

Scriptural Rebirth (Part 2)

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[0 : 00] This is not part of the notes, but I've got to relate to you.

I heard something the last few days. I think it was George Whitefield, the great evangelist, that had a revival service at Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Belfast is even to this day is where they build ships. And shipbuilders, ironworkers, they're a tough, profane, it's like a group of plumbers, you know.

It can be bad. And these guys, well, they were. And George Whitefield went in there and he had a great revival. And these guys started attending.

It went for weeks. And they started attending. And they were getting born again. You must be born again. And finally, the ship owners that owned the shipbuilding company wrote every employee and said, quit bringing back the tools you've stolen.

[1 : 13] We don't have enough room in the warehouse. They were returning all the tools that they had stolen over the years, you know. Let's do a quick review tonight as it pertains to the doctrine of regeneration.

We began by looking at the fact that those being born again or born from above is a necessary birth. It has to happen. Without it, you won't see the kingdom of God.

It is God's chosen method of saving sinners. They're lost, depraved, and incapable of saving themselves.

They not only can't save themselves, they can't even make a move toward God to start the process, to get God's attention. We went through a few years ago the seeker movement.

The Bible says there's only one seeker in the Bible. Only one seeker in the universe. And it is God as He seeks to save His elect children. He's the great seeker.

[2 : 20] Now, as a result of this, we next look at the fact that regeneration is a supernatural birth. Again, it is all of God.

It's none of man. This is usually very disturbing, especially to fallen creatures. We always want to know what's our part in the process.

I want to make sure I get my part out of the way. Then I can move on to other things. My late brother-in-law used to say, well, I got saved when I was 12, so I don't need to hear about Jesus anymore.

That was his basic attitude. And then he got stage 4 cancer. One might argue that we must believe or have faith, and that is true.

But remember Ephesians. Faith is a grace gift from God, given to those who are born from above. And we're going to be looking at that fact in some detail in the future as part of this lesson.

[3 : 22] Not tonight, but the overall lesson. We also saw that the new birth, or being born again, must be a scriptural birth. Scripture speaks frequently of the need for a new birth, for a new heart.

This includes passages not only in the New Testament, but in the Old as well. When Jesus tried to explain this to Nicodemus in John chapter 3, he was surprised that as the great teacher of Israel, Nicodemus was unaware of the doctrine of regeneration.

Nicodemus should have known about this from Scripture, and the only Scripture available to Nicodemus in that day was the Old Testament.

The New Testament was yet to be written. Next, we're going to examine the fact that the new birth is an instantaneous birth.

It does not occur by a process over days, or weeks, or months, or years. It is true that God may and does often plant numerous people within our circle over time, and ultimately regenerates a soul.

[4 : 48] But when He regenerates a soul, He does it immediately, He does it instantaneously. I would like to say that these themes of the new birth we've been examining are original with me, but

of course that would be a great untruth.

In fact, I don't think I ever had an original thought in my mind in my whole life. I've been leaning on men like R.C. Sproul and John MacArthur, Steve Lawson, the great Puritan John Owen, another Puritan Stephen Sharnock, Abraham Cooper, who was a Dutch reform guy, and many, many others.

I was reading, I got here about 4.30, and I have a little book down there on regeneration by J.C. Ryle, the great Anglican bishop and a great man of God. But this evening, we're going to come to another resource on the new birth.

Another name I'm going to put in that list, and it is a man by the name of Augustine. Now, you may have heard his name pronounced Augustine, and you may have been even to St. Augustine, Florida, as I have been, but the proper way to pronounce his name is Augustine.

Augustine is regarded as one of the greatest theologians in the first 1,500 years of church history. Of course, that list came after the deaths of the apostles, who were inspired by God, John being the last one to depart for glory.

[6 : 26] Augustine was born in 354 A.D. in North Africa. He was actually born in what is today the country of Algeria. I've been to Algeria many times.

It is a Muslim country. I never saw a billboard or a highway marker proclaiming that Algeria was the birthplace of Augustine, one of the greatest theologians, Christian theologians that ever lived.

