

# **Associated Gospel Churches - Articles of Faith and Doctrine**

**Regeneration by the Holy Spirit  
&  
The Believer's Eternal Salvation**

**January 15, 2006**

# Regeneration by the Holy Spirit

## IX. Regeneration by the Holy Spirit

*We believe that, owing to the universal depravity and death in sin, no one can see or enter the kingdom of God unless born of the Spirit whereby he becomes a new creation, sealed unto the day of Redemption.*

*John 3:5-8; James 1:18; Galatians 6:15; 1 Peter 1:23; Ephesians 1:13; 1 John 5:1; Titus 3:5*

# The Believer's Eternal Salvation

## X. The Believer's Eternal Salvation

*We believe in the eternal salvation of all who are actually born again by the Spirit of God through faith in Christ as revealed in the Scriptures, and that it is the privilege of all such to be assured of their present salvation and eternal life.*

*John 5:24; Hebrews 10:24; John 10:28-29; Romans 8:28-39; 1 John 5:11-13; Philippians 1:6*

# Regeneration by the Holy Spirit

- **Regeneration**

- is a secret act of God in which He imparts new spiritual life to us

- i.e. being *“born again”*

- from spiritual death to spiritual life

- “But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved.” (Eph. 2:4-5)

- *“born-again Christians”* - a redundancy!

# Regeneration by the Holy Spirit

- **Regeneration**

- **completely an act of God (especially the Holy Spirit)**

- “...children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.” (John 1:13)**

- “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God...” (1 John 5:1)**

# Regeneration by the Holy Spirit

- **Regeneration**

- **completely an act of God (especially the Holy Spirit)**

- “He [the Father] chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all He created.”  
(James 1:18)

- “...He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.” (Titus 3:5)

# Regeneration by the Holy Spirit

- **Regeneration**

- **exact nature of regeneration is a mystery**

- **an instantaneous event that occurs only once**

- **but not always sure exactly when it happened**

- **an awakening of one who was spiritually dead to spiritual life**

- **but unsure exactly how this happens**

- “The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.” (John 3:8)

# Regeneration by the Holy Spirit

- **Regeneration**

- necessary owing to total depravity of Man

- **in a state of “spiritual death, or total corruption of human nature” (from AGC Article VI)**

- completely unable to do good before God or to save himself

- thus, cannot ‘see or enter the kingdom of God unless born of the Spirit’

# Regeneration by the Holy Spirit

- **Regeneration**

- **necessary owing to total depravity of Man**

## **John 3:3-8**

**“In reply Jesus declared, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.’**

**‘How can a man be born when he is old?’ Nicodemus asked. ‘Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!’**

**Jesus answered, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.’”**

# Regeneration by the Holy Spirit

- **Regeneration**

- coincides with “effectual calling”

- **i.e. when God, speaking through the proclamation of the Gospel, summons people to Himself in such a way that they will respond in saving faith**

- “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation...” (Eph. 1:13)

- “**He chose to give us birth through the word of truth...**” (James 1:18)

- “For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.” (1 Pet. 1:23)

# Regeneration by the Holy Spirit

- **Regeneration**

- precedes saving faith

- **owing to total depravity, unable to save ourselves or turn to God unless He enables**

- dead in sin & trespasses

- thus, need God to give us spiritual life and give us the ability to respond to the Gospel in faith

- “**One of those listening was a woman named Lydia... The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message.**” (Acts 16:14)

- “**No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.**” (John 6:44)

# Regeneration by the Holy Spirit

- **Regeneration**
  - precedes saving faith
  - ‘order of salvation’

**Regeneration**



**Faith**



**Justification**



**Sanctification**



**Glorification**

# Regeneration by the Holy Spirit

- **Regeneration**

- precedes saving faith

- i.e. *‘If you are born again, then you will believe in Jesus Christ,’* not, *‘If you believe in Jesus Christ, then you will be born again’*

- this position not universally held

- e.g. Evangelical Free Church of America

- [We believe:] **“That the true Church is composed of all such persons who through saving faith in Jesus Christ have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and are united together in the Body of Christ of which He is the Head.”** - Statement of Faith, paragraph 8

# Regeneration by the Holy Spirit

- **Regeneration**

- precedes saving faith

- e.g. Free Methodist Church in Canada

- “**God, by His Spirit**, acts to impart new life and put us into a relationship with Himself as we repent and our faith responds **to His grace.**”

- **i.e. some hold that regeneration results from / follows saving faith**

- **AGC position ambiguous from Articles (see later)**

- on the surface, Article X seems to suggest that regeneration results from faith (but see other possible explanation later):

- “We believe in the eternal salvation of all who are actually **born again through faith in Christ** as revealed in the Scriptures...”

# Regeneration by the Holy Spirit

- **Regeneration**

- results ultimately in a changed life

- “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” (1 John 5:1) - regeneration evidenced by faith

- “No one who is *born of God* will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been *born of God*.” (1 John 3:9) - regeneration evidenced by holiness

- “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been *born of God* and knows God.” (1 John 4:7) - regeneration evidenced by love

# Regeneration by the Holy Spirit

- **Regeneration**

- results ultimately in a changed life

- “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Cor. 5:17)

- “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.” (Galatians 6:15)

# Regeneration by the Holy Spirit

- **Regeneration**

- **results in assurance of eternal salvation  
(eternal security)**

**“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession - to the praise of His glory.” (Eph. 1:13-14)**

**“For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.” (1 Pet. 1:23)**

# The Believer's Eternal Salvation

## X. The Believer's Eternal Salvation (previously “The Believer's Security and Assurance”)

*We believe in the eternal salvation of all who are actually born again by the Spirit of God through faith in Christ as revealed in the Scriptures, and that it is the privilege of all such to be assured of their present salvation and eternal life.*

*John 5:24; Hebrews 10:24; John 10:28-29; Romans 8:28-39; 1 John 5:11-13; Philippians 1:6*

# The Believer's Eternal Salvation

- **Eternal Security**

- aka Perseverance of the Saints

- 2 aspects:

- **those who are truly born again will be kept by God's power and will persevere as Christians until the end of their lives**

- “We believe in the eternal salvation of all who are actually born again by the Spirit of God...”

