

Doctrinal Regeneration

Recently, the term “doctrinal regeneration” has come from different segments of self-righteous religion to describe those who believe that all Arminians are lost. Let us first briefly examine what they mean by “doctrinal regeneration.” They equate “doctrinal regeneration” to “decisional regeneration”; the latter is the view that one’s decision is a prerequisite to regeneration. “Doctrinal regeneration,” they say, is the view that knowledge of a certain doctrine or set of doctrines is a prerequisite to salvation.

“Decisional regeneration” is damnable. All who hold to “decisional regeneration” are lost. Anyone who believes that one’s decision is the basis of gaining or maintaining salvation does not know the true gospel.

“Doctrinal regeneration” is also damnable. All who hold to “doctrinal regeneration” are lost. Anyone who believes that one’s belief in a certain doctrine or set of doctrines is the basis of gaining or maintaining salvation does not know the gospel.

The self-righteous Calvinists who speak peace to Arminians would say that we hold to “doctrinal regeneration.” If this accusation were true, then we would be lost. The fact is that we *do not* believe that belief in a doctrine or set of doctrines is a prerequisite to salvation, and we *do not* believe that belief in a doctrine or set of doctrines is the basis of gaining or maintaining salvation. Their accusations sometimes go like this: “You think that someone must believe all the five points of Calvinism before he can be saved.” We have never believed this. We have never promoted this. This is a false accusation.

I will attempt spell out why we believe that all Arminians are lost and how this is not doctrinal regeneration. I will use the example of universal atonement, since the atonement is at the heart of the gospel. Do we believe that one must believe in particular redemption before he can be saved? No. If we believed this, we would believe in salvation conditioned on the sinner -- in this case, salvation conditioned on one’s belief of the doctrine of particular redemption. Let me make this very clear: There is *nothing* in the sinner -- nothing the sinner does, thinks, or believes -- that is a prerequisite for salvation. *NOTHING*. The sinner before regeneration is a poor, helpless, blind, dead sinner. He cannot believe the truth and does not want to believe the truth (Romans 3:9-12; 8:5-8, 1 Corinthians 2:14, Isaiah 64:6-7, John 6:44, Colossians 2:13, Ephesians 2:5). The Bible describes the lost person as one without knowledge:

“... they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray to a god [that] cannot save” (Isaiah 45:20b).

“For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge” (Romans 10:2).

So knowledge cannot be a prerequisite to salvation, since lost people have no knowledge of the truth. And what is the truth of which these lost people have no knowledge? All we need to do is look at the verses that follow the above verses. In Isaiah 45:21, God shows that this knowledge

is the knowledge of God as a just God and a Savior. In Romans 10:3, God shows that this knowledge is the knowledge of the righteousness of God.

The righteousness of God is what reveals God to be a just God and a Savior. The righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel (Romans 1:17). It is explained in Romans 3 (notice the places where God's righteousness is mentioned).

God also describes lost people as those who do not believe the gospel:

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

And Mark 16:16 says that those who do not believe the gospel are lost.

So we see how God describes lost people. They are without a knowledge of the gospel. They have no ability to obtain a knowledge of the gospel. Thus, "decisional regeneration" is impossible, as is "doctrinal regeneration." It must take a miracle of God's grace. *God* regenerates, not a decision or a belief in a doctrine.

We have seen that lost people are described as those who do not believe the gospel. What of regenerate people? Do they believe the gospel? The first part of Mark 16:16 says they do. And there are other passages that show that God gives His people faith upon regeneration. What is faith? It is belief of the truth. In this case, it is belief of the gospel – who Christ is and what He did.

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to [give] the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6).

"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness" (Romans 6:17-18).

We can see the contrast God makes between the unregenerate and the regenerate. Unregenerate persons do not believe the gospel, and regenerate persons believe the gospel. The gospel is made up of doctrine. Now does this mean that belief of the gospel (doctrine) is a prerequisite to regeneration? Absolutely not. In fact, when one believes the gospel, he believes that his

salvation is conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ alone, which *excludes* salvation conditioned on knowledge of doctrine! The knowledge of the gospel is a *fruit* of regeneration, *not* a *prerequisite* to salvation. And not only is it a fruit of salvation, it is a fruit that every single regenerate person is given upon regeneration. There is no such thing as a regenerate person who does not believe the gospel.

We have already seen that this gospel shows God to be a just God and a Savior, one who is Just and Justifier, based on the work of Christ. We have seen that the gospel is the good news of salvation conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ alone. So what does the universal atonement advocate believe? He believes that Jesus Christ died for everyone without exception. He believes that it is *not* the work of Christ alone that makes the difference between salvation and damnation; instead, he believes that it is the work of the *sinner* that makes the ultimate difference between salvation and damnation. Whatever one believes makes the difference between salvation and damnation is what that person glories in -- boasts in -- as the ground of his salvation. The universal atonement advocate glories in -- boasts in -- the work of the sinner. The Christian glories in -- boasts in -- the cross of Christ alone as the only ground of salvation (Galatians 6:14). The universal atonement advocate is ignorant of the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel and is going about to establish his own righteousness (Romans 10:3). He prays to a god who cannot save (Isaiah 45:20). We saw above that this describes the unregenerate person. This does not describe the regenerate person. The regenerate person is given faith as the immediate fruit of regeneration -- he is given faith in Jesus Christ as the only ground of salvation. Thus, he will never believe that Jesus Christ died for everyone without exception, because he knows that it is the work of Christ that makes the only difference between heaven and hell. Now is this knowledge of the gospel a prerequisite to regeneration? Is he required to believe this before he can be saved? No! Before he is saved, he is ignorant of the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel. And as a fruit of regeneration, he is given faith so that he is no longer ignorant of the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel.

Do we believe in doctrinal regeneration? I hope you can see that we consider it as wicked a heresy as decisional regeneration. Salvation is of the Lord. And when the Lord saves someone, he gives that person a knowledge of the truth, which is the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the one who shed His blood and established a righteousness that ensures the salvation of everyone for whom He died.

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