I don't think there's any marker or historic site relative to Augustine in Algeria. When he was a young teenager, about 15 years of age, his father died.

Augustine was at that time unregenerate. He had no interest in the things of God. In fact, it was all quite the opposite. With no one to guide him, Augustine adopted a sinful lifestyle that was quite gross, even for the standards of the secular world that we find ourselves in today in the 21st century.

And that's saying quite a bit. Much to the consternation of his mother, Augustine moved in with a woman who bore him a son out of wedlock.

[7 : 47] Augustine had a close friend who died. And he wrote later, this event began to provoke his thinking on the subject of life and death and what, if anything, lay beyond the grave.

And he thought about that. He moved to the country of Italy, settling in Rome. And by the way, Rome was the center of sinful activity.

Augustine had one thing going for him that many of you in this room can identify with. He had a Christian mother and she was a prayer warrior.

Thank God for praying Christian mothers. She prayed for years that her son would be saved, be born again. When Augustine departed for Rome, his mother knew he did not have a track record of virtue and godly living.

So she did what good godly mothers do for their only child. She pulled up stakes and followed him to Rome. She moved up there.

[9 : 01] She wanted to be close at hand as she lifted her son before God Almighty. Now for his part, Augustine continued his life of sin and things in Rome for him personally actually got worse.

He joined one of the worst cults of his day. It was steeped in evil. The deeper Augustine became involved in sin, the more disillusioned he became and the more his mother prayed.

Augustine finally decided, well, I've got to get out of Rome. I'm going to move to Milan. He worked there as a lawyer and was known for his skills in logic and speaking.

He wanted, though, to improve his speaking skills and someone told him, well, it is the greatest speaker that has ever lived, lives in Milan.

And so they convinced him to go week after week to listen to this guy and he was actually a great preacher, a man by the name of Ambrose. And he was a preacher there in Milan.

[10 : 13] So here we have Augustine. He was unsaved. He had no interest in regeneration or conversion. He would slip into the very back of the church and listen to Ambrose preach.

Again, his motive was to hone his own speaking skills. He was trying to pick up, you know, some tips on how he could become a better speaker. Well, week after week, sitting in the back of that church, he became convicted under the power of the Word of God.

This power brought to Augustine far more than he could ever imagine. He was impressed with not only how powerfully Ambrose spoke, but how truthfully he spoke.

It was shortly after this time that an event occurred in Augustine's life that is quite familiar. I would imagine that several of you in this room have heard the story.

Augustine was sitting on a patio in the midst of his garden. He was contemplating at that very moment the futility and vanity of his life.

[11 : 26] Out of sight, but not out of hearing, was a group of children that were playing. Now, Augustine wrote a classic work, *The Confessions*, or *The Confessions of Augustine*.

I have it. It's hundreds and hundreds of pages long, and if you want to borrow it, I'm not currently looking at it. I'd be glad to loan it out to you. Here's what Augustine said, and it's worth listening to, so take a few moments.

Sitting in his garden. But when a deep consideration had from the secret bottom of my soul drawn together and heaped up all my misery in the sight of my heart, there arose a mighty storm bringing a mighty shower of tears, which that I might pour forth wholly in its natural expressions, I arose from Alpheus, that was a friend of his who was also there and an unbeliever.

Solitude was suggested to me as fitter for the business of weeping. He didn't want to weep in front of his friend. So I retired so far that even his presence could not be a burden to me.

Thus was it then with me, and he perceived something of it, for something I suppose I had spoken wherein the tones of my voice appeared choked with weeping and so had risen up.

[13 : 03] He then remained where we were sitting most extremely astonished. I cast myself down, I know not how, under a certain fig tree, giving full vent to my tears, and the flood of mine eyes gushed out an acceptable sacrifice to thee, to thee, thee being God.

And not indeed in these words, yet to this purpose spake I much unto thee, and thou, O Lord, how long? How long, O Lord, wilt thou be angry?

Forever? Remember not our former iniquities, for I felt that I was held by them. I sent up these sorrowful words, how long, how long, tomorrow, and tomorrow?

