

SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER ISA. 55: 1 0 FOR THE EATER

BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES
FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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GENERATION FROM ABOVE

In the study on "Concerning 'Born Again'" (Issue No. 93) it was demonstrated by infallible proofs from Scripture that the Greek phrase *gennao anothen* does not mean "**born again**" as it is translated in John 3:3, 7; and that the simple, honest, and objective meaning of this phrase is "**generated from above.**" This being true, then we all owe it to God to find out as much as we can from His Word just what "generated from above" means.

Jesus Christ said to His disciples: "**Without Me ye can do nothing**" (John 15:5). This was true of the apostles to whom this was declared, and it is still true of every one of us today. However, it must be acknowledged that there is much that a capable or talented person can do even in the religious realm that has no real relationship to Him. In conferences on "church growth" you will be told of a thousand gimmicks you can use and schemes that can be worked in order to assemble great crowds. One of these is to hire the best musical director you can obtain, organize and train a choir of four hundred voices, and this will guarantee an attendance of at least 1200 people, 1600 if the choir is counted. But all this will prove to be just so much wood, hay, and stubble in the day when every man's work shall be made manifest.

Paul declared: "**For what man knoweth the things of man, save by the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God**" (1 Cor. 2: 11). This tells us that while all human things can be searched out and known by human intelligence, no matter how complex they may be, yet divine things can be known only by divine enabling.

In view of such declarations as these from the Word of God, it is evident that there has to be a work of God that makes possible every acceptable thing that anyone ever does in relationship to Him. This would need to be an enabling work, an empowering work. That there is such a work is declared in many places in Scripture, and the term that best describes this work is "divine generation." This most important truth is one which is only feebly understood by many, due to the fact that the passages which declare it are forced either by mistranslation or misinterpretation to support traditional ideas that are not in them.

It has been said that quite often we make our own troubles, after which we are troubled by the troubles we have made. This is certainly true in the case of many passages into which men have read the theological ideas of "regeneration," or the so-called "new birth."

In all theology this is supposed to be a one-shot thing, experienced instantaneously at the moment of conversion, settling once and for all one's place as a child in the family of God. It is held that as by a first and natural birth one becomes a child of human parents, even so by a second divine birth he becomes a child of God. Those who say they have experienced this usually lay claim to having been "born again." However when they come upon the passage that emphatically declares: **"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God"** (1 John 3:9), they are greatly troubled. While they insist they have experienced this birth, they are too honest to claim they have reached the stage of sinlessness.

So the problem they have created calls for the manufacture of other theological doctrines in the hope of solving the problem and dispelling the trouble. Some who have a very low estimate of the character of sin are able to claim such sinlessness inasmuch as they have ceased from certain obvious vices, or have given up the use of certain things which their sect calls sinful. Thus, measured by their own private yardstick they are sinless. Further claim is usually made that this sinlessness was produced by some other experience which is described by various terms such as sanctification, eradication, second-blessing, or the baptism of the Holy Spirit. But there are many Christians who have a much keener sense of the nature of sin, and who live lives of much greater commitment, devotedness, and service than the self-acclaimed pietist and perfectionist, yet would never think of claiming sinlessness.

There are others who have developed a doctrine called "the two natures of the child of God," a "sinful nature" which is the result of natural birth, and a "divine nature" which they attribute to being "born of God." It is further held that all sin in our lives is the outflow of our "sinful nature," and that no sin at all is ever out of the divine nature. This is supposed to take care of John's difficult declaration, since it is held that he is speaking of the divine nature when he said, "**He that is born of God doth not commit sin.**"

This is one way out of the difficulty, but it will not stand the test of constant examination by the white light of God's Word. In it we have only one nature, which is our human nature. And while we have become partakers of the divine nature, we must remember that it is a human being that becomes a partaker of this, and that it comes from believing in the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:4).

In the meaningful study of any passage of Scripture we must first of all ask, "What does it say?" This must be answered wholly without any input from those doctrines that have been built upon it, and which are supposed to be demonstrated by quoting it. And if our question sends us to the original Greek, then to the Greek we will go. Furthermore, if the mere suggestion of "going to the Greek" frightens anyone, then he does not know that in Bible study the language barrier has been broken, and that every fact that is available to anyone is also available to you and me.

