

THE EXPERIENCE OF LIFE: Chapter 1

The first stage — in Christ Regeneration

The conditions of regeneration

The experience of regeneration is especially related to four things: our nature, our heart, our spirit, and God's life. From the aspects of these four things, therefore, we will look at our condition before regeneration, during regeneration, and after regeneration.

The Condition before Regeneration

First, our nature is corrupted. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, / And it is incurable; / Who can know it?" Although this verse speaks of man's heart, it actually refers to man's nature. Thus, we see that before regeneration our original nature is deceitful and crooked, incurable, and unable to match God's nature.

Second, the heart is hardened toward God. Ezekiel 36:26 speaks of our original heart as a "heart of stone." This means that before regeneration our heart toward God is always rebellious, stubborn, and as hard as stone.

Third, our spirit is dead toward God. Before regeneration, because of sins ([Eph. 2:1](#)), our spirit is dead toward God and has lost its function to contact God. We cannot, therefore, have fellowship with God, nor can we understand the spiritual things of God.

Fourth, man is separated from God's life. Since the nature of a man who is not regenerated is corrupted, his heart toward God is hardened, and his spirit toward God is dead, his entire person, therefore, is separated from God's life (4:18).

This is our condition before regeneration.

The condition during our experience of regeneration

First, we see that our nature is corrupt. Although before regeneration our nature was corrupt, we did not know it. It is at the time of experiencing regeneration, because of the Holy Spirit's enlightenment, that we see ourselves to be corrupt. At this time we see not only that our external deeds are corrupt but also that our inner nature is corrupt.

Second, our heart is contrite and repentant toward God. When we experience regeneration and the Holy Spirit enlightens us, we see ourselves as corrupt, sinning against God and man. Our heart then reproaches us and is contrite and repentant before God.

Third, our spirit is contrite toward God. Because of the repentance of our heart, the spirit deep within us also feels extremely contrite. Our spirit at this time is like that of Psalm 51:17, “a broken spirit.” When we are being regenerated of the Holy Spirit, our spirit deep within feels contrite — indeed, as if it were broken.

Fourth, man contacts God’s life. Since man sinned and fell and was driven out of the garden of Eden, the cherubim and a flaming sword guarded the way to the tree of life ([Gen. 3:24](#)) so that man could no longer contact it and thereby obtain God’s life. Not until the Lord Jesus shed His blood and died on the cross, thus satisfying the demand of God’s glory, holiness, and righteousness, was the way that leads to God’s life opened. Therefore, at the time of our regeneration, because of our contrition, repentance, and faith in receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, we can then contact in our spirit the life of God, which is in Him, for the life of God is in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ ([1 John 5:11](#)).

The condition after regeneration

First, we feel that our nature is corrupt. At the time of regeneration we see that our nature is corrupt. After regeneration, because of that initial seeing, we always feel that our own nature is corrupt.

Second, our heart is softened toward God. Our heart, which is as hard as stone toward God before regeneration, having experienced repentance at the time of regeneration, is softened toward God and becomes “a heart of flesh” ([Ezek. 36:26](#)). Our heart, having been softened, desires to love God and draws near to God; it longs to contact spiritual things and gladly receives and obeys God’s commands; it is not stubborn or rebellious; and although at times it is unable to obey, yet it is still willing to obey.

Third, our spirit is alive toward God. Because of its contact with God’s life at regeneration, the spirit that was dead before regeneration has been made alive by the resurrection power of God. The spirit, having been made alive, is able to contact God, to fellowship with God, and to apprehend the spiritual things of God, and it has the strength to do God’s will.

Fourth, we have God’s life. Because we have contacted and received God’s life during regeneration, we have the life of God within us. At the same time we also have God’s nature, since God’s nature is in God’s life.

When we speak of the experience of regeneration, therefore, in regard to the aspects of these four things — our nature, our heart, our spirit, and God’s life—the changes that have taken place before and after regeneration are all very clear. Our nature before regeneration is corrupt; at the time of regeneration we see that it is corrupt; and after regeneration we always feel that it is corrupt. Our heart is hard toward God before regeneration; at the time of regeneration it becomes deeply repentant; and after regeneration it is softened toward God. Our spirit is dead before regeneration; it is contrite at the time of regeneration; and it

is alive unto God after regeneration. Before regeneration we are separated from God's life; at the time of regeneration we contact God's life; and after regeneration we have God's life. If we are clear regarding these few points, we then have a thorough understanding of the experience of regeneration.

Clearance of the past

Now we will look straightway at the second experience of life, namely, the clearance of the past.

Strictly speaking, the clearance of the past cannot be regarded as an experience of life in itself. It can only be considered as an appendix to the experience of regeneration, since a man who has been truly regenerated and saved will naturally bring all his past to an end. The normal experience, therefore, of regeneration certainly includes the element of the ending of the past. But because there are some who do not seem to be regenerated and saved in a thoroughgoing way, although they have indeed been regenerated and saved, their past has not been immediately cleared. Not until they are once more revived by the Lord do they make up this lesson of clearing the past. It is proper, therefore, that we separate regeneration and the clearance of the past and consider them as two distinct experiences of life.