Why not now? Why not? Is there this hour an end to my uncleanness? So was I speaking and weeping in the most bitter contrition of my heart when, lo, I heard from a neighboring house a voice, as of a boy or a girl I know not, chanting and oft repeating *tolelege, tolelege*, which means take up and read, take up and read.

Strange thing for a little kid to be saying, take up and read. Instantly, my countenance altered. I began to think most intently whether children would want in any kind of play to sing such words, nor could I remember having heard anything like that.

[14 : 46] So checking the torn of my tears, I arose, interpreting it to be no other than a command from God to open the book and read the first words that I should find.

Well, Alpheus had brought a copy of Romans with him. Eagerly then, I returned to the place where Alpheus was sitting, for there I had laid the volume of the apostle when I rose thence, I seized, I opened in silence and read that section on which my eyes first fell.

Now, we don't normally recommend that, just let it open up, but he did. I mean, I did that once and it basically said, Judas hanged himself and said, go and do likewise.

So he looks down at this book, I assume a book, maybe parchment, but this material, reading material, and this is what his eyes fixed on, Romans 13, 13 and 14.

Let us walk properly, now remember this is Augustine, I've already told you his background. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies, not in drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.

[16 : 28] That's what his eyes saw. And Augustine wrote, he said, no further would I read, nor need I, for instantly at the end of this sentence, by a light as it were of serenity infused into my heart, all the darkness of doubt vanished away.

Remember we said last week it's by the word of God that you're born again. And by the way, Alpheus was an unconverted friend and they were both together seeking answers.

Alpheus had brought this book of Romans, he was converted at the same time as Augustine and later became the bishop of what is now Algeria.

So what happened to Augustine? He was born again. We heard those words, he was born again by a spiritual birth that came down from heaven.

And he's considered the greatest theologian in the first 1500 years of the church. What else happened in that instance? His mother's prayers were answered. His mother's prayers were

answered.

[17 : 46] And the lesson I'm striving for here is that Augustine's rebirth was sudden. It was instantaneous. Every new birth, once it happens, is instantaneous.

It does not mean that each of us are aware as to the split second rebirth occurs in our lives, in our lives, I don't know precisely when my regeneration happened, but it is a sudden act of the sovereign grace of the Spirit of God as he acts upon a dead soul.

And we could say this of Augustine before that happened, he was dead in trespasses and sins. We looked at this last time, we've already mentioned it, but God accomplishes the new birth through his word.

He awakens dead sinners to become alive in him by the word. Stephen Sharnock, the great Puritan, said the word is the instrument of the new birth.

And that is why we are to take this word to the uttermost parts of the world. In the case of Augustine, this pagan unbeliever read the word, it spoke to his heart, God, and he was regenerated.

[19 : 08] Now we look many times at these particular verses in John chapter 3, we're going to be going back to them, again John 3, 3, truly, truly, this is true, this is true, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Pivotal verse of scripture. scripture. That verse implies the instantaneous nature of the new birth, just like the old birth.

I was born on January 5, 1948, at 828 a.m. I broke the pattern of most guys, you guys are born at 2.30 in the morning, it's always that early morning, man, I got mine out of the way, 828, my dad went to work, you know, after I was born.

It helped that I was born Caesarian, but still, they could pick the time. My first birth occurred in January. It did not extend from January into February, March, April, and May.

In that regard, my birth was instantaneous and I'm quite certain my mom was glad it did not linger all of those months. There was a point in time where God brought me forth from my mother's womb.

[20 : 31] There's also a point in time when we are suddenly and instantly born into the kingdom of God if in fact we are born again. Our second birth is just as instantaneous.

There can be a flow of information concerning the things of God and Jesus. That can go on for years. I had a lot of people giving me pieces of the gospel. I didn't know it at the time. I know it now. But the actual point of rebirth is in an instant. There's a moment in time when those reborn go from death to life. And actually eternal life.

And by the way, in your rebirth, that's when your eternal life begins. We keep saying, boy, you know, I got eternal life. When I die, I'm going to live forever. You're in it now, guys. This is it.

This is a little taste of heaven. Trust me, it's going to get a lot better when Paul's up here, Jesus is up here, and I'm out there. But this is a little taste of heaven. Or Willard's up here, and Lee, on Wednesday nights.

[21 : 40] But there's that moment we go from death to life. Again, I want to read the great reformed theologian, Louis Burkoff, Dr. Burkoff. The new birth is an instantaneous change of man's nature, affecting at once the whole man.

It is not a gradual process like sanctification. We're going to get there, I don't know, 2025. There is no intermediate phase between life and death.

One either lives, or he continues in death, spiritual death. In the rebirth, we were raised in a moment in the twinkling of an eye from death to life.

It's like the rapture, which shares that same description. Twinkling of an eye. By the way, scientists are always looking for things to study. A guy actually studied the twinkling of an eye, and it's not a blink.

It's a twinkle. time that light hits the retina, and the retina responds to light. It's like one six billionth of a second.

[22 : 52] You can look it up on the internet, which is what I did. So we have the analogy of birth to compare rebirth with.

The Lord uses another analogy in verse 5. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

You've got to be born of water and the Spirit. Well, again, this implies that we were born outside the kingdom, and we must be brought into the kingdom.

And may I say, you cannot force your way in, you cannot sneak in, you cannot ride the coattails of your parents or your siblings or your wife.

It doesn't happen like that. The only means of entrance into the kingdom of God is through the new birth. In a moment, we are regenerated and converted into followers of Christ.

[24 : 01] Now, just like our first birth, when we're reborn, we're babies in the kingdom. Do we understand that? We're babies. And that's why Paul says, look, you need milk.

You don't need meat. Babies don't need meat. They need milk. They need milk. And by the way, if you're wondering, what does it mean to be born of water?

Show up in two weeks and we're going to talk about that. And that's a great, great discussion. This is how quickly, though, rebirth can happen.

People can walk into a church, this church, dead in trespasses and sins, and leave a new creature in Christ bound for heaven.

Leave a new creature. I always remember when Jim Merritt came and preached here. He later became president of the Southern Baptist Convention. He was an interesting guy. He came to our house to eat. I gave him some books.

[25 : 04] I stayed at his house on my way to New York City with the FBI. He was still going to seminary at Southern. And that was in the days where they were liberal. And he actually had to hire a lawyer to graduate.

They were so opposed to him because he was conservative. In fact, I forget the guy's name. You guys would know him. He was a pagan.

I don't know what he was doing there at seminary. But I never forget he said, Mr. Merritt, there was a move on to dismiss this guy, although he was tenured. He said, Mr. Merritt, do you think that a professor at this seminary should be dismissed because he does not believe in inerrancy?

He said, no, sir, I do not. He said, well, Mr. Merritt, that's rather refreshing. I thought you would say it was, that they should be. No, no, sir. You signed a document when you hired on saying you did believe in inerrancy.

I think you ought to have the integrity to resign. And that's when he had to hire a lawyer to graduate. He had to hire a lawyer. And he once went down to C.W.A.

[26 : 11] Criswell. Criswell summoned him. And he got in there and Criswell's staff told him, he said, Dr. Criswell's going to talk to you a little bit and he's going to pull you up to his knee to knee and he's going to ask you a question.

And you can tell whatever you want to, but if you want to get on his good side, here's the answer. So they gave him the answer. He went in and everything happened. He kneeed to knee and he bent over and he said, I've got a question I've got to ask you.

He said, how did you stay conservative at that liberal seminary? How did you do that? And he had the answer and Jim Merritt said, I just read your books, pastor.

And Criswell said, you humble me. Here's my private phone number. It was a great moment. And I'm way off track here.

I don't have a clue where I'm at here. But that was a great moment for Jim Merritt. Again, this is evidence of the instantaneous nature of that new birth.

[27 : 22] It's just like our first, but we need milk and not meat. now we have a great example of rebirth in the word of God, in the life of Jesus himself.

When Christ hung on the cross, there were thieves on both sides of him. Remember that? And one of those thieves was miraculously regenerated just moments before his death.

thief. And Jesus told