

BORN OF GOD

Quite often we hear unregenerate sinners exhorted to raise themselves out of sin. They are asked to meet such impossible conditions as "feeling and acknowledging themselves to be in need of salvation, resolving to turn from sin and to ask Christ to come into their hearts." However, if they could do any or all of these things while spiritually unborn, then there would, and could, be no such thing as regeneration. There could be no *quickenings* from sin by the Holy Spirit, and the sinner's deliverance from his former course could not be traceable to the grace of God nor to the "great love wherewith He loved them" but rather it would be the result of their own doings. This could not by any stretch of the imagination be referred to as "Salvation by grace" but it would be salvation by the works of the creature.

The Scriptures make it abundantly clear that the spiritual birth of sinners occurs when they are "dead in trespasses and sins;" while they are walking according to the course of this world and fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. It *never* occurs as a result of a dead sinner deciding to start hating sin and feeling in need of salvation. How could a sinner feel the need of being saved from something he loves; or how could he voluntarily start desiring that which he hates? That would be about like expecting a hog to stop loving slop, or to stop wallowing in filthy mudholes.

A man's nature must first be changed before he will love what he preciously hated, or hate what he previously loved. And only the almighty power of God, exerted independently of the creature, can accomplish this. It is called a *new creation, a new birth, a resurrection, a quickening, and a translation*, all to show that man has nothing whatsoever to do with it. Any godly actions on the part of a sinner comes *after* he is given divine life, *never* before.

And, God only quickens "*His people.*" "*Because ye are (already) sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father*" (Gal. 4:6). "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will" (John 5:21). "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but

of God that showeth mercy" (Rom. 9:16). Sinners are spiritually born "Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13). "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Matt. 11:27). These verses are a mighty strong dose for popular religionists, but could anything be plainer so far as language is concerned?

---Elder Ralph Harris