In the passage we are now considering (1 John 3:9), everything depends on the meaning of the word "born." The Greek word is *gennao*, one of a large family of words which has the root *gen* as a base. This root is also carried over into English usage, providing us with many words that use *gen* as a prefix or root, all of which have the idea of producing in them.

The basic meaning of *gennao* is to generate, or to produce, especially in the sense of giving origin to. The lexicons, usually following one another, are prone to say that *gennao* means "to beget," but this presents no problem if we keep in mind that *beget* and *generate* are synonymous terms, and that they come into comparison in the sense that they both have in them the idea of "to give origin to," that is, "to produce." Of this word Herman Cremer says: "Peculiar is the use made by Paul in some passages of the word to denote an influence exerted on someone, moulding his life, as in Gal. 4:24." However, I do not think that these are peculiar uses at all. 'What Paul said in the Galatian passage was that the Sinai covenant "gendereth (*gennao*) to

bondage," which means that the law generated slavery, not freedom.

The idea of generating is a basic meaning that must always be kept in mind in considering any occurrence of *gennao*. John declares that, "Whosoever is generated of God does not commit sin," and enforces this by saying, **"we know that whosoever is generated of God sinneth not, for His seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin for he is generated of God."**

The lesson to be learned here is that the generating work of God never produces sin as a result. It cannot lead to the committing of sin. John does not say that the children of God never transgress. Indeed, in an earlier passage he freely admits the possibility of sin in the believer's life, telling him that if any man does sin he has an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. It does not seem that God would have made such marvelous provision for His sinning children if it were impossible for them to sin.

What the Holy Spirit is telling us in 1 John 3:9 is that the generating work of God will never produce sin. Even when sin is committed by the Christian, it will never be the outcome of divine generation. God's generating work always has a specific purpose, a definite end in view. It is likened to a man planting seed. If a farmer wants wheat, he plants the seed that produces wheat. All seeds bring forth only after their kind, The seed God plants remains within us. It does not change into something else. He never plants a seed that produces sin. If His generating work produces nothing in our lives, His seed remains and will be a witness against us when God judges the living and the dead. Even as the Lord Jesus declared: "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

As already noted, when we recognize that *gennao* means to generate, or to produce, all passages in which this word occurs will shine forth with a new light and reveal greater and more positive truth. Take as an example 2 Tim. 2:23 where Paul instructs Timothy to avoid foolish and unlearned questions "knowing that they do gender (*gennao*) strifes." How simple this passage becomes when we use the word *generate* as a translation.

In Matt. 1:18 we read: **"Now the birth (*genesis*). of Jesus Christ was after this manner."** The word *genesis* is a verbal noun derived from *gennao* and should be translated "generating." Joseph had no part in the

generating or producing Jesus the Christ. His incarnation was entirely a work of the Holy Spirit. Then in Matt. 1:20 We read that the angel of the Lord said to Joseph: "**Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived (*gennao*) in her is of the Holy Spirit.**" This shows that *gennao* has more to do with all that took place in the womb of Mary in the nine months before birth rather than with the actual birth (coming forth) of the babe itself. The proper understanding of *gennao* in this passage will produce a better appreciation. of the virgin birth.

Another passage from 1 John is of the utmost importance. It is emphatically declared that: "**Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born (*gennao*) of God** (1 John 5:1). A quick look at this passage might cause one to think that belief in Christ is the cause, and that "born of God" is the result, but this is not the truth being declared here. If any use it as proof of this, he had better end his studies then and there, for if he continues he will find two other statements in this epistle that make such an interpretation impossible. These are: "**Ye know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born (*gennao*) of Him**" (1 John 2:29); and "**For love is of God; and every one that loveth is born (*gennao*) of God**" (1 John 4:7).

These passages tell us that belief in Jesus Christ is God-generated. There would be no believers apart from this. Some who say they will believe when they get "good and ready" had better give due heed here. How do they know that the generating work of God will be there at their convenience? We also learn that love is the result of divine generation. Apart from this all men would care only for their own, and none would care for another. Righteousness which is acceptable in God's sight is also generated by Him.

I believe I have pointed truth lovers to an avenue of truth down which they can walk and enjoy the beauty of truth as they go.

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