- **only those who persevere to the end have truly been born again**

# The Believer's Eternal Salvation

- **Eternal Security**

- 1) **Eternal salvation of all who are truly born again**

- **“once saved, always saved”**

- **controversial point - significant disagreement on this point among evangelicals**

- **Wesleyan/Methodists (Arminians)** - believe it is possible for someone who is truly born again to lose his salvation
- **Reformed (and most Baptists)** - hold to perseverance of the saints (or ‘eternal security’, among Baptists)

# **The Believer's Eternal Salvation**

- **Eternal Security**

- 1) **Eternal salvation of all who are truly born again**

- **rooted in truth that salvation is, from beginning to end, the work of God**

– **what God has started, He will not fail to complete**

**“...being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 1:6)**

# The Believer's Eternal Salvation

- **Eternal Security**

- 1) **Eternal salvation of all who are truly born again**

- **salvation is, from beginning to end, the work of God**

**“For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified.” (Rom. 8:29-30)**

**Thus,**

**“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.” (John 5:24)**

# The Believer's Eternal Salvation

- **Eternal Security**

- 1) **Eternal salvation of all who are truly born again**

- **those who are truly born again are kept and protected by God's power - will therefore persevere to the end**

**“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.” (John 10:28-29)**

**“And this is the will of Him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that He has given me, but raise them up at the last day.” (John 6:39)**

# The Believer's Eternal Salvation

- **Eternal Security**

- 1) **Eternal salvation of all who are truly born again**

- **faith is the means God uses to guard His people**

“...who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last times.” (1 Pet. 1:5)

- **God’s power shields His people until salvation is completed at the Day of Judgment**
- **but God’s power works to shield His people *through their faith* (...who *through faith* are shielded by God’s power)**

# The Believer's Eternal Salvation

- Eternal Security

- 1) Eternal salvation of all who are truly born again

- **faith is the means God uses to guard His people**

- a point of some ambiguity in the AGC article:

Is it

“We believe in the eternal salvation of all who are actually *born again through faith in Christ...*” (i.e. regeneration through faith in Christ)

or

“We believe in the *eternal salvation* [of all who are actually born again] *through faith in Christ...*” (i.e. eternal security through faith in Christ)?

# **The Believer's Eternal Salvation**

- **Eternal Security**

**2) Only those who persevere to the end have been truly born again**

**“But now He has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation - if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel...” (Col. 1:22-23)**

**“We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly to the end the confidence we had at first.” (Heb. 3:14)**

# The Believer's Eternal Salvation

- **Eternal Security**

2) **Only those who persevere to the end have been truly born again**

- **those who finally fall away may give external evidences of conversion, but were never truly born again**

**e.g. Mark 4:16-17**

**“Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.”**

# The Believer's Eternal Salvation

- **Eternal Security**

- **Results in assurance for genuine believers**

- **those who have been truly born again will never lose their salvation**
    - **thus, “...it is the privilege of all such to be assured of their present salvation and eternal life.”**

**“And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. *I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.*” (1 John 5:13)**

# The Believer's Eternal Salvation

- **Eternal Security**

- **Results in assurance for genuine believers**

- **but need to avoid 'false assurance' (i.e. thinking you are saved when you in reality are not)**

**“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” (Matt. 7:21-23)**

# The Believer's Eternal Salvation

- Assurance of Salvation

- How can we have assurance?

- we can have assurance as we see the outworking in our lives of the new life we have in Christ

- could not see the act of regeneration, but should be able to see its effects in our lives (John 3:8)

- 3 helpful questions:

- Am I presently trusting Christ for salvation?

- Is there evidence of a regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in my heart?

- Do I see a long-term pattern of growth in my Christian life?

# The Believer's Eternal Salvation

- Assurance of Salvation
  - Am I presently trusting Christ for salvation?
    - continuing faith in Christ is a present assurance that God is working in us and guarding is
      - faith is the means by which God preserves His saints (1 Peter 1:5)

# The Believer's Eternal Salvation

- **Assurance of Salvation**
  - **Is there evidence of a regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in my heart?**
    - **subjective testimony of the Spirit in our hearts that we are God's children (Romans 8:16)**
    - **fruit of the spirit showing more and more in our lives (Gal. 5:22-33)**
    - **abiding in Christ day by day (John 15:1-8)**
      - **desire for regular fellowship with Him in prayer & worship**

# The Believer's Eternal Salvation

- Assurance of Salvation
  - Is there evidence of a regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in my heart?
    - continuing belief and acceptance of sound doctrine (1 John 2:23-24; 4:6)
    - living in obedience to Christ (1 John 2:4-6; 3:9-10, 24)
    - love for other believers (1 John 2:10-11; 3:11-17; 4:7-8)

# The Believer's Eternal Salvation

- Assurance of Salvation

- Do I see a long-term pattern of growth in my Christian life?

- **not sinless perfection, but pattern of growth over time**

- “For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ... Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:5-8, 10-11)

**Next class**

**Sanctification**

**January 22, 2006**

# References

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