

A NEW CREATION

RECOVERING THE GLORY OF REGENERATION

It is the mind alone on which regeneration acts, and the mind when changed reduces the rebellious flesh to order. — W. Anderson

In order to grow in our love to God, we should not only understand the tragedy of the fallen mind, we must revere the profundity of the redeemed mind and sense the gravity of our stewardship over it. The goal of this lesson, then, is to help the redeemed mind perceive more clearly the tremendous gift of God in regeneration and to rightly motivate a joyful resolution to steward it with all our might for the love of God. My hope is that the truth of the miracle of the new birth will awaken a tangible and pervasive attention to the importance of disciplining the regenerate mind.

DEFUNCT BY DEFAULT

1. **Jeremiah 4:14** - O Jerusalem, wash your _____ from evil, that you may be saved. How long shall your wicked _____ lodge within you?
2. **Isaiah 55:7** - Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his _____; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

The fountain must be cleansed which breeds the vermin. Pure vapours can never ascend from a filthy quagmire. What issue can there be of a vain heart but vain imaginations? Thoughts will not become new till a man is in Christ. We must be holy before we can think holily.¹

While the consequences of sin are devastating beyond comprehension, the gospel exhibits a rescuing power scarcely appreciated. The power of the gospel is to be realized at the foundation of the human soul. It conquers that most unconquerable part of man. It is made visible in the most invisible recesses of his heart. It is the power of God unto a new creation.

¹ Stephen Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, vol. 5 (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1864–1866), 304.

GOSPEL BY GRACE

We have seen that the natural mind is defunct by default—dead to its designed purpose; dead to the love and enjoyment of God (Ephesians 2:1). Indeed, “we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body *and the mind*, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind” (Ephesians 2:3). Every mind is guilty of offending God and would be lost in sin and under His just condemnation if it were not for the grace of His gospel, which is precisely the point of this passage. “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved” (Ephesians 2:4-5). Our salvation is here described in terms of the present effects of God’s grace. Salvation begins now as we are “made alive together with Christ.” The result involves nothing less than *redemption* through His substitutionary death, *regeneration* of being, and *union* with Christ. Here we will focus on regeneration, appraising the reality that in Christ we are radically new.

1. NEW _____

1. **Ezekiel 11:19–20** - And I will give them one _____, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the _____ from their flesh and give them a _____, [20] that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.
2. **Jeremiah 24:7** - I will give them a _____ to know that I am the LORD, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their _____.
3. **Jeremiah 31:33** - For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their _____. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.
4. **Deuteronomy 30:6** - And the LORD your God will circumcise your _____ and the heart of your offspring, so that you will _____ the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.
 - a. **Romans 2:29** - But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

- b. **Colossians 2:11–12** - In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, [12] having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

2. NEW _____

1. **Galatians 6:15** - For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a _____.
2. **2 Corinthians 5:17** - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a _____. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

3. NEW _____

1. **Ezekiel 18:31** - Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a _____ and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel?
2. **Ezekiel 36:26** - And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a _____.

4. NEW _____

3. **Romans 6:4** - We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in _____.
4. **Colossians 2:13–14** - And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God _____ together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, [14] by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.
5. **Ephesians 2:4–6** - But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, [5] even when we were dead in our trespasses, _____ together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—[6] and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

5. NEW _____

1. **John 3:3** - Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is _____ he cannot see the kingdom of God."
2. **John 1:12–13** - But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, [13] who were _____, not of blood nor of the will of the _____ nor of the will of _____, but of _____.
3. **James 1:18** - Of his own will he _____ by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.
4. **1 Peter 1:3** - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has _____ to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

(See also: 1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 18)

6. NEW _____

1. **Ephesians 4:23–24** - Be renewed in the spirit of your minds, [24] and to put on the _____, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.
2. **Colossians 3:10** - Put on the _____, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

7. _____

1. **Titus 3:5** - He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and _____ of the Holy Spirit
2. **1 Corinthians 6:11** - And such were some of you. But you were _____, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.
3. **Ephesians 4:23** - Be _____ in the spirit of your _____,

NATURE

4. **2 Peter 1:4** - by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

We are not new until our thinking is new.

- **1 Corinthians 2:12** - Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.
- **2 Timothy 1:7** - For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and _____.
- **2 Thessalonians 3:5** - May the Lord direct your hearts to _____ of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.
- **Philippians 2:12–13** - Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, [13] for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Regeneration

Regeneration is that work of the Spirit at conversion that renews the heart and life (the inner self), thus restoring the person's intellectual, volitional, moral, emotional, and relational capacities to know, love, and serve God.²

After the image of God, in order that this renewing may be understood to take place in that wherein is the image of God, i.e. in the mind.³

Scripture describes every believer in Christ as a new creation with a redeemed and regenerated mind. In Christ the Fall is reversed, but the totality of that reversal remains an interest of eager longing. But through regeneration the Holy Spirit produces love through a sound mind. "There is a new vital power, called there the spirit of power; and then he possesseth our hearts with predominant love to God, called there the spirit of a sound mind; so that by these three effects, doth the Spirit, renewing and sanctifying the souls of men, discover itself; in enlightening their minds, and opening their hearts, and fortifying their resolutions for God and the world to come."⁴

² Demarest, 293.

³ Augustine of Hippo, "On the Trinity," *NPNF*, 3: 195.

⁴ Thomas Manton, *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton*, vol. 11 (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1873), 405–406.

RESTORING THE CREATION BY REVERSING THE FALL

Though more is certainly accomplished, salvation affects the reversal of the Fall. For all who apprehend their need and receive the gospel of Christ by faith are not only *destined* for a new creation, they are *made* a new creation. Through the blood of His cross, Christ reconciled all things to Himself and thereby secured the reversal of the Fall (Colossians 1:20; Romans 8:20-23). As for the cosmos, the final reversal of the Fall constitutes a new heavens and a new earth; in other words a new creation (Is 65:17; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1). So too with human beings, the reversal of the Fall effects a new creation in us. The defunct mind is made alive to live for God. The futile mind is made effective to honor God. The hostile mind is replaced by a mind positively inclined to love God. But the new creation is more than restoration to the original. It speaks of an even greater glory than what was deemed “very good.” This remarkable notion is an inaugurated reality for everyone who has been made alive together with Christ.

The figure of the new creation replacing the old is a figure for us. Paul directs the illustration to the redeemed mind when he instructs us “to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds” (Ephesians 4:22-23). Our “new self,” then, is “created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:24). So the redeemed are being restored to the true character of the image of God through the renewal of the mind. What was marred at the Fall, is renewed through Christ, who is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4). So again, Paul writes, “put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” (Colossians 3:10). Clearly the repeated mention of ‘image’ is intended to evoke thoughts of the original creation when God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Genesis 1:26). What was corrupted at the Fall through sin is being reversed in Christ through redemption. But the transformation in view is more than an undoing; it is positively a new creation.

A NEW MIND

At regeneration the human mind undergoes a most essential change. When a person is truly awakened to grace, their mind begins a new life. So radical is this change, we can say that we now think with a new mind, not just an improved one. The redeemed mind is a new creation in Christ—a new creation, not merely unencumbered or more of something already there. Moreover, the new creation represents far more than a shift in the content of thought or habits of the mind. It speaks of a *change of nature*, a categorical transformation that frees the mind from slavery to sin and enables it to know and love God (Romans 6:6-13). With new minds, the redeemed in Christ are called to “walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

New creation (2 Corinthians 5:17; Gal 6:15), new birth (John 3:3; 1 Peter 1:3), new self (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:9), circumcision of heart (Deuteronomy 30:6; Romans 2:29), and regeneration (Titus 3:5) are varied expressions that have but one fundamental meaning: *a change of nature*. It is the same *you*, but with an inner nature that is radically new. In Christ, you are more than forgiven, more than cleansed; you are new, alive, raised, and illumined.

There is an important lesson to learn here. When through the gospel, a sinner is joined to Christ by faith, a fallen mind is reborn, renewed, regenerated—*it is made a new creation*. First, we should state the obvious. The mind cannot transform itself; it is not the cause of its own regeneration. Regeneration is something that happens to the mind; it is the work of God (Titus 3:5). Second, it is therefore a gift, and one of inestimable worth. It comes to us at an unfathomable price. It was purchased by nothing less than the blood of Christ. It is the workmanship of God, crafted for the express purpose of God-honoring use. Third, with our new mind we are given access to “the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16), a subject that we will consider at some length later. The redeemed mind is, therefore, to be stewarded with diligent care as over property of great value; and the greater the value, the greater the responsibility.

THE WAY YOU LEARNED CHRIST

Futile patterns of thought are the way of the world and ultimately destructive. The Apostle reminds us, “But that is not the way you learned Christ!” (Ephesians 4:20). The point is striking: the *way* that a person submits to Christ initially is to characterize the *way* that they live their daily lives in Christ. The exhortation, then, is: “you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ... that is not the way you learned Christ!” (Ephesians 4:17, 20). It reminds us of the words of Jesus, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29). We are exhorted to “have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.” This mind which is ours in Christ Jesus is a mind of profound humility (“gentle and lowly in heart”) since “he was [continuously existing] in the form [nature] of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped [an entitlement to be held onto or demanded], but emptied himself, by taking the form [nature] of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form [outward schema], he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:6-8). This is the supreme portrait of self-denial for the purpose of glorifying God. This is the mind that we are to have within us, a mind of unnatural, God-entranced humility that is willing to deny all self-seeking in thought and desire in order to manifest obedience to God.

So in contrast to their former futile patterns of thought (Ephesians 4:17), Paul calls the Ephesians to renew their minds in Christ (v. 24). We would do well to notice that this is a

command to believers, implying that as believers they need to be intentional about their minds. And not only intentional, but Christ-centered.

The life of a Christian is never detached from its start. The means that are instrumental to give spiritual life sustain that life. Received by faith, the gospel both redeems and sanctifies. So that one believes unto spiritual birth and continues believing unto spiritual growth. One repents by faith to enter into salvation, and repents daily in the process of growing in their salvation. We do not repent and believe in the gospel at the start and then move on to bigger and better things. Repenting and believing is our life while in this body of death. A life of faith is a life of repentance.