

From the Bits and Pieces #411 by Elder Ralph Harris
IT IS THE SPIRIT THAT QUICKENETH

Our Lord told us that it is the *Spirit* that quickeneth. He did not say, the *gospel and* the Spirit, or, the *preacher and* the Spirit, or, the *missionary and* the Spirit, or, *Man's freewill and* the Spirit, etc., but rather, "It is the *Spirit* that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing" (John 6:63). Now if the preaching of the gospel was necessary to the regeneration of sinners, it would require preachers and missionaries, and if it depended on them and the exercise of man's will how could the Lord say that the flesh profits *nothing* in the matter? In such a case the flesh would profit a great deal. It would be essential. It would be vital.

The apostle John taught us plainly that the new birth is "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13). I often hear Arminians quote the verse just prior to this one, but they always leave off verse 13. There can be but one reason why they leave it off, and that is because it teaches just the opposite of what they advocate. They say the new birth *positively is* of the will of the flesh; that it *is* of *man's will*. They say it absolutely depends upon the will of the sinner; for he must exercise his will in the matter or else God cannot give him spiritual birth.

The same John also tells us that being born of the Spirit is just as much out of the control of man as is the blowing of the wind (John 3:8). Listen to John again on this matter: "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth *whom he will*." So we see that it is based solely upon the will of God, not upon the will of man. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom. 9:16). It is *He* that begins the good work in a person, and it is *He* that will finish it (See Philippians 1:6). Man can neither *initiate* it, nor can he *complete* it. No man can come to me except the father which hath sent me drawn him (John 6:44). "You hath *He* quickened" (Eph. 2:1-5) "who were dead in sins." The dead cannot bring themselves to life---either in the *natural realm* or in the *spiritual realm*.

"You hath *He* quickened,"---not *Him* and some other contingency. What contingency did God use in making little John leap for joy in his mother's womb (See Luke 1:41, 44)? What contingency did He use when He sanctified Jeremiah before he came forth out of his mother's womb (Jeremiah.1: 5)? The Lord ordained Jeremiah a prophet *before he was born*. Then how can anyone think He is dependent upon man to help Him get people born of the Spirit? What contingency did He use to stop a persecuting Saul dead in his tracks and make an apostle out of him? What contingency did He use in the case of the repentant thief (Luke 23:39-44)? In none of

these cases, nor in any other, did the Lord need the help of men or angels. He did not need the help of either the written word or the preached word.

In the clear light of the Scriptures a man would have to be blind to argue that the preaching of the gospel is necessary in order for dead sinners to be regenerated. God's born again children may be begotten to, or brought to, an understanding of the *truth* through the preaching of God's word if He is pleased to shine the light of His Holy Spirit upon it (See I Cor. 4:15), but the only *Word* by which they can be begotten to eternal life is *Christ*, the *Living Word*. He is "the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever," the same *Living Word* which by the gospel is preached unto the saints (I Peter 1:23,25). The *written* word, or the *preached* word, does not live and abide forever.

"It is the *Spirit* that quickeneth"---the Spirit and the Spirit alone---at God's own time, and without the aid of any man in any way. Man does not have to believe, or do anything else, in order to be quickened by the Spirit, but he *does* have to be quickened by the Spirit before he can believe, or before he can do anything else of a spiritual nature. ---Elder Ralph Harris