

Theological Components of the Question

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEPRAVITY AND THE NECESSITY OF REGENERATION

The New Testament Doctrine of Depravity

The New Testament consistently views all natural descendents of Adam, all unbelievers, all unsaved men as spiritually dead, dead in trespasses and sins, sinners, bondslaves of sin, at enmity with God, rebels against the law of God, repressers of the truth of God, incapable of understanding the things of God, unable to please God in any way, and continually standing under the wrath and condemnation of God. All natural descendents of Adam are thus viewed.

The New Testament Doctrine of Regeneration

Abraham Kuyper, in his classic, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, defines this term, both theologically and historically, in its usages:

The word "regeneration" is used in a limited sense, and in a more extended sense. It is used in the limited sense when it denotes exclusively God's act of quickening, which is the first divine act whereby God translates us from death into life, from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son. In this sense regeneration is the starting-point. God comes to one born in iniquity and dead in trespasses and sins, and plants the principles of a new spiritual life in his soul. Hence he is born again.

The word "regeneration" used in its wider sense, denotes the entire change by grace effected in our persons, ending in our dying to sin in death and our being born for heaven. While formerly this was the usual sense of the word, we are accustomed now to the limited sense, which we therefore adopt in this discussion.¹

In this discussion, the term "regeneration" is used in the limited sense, to mean the act of impartation of spiritual life, by the agency of the Holy Spirit. This doctrine is presented in the New Testament under various figures, including a new birth, a resurrection, and a new creation, resulting in a new life and a new nature.

The present discussion centers upon the question: Were Old Testament believers regenerate or not? What is usually intended by this question

¹Kuyper, op. cit., p. 293