

## Regeneration and Conversion Compared

(1) What is the definition of Regeneration and Conversion?

(a) Regeneration: Titus 3:5, " Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost ." Election is salvation purposed, Redemption is salvation purchased, and Regeneration is salvation applied. Regeneration is the direct work of the Holy Spirit in applying, to the child of God, the salvation an elect child has in Jesus Christ. Synonymous terms and phrases would be; John 3:3, 5 born again, Ephesians 2:1 quickening, Colossians 2:11 circumcision of the heart, Romans 8:30 called, 2 Corinthians 5:17 new creation, Colossians 1:13 translation, John 6:44 drawn, John 5:24 passing from death to life, and etc. This work, according to scripture, is performed by God without any help or assistance from man.

(b) Conversion: Acts 3:19, " Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." In my humble estimation, the definition of conversion would be the voluntary turning of the quickened soul to God. In the scripture cited, the Apostle Peter is exhorting born again children of God to voluntarily turn from a life of disobedience, to a life of obedience that would include intimate fellowship with their Savior. The blessing of this work of obedience is to have their sins blotted out, which is a practical or experiential cleansing concerning the forgiveness of sins within a service context. I John 1:9 reads, " If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Since conversion is a voluntary work done by a born again child of God, it cannot precede the work of Grace that is termed Regeneration in Titus 3:5. Any good work by a person is the evidence, not the cause of his or her state.

(2) Will all the elect of God be Regenerated and/or Converted?

(a) Regeneration: According to Romans 8:29-30, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." This scripture cited should be sufficient to prove that every covenant child of Grace will be born again.

(b) Conversion: When searching the scripture we find many born again children of God that were not converted from the error of their way. For example; In Matt 19:16, Mark 10:17 and Luke 18:18 we read of a ruler that was very rich. This man manifested that he was a regenerated child of God, however he did not convert from his sin of covetousness to follow Jesus in a life of obedience. In Matt 13:15 we read of some children of God that were so disobedient that Jesus hid the truth in parables lest they should be converted. Matthew 7:14 teaches us that only a few children of God will enter into the strait gate of active obedience to God.

(3) How many times does Regeneration and/or Conversion take place in the life or experience of an elect child of God?

(a) Regeneration: The Bible is clear that this only happens once to a child of God. It would be impossible for one to become unborn by grace. This instant and irreversible work of grace happens at God's appointed time and will never be reversed or changed. James 1:17, " Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

(b) Conversion: If someone would do a complete study on the life of the Apostle Peter, one would conclude that there is at least four different times when Peter was converted concerning error. Peter in Matt 4:18-20, left his net to follow Jesus; In Luke 22:32 Peter was in need of a conversion from the error of believing he was great

in the Kingdom of God; In Acts 10:9-16 Peter was converted concerning having respect of persons between Jews and Gentiles ; And between Galatians 2:11 to Acts chapter 15 Peter was yet converted again concerning an issue with the food of the Gentiles.

The Greek term from which the word converted (epistrepho-Strong's # 1994) is translated in our King James Bible is often translated in the New Testament as Turn. In Luke 17:4 it is said that one could TURN (epistrepho) seven times in a day.

(4) Is the gospel instrumental in Regeneration and/or Conversion?

(a) Regeneration: In Ephesians 2:9 we read that our eternal salvation, " is not of works, lest any man should boast." If the gospel had anything to do with saving a person to heaven, the preacher and the believer would have grounds to boast. The gospel is not needed for one to be saved from the penalty of sin. That work is done by God alone without any mediation from man.

(b) Conversion: The subject of conversion is one that finds the gospel being an instrument. In Romans 10:14 we are taught that God uses a preacher to tell the truth of salvation to a regenerate child of God to convert him from the ignorance that he or she could be in. In 1 Corinthians 4:15 we read, " For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you again through the gospel." If this text is not teaching that the gospel is instrumental in one being converted, I would appreciate explanation as to how this text fits in your theology. Paul, without doubt believed his efforts in preaching the gospel converted the congregation at Corinth to the truth. In John 17:20 we read, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." Clearly in this text Jesus is praying for those that would be converted to the truth through the preaching of the Apostles. In Acts 14:15 Paul preaches that men would turn (epistrepho) from vanities unto the living God. Truly it should be as clear as the noon day sun on a cloudless day that the gospel is instrumental in the Conversion of a child of God from ignorance to understanding the truth in Christ Jesus, hence the phrase Gospel Conversion. As Paul would teach in 1 Corinthians 3:9 and 2 Corinthians 6:2, concerning the subject of Conversion the gospel preacher is a labourer/worker together with God. In Luke 1:16-17 the ministry of John was to turn(epistrepho) children of God to the Lord their God.

(5) Could a child of God lose his or her Regeneration and/or Conversion?

(a) Regeneration: The child of God according to John 10:27-30 could never perish or be plucked out of the hand of God. Romans 8:35-39 teaches us that a child of God cannot be separated from the love of God. It is absolutely impossible for an elect, redeemed, and regenerated child of God to lose his or her eternal salvation. Every child of grace is preserved in Jesus Christ( Jude vs1, 2 Timothy 4:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:23).

(b) Conversion: There are many accounts in scripture where children of God lost their conversion. In Galatians 5:4 there were some that fell from their service in grace. In 2 Peter 1:10 Peter tells that we can fall from the assurance in grace(experiential). In 2 Peter 3:17 Peter tells that a child of God could fall from a place of steadfastness in the truth(a place surely they had been converted to). In Revelation 2:5 we read that the Church at Ephesus fell from a place of devotion. All of these texts and many more could only lead one to understand that a child of God could lose his or her place of conversion and because we are so prone to error, many children of God need to be converted over and over for the same deviation from the truth.

(6) Could a person deny or refuse Regeneration and/or Conversion?

(a) Regeneration: By understanding what the Bible teaches about the power and sovereignty of God, one would conclude that no covenant child of grace could refuse the power of God in Regeneration. One could refuse the effectual call of grace no more than Lazarus could the power of the voice of Jesus in John chapter 11. In Psalms 110:3 we read, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Also in Romans 8:21 we read,"

For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope." Paul clearly taught that regeneration was not by the sinner's will, but by the irresistible power of God.

(b) Conversion: In Acts 26:18 the Apostle Paul declares the heart of his effort in preaching the gospel." To open their eyes, and to turn (epistrophe) them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." There was a man named Agrippa that listened to Paul, and was declared by the Apostle to be a believer in the prophets(Acts 26:27). Agrippa on this day, even though he showed evidence that he was a regenerate child of God, never was converted to the truth. Paul almost persuaded him to be a Christian. In John 12:42-43 we read, "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." If I gave no other example, these two should be enough to show that a regenerate child of God can refuse to be converted from the error of his way.

(7) Could there be a hindrance to Regeneration and/or Conversion?

(a) Regeneration: Psalms 33:9 we learn that when God speaks it is done, when he commands, it will stand fast. In John 5:25 we read that when Jesus speaks(His voice in this text is synonymous with the Holy Ghost) they shall live. Not might live, but SHALL LIVE. There is no government, man built wall, military, nation, or evil strength that could hinder God in regenerating His elect child.

(b) Conversion: In 2 Corinthians 4:4 we learn that the god of this world could blind the mind of a child of God so they would not receive the truth. The people and false teachers of this world are often times hindrances, as I've spent time un-teaching children of God those things false teachers have taught. And even our old nature, that was not eradicated in the New Birth will hinder one from understanding the truth. In Hebrews 3:7 we read, "To day if ye will hear his voice." Truly Hebrews 3:7 is not in the same context as John 5:25. Hebrews 3:7 is in a temporal sense of a child of God hearing the Lord in His word.

(8) Is a person active in obedience in Regeneration and/or Conversion?

(a) Regeneration: In Ephesians 2:1 we read, " And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." If the person is dead in sins, it is impossible to conclude that his or her active obedience was involved in this great work of grace. This work is done by God, without man. Romans 3:24 teaches us that we are justified freely by His grace. The word freely in this beautiful text literally means without a cause. No child of God has ever performed one work to become a child of grace.

(b) Conversion: In Matthew 18:3, "And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven". This scripture makes reference to an active work that we do to enter into the Church. **THERE IS NO TEXT THAT EXHORTS A PERSON TO BE BORN AGAIN.** Jesus is clearly teaching His disciples, who were already born again children of God, to actively obey His commandment. In James 5:19-20, which are key verses in understanding the rightful place which conversion holds in the life of a born again child of God, we read, " Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." James in this text clearly is calling for active obedience from his readers. An understanding of this scripture will force us to believe that active obedience cannot precede Regeneration. Therefore we can easily conclude that conversion can only take place after Regeneration.

(9) Is Regeneration and/or Conversion always effectual? Meaning, is it possible for one or both of these works to fail?

(a) Regeneration: The work directly done by God never fails. When He said, Let there be Light, there was Light. When He calls his covenant children to life, they live. The Primitive Baptist use the phrase " The Effectual Call" to describe this perfect unfailing work of God.

(b) Conversion: The gospel call to conversion is not a work that gets results 100% of the time. It is a great blessing to receive the truth and be converted to a life of obedience, but sadly more times than not, children of God walk away from the truth to follow after their own ways. In Matthew 7:13 we read of MANY that go into the broad way, that leadeth to destruction.

(10) What is the context of scripture in which Regeneration and Conversion are used?

(a) The word Regeneration appears only two times in scripture.(1) In Titus 3:5 there is no question that the context is eternal salvation.(2) In Matthew 19:28 it is clear that Jesus is not making reference to eternal salvation, but a change in the form and order of service and worship.

(b) The word conversion never appears in scripture in the eternal salvation context. It is always under the Conditional Time Salvation context. Matthew 18:3, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children", James 5:19-20, " he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death"(temporal). Acts 3:19, " Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out", (in a temporal context, since we understand that the blood of Jesus cleansed us in eternal salvation).

In closing I would like to pay close attention to a portion of scripture in Acts chapter 16. In Acts 16:14-15 we read of Lydia, "whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household,". Notice that the Bible does not say that God opened her heart that day, but did open her heart before she attended unto the things spoken of Paul. A reader will also notice in the verses before this scripture that the Lord, in His providence, led Paul to this area to preach and Lydia was obedient to the preaching of the gospel by being baptized. It was Paul's preaching, being blessed of the Lord, that Lydia heard and the preaching of Paul was instrumental in her conversion to the truth.

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