “perfect society” or a “utopia?”**

= Every attempt at utopia has crash and burned. The biggest flop was Russia’s experience with Marxism/Communism. Marx pictured a “class-less society” where every one would give and get no more or less than they had need or ability. The horrific crash of Marxism resulted from “a fundamental misunderstanding of human nature.”⁸

If humans are basically good then you could theoretically structure an “equal society” where everyone both produced and consumed according to their ability and need. The evils of society would quickly dissipate. Yet Communism has never, nor will ever work because the problems of human society ultimately stem from the human heart that is naturally dead to God and thus, inclined towards selfishness rather than benevolence. Jeremiah 17:9 warns, *“The heart is more deceitful than all else, and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?”* (NASB).

Q# Do I have to turn over a new leaf to come to God?

= Even if you turn over a new leaf (behavior modification), you’re still turning over a dead leaf.

Q# Can I be good enough to go to heaven?

= You need a fundamental change of your heart and nature; not simply a change in actions.

2) Deceived – 2:2

Q# How can I meet God halfway?

= Here’s the deception; you are still unwilling to utter your inability to change your own heart. You are still holding on to your self-righteousness, deceiving yourself that you can come even 10 % of the way. Putting your faith in Christ alone is not some contract you haggle with God over.

Without God we are dead and regeneration is necessary because:

A. The Life of Death – 2:2 *“in which you formerly walked according to the ¹course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.”*

2 ἐν αἷς ποτε περιεπατήσατε κατὰ τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, κατὰ τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος, τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ νῦν ἐνεργοῦντος ἐν τοῖς υἱοῖς τῆς ἀπειθείας·

ἐν αἷς ποτε - is a clause pointing back to a time before the present; our life before we were changed. It is the biggest “WHEN” of your life. Alan Jackson’s song “Do you Remember?” brings our thoughts back to 9/11 and the apostle Paul is bringing us back to the “WHEN” before we were saved and changed by the work of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:14 *“The natural man understands not the things of the spirit of God, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned”* (NASB).

⁸ *The Truth About Communism*, Documentary.

¹ Lit age

The above verse speaks about how lost people follow the pattern of the world that is in rebellion to God. The point of the verse is that the course and pattern of the world has been crafted by Satan.

Satan is the author of rebellion and selfishness.

*A sinner must realize the nature and effect of his sin before he will ever turn from it.

3) Slaves to sin – 2:3

John 8:44 “*Everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin*” (NASB).

= Romans 3:23 ...every person is a slave to sin.

Q# What makes the difference between a bad person and a good person?

=The problem with this question is that it assumes a standard that is wrong. It assumes a horizontal standard; comparing ourselves to other people, whereas the standard is not a comparison to people but to God.

*Depravity in a child – Selfishness

The next key is the past tense of our Lifestyle περιπατήσατε κατὰ τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου = “*you once walked according to the age/customs of this world...*”

*This is what is meant by Total Depravity: you can never get out of the sphere and scope of sin outside of a relationship with Jesus Christ. It means that without the changing power of the Holy Spirit we CANNOT do what is righteous in God’s sight.

Kenneth Wuest explains:

All their thoughts, words, and deeds are ensphered by sin. Not one of their acts ever gets outside this circle of sin.⁹

Edna Johnson writes:

It’s that sin governed every aspect of the Ephesians’ lives.¹⁰

*Falling into a pool of used motor oil and trying to clean it off just using your hands. This will not work because you need something to cut through the grease. You must realize that sin comes from the heart and that only the cleansing of the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration can remove the stain of sin.

***Objection: So are you saying that I can’t do ANYTHING GOOD AT ALL?**

= The Bible is not saying that we can’t occasionally OUTWARDLY align ourselves with God’s Moral Law but this is not the point. Having a relationship with God is not a matter of behavior modification or outwardly aligning your actions with a certain moral code. The point is not so much our actions as it is our nature; our hearts.

A. Giving money to the church – Root motivation = drudgery “I should, therefore I will but I really don’t want to.” Vs. “I get to give.”

⁹Wuest, K. S. (1997, c1984). Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English reader (Eph 2:2). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

¹⁰ Edna Johnson, *A Semantic and Structural Analysis of Ephesians* (SIL International: Dallas, 2008), 79.

B. Visitation – Root motivation = drudgery “I should, therefore I will but I really don’t want to.” Vs. compassion for people.

C. Church trips – Root motivation = Popularity/Connections vs. serving Christ = used the church to serve myself vs. making the Gospel known.

D. Reading theology – Root motivation = Curiosity about the End Times, Nuclear War, Dragons, the Antichrist, One World Government, Dragons, and an unprecedented WW III, etc. vs. the desire to know the One who created me and died for me. Fascinating reading vs. Desire to know my Savior.

*If Salvation depends upon aligning our lives with God’s Moral Law, then Salvation **is not** a matter of a changed heart but of an altered lifestyle. But we’ve all seen what this looks like:

A. The Conscience does its work in making us miserable by pointing out our many faults

B. We don’t like being miserable so we try BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION and try to align ourselves with a form of godliness but DEEP DOWN we hate it. We have no desire for godliness, although we know that we need it and our family would be better off if we ACT this way, but

C. It either ends in:

1) Disillusionment – we realize that we can’t perfectly keep the Law of God and we become disillusioned and quit. We come to church for a time kind of like starting a new workout but after time, the new becomes old and we quit.

2) Self-righteousness – we are able to perform a certain religious checklist and then become dependent upon it for our relationship with God

Point = So you **can** align yourself to a certain extent with God’s moral standards but you cannot change your own heart so that you serve God with the right motivations.

Q# Why is the pattern of life outside of a relationship with Christ?

The unregenerate lifestyle/before regeneration, evil engulfs & influences our:

1. The World (2:2)
2. The Devil (2:2)
3. The Flesh (2:3)

Point = Each one plays a vital role in the “Dead Life” apart from God.

- 1) Environment: Patterned after the fallen world vs. will of God – “*according to the course of this world...*” 2:2

Q# What is the course of this world?

- A. Racism
- B. Selfishness
- C. Materialism
- D. Relativism
- E. Tyranny
- F. Bureaucracy

- 2) Patterned after the character of Satan vs. character of God – “*according to the prince of the power of the air...*” 2:2
- 3) Patterned after the spirit of rebellion vs. Repentance – “*...of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience...*” 2:2

Just as God continues to form Christians to be more like Him, so Satan inexorably assists and influences the unbeliever to further reject the light of God’s revelation.

A. I’m not a bad person

B. My good works are enough to get me into heaven

- 4) Inner desires: “*Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging in the desires of the flesh and of the mind/thoughts,*” 2:3

ἐπιθυμίαις – also used in Eph. 4:22 “*that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,*”

Sins of:

A. The Flesh – the sins of the body

Ephesians 4:17-19

17 *So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind,*

18 *being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;*

19 *and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.”*

- 5) Entrenched Patterns of Thought – “*Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging in the desires of the flesh and of the mind/thoughts,*” 2:3

The Mind – unbelief or a trust in human reasoning instead of God

Point = “those evil deeds which our bodies and our minds wanted to do.”¹¹

- 6) Patterned after Adam vs. Christ – “*and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.*”

Romans 5:12,18 “*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.... So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.*”

4) Condemned – 2:3

We behaved according to our evil, corrupted human nature and thus, incurred the wrath of God.

Q# How good do I have to be to get into heaven?

= Perfect...and you’re not...so you’re in serious trouble.

Q# Can you really tell the difference between how a true Christian lives and one who thinks they are a Christian but really are not?

= Yes. Notice the past tense in 2:1 and 2:3. Your profession of faith is only valid so far as your life has been fundamentally changed.

¹¹ Johnson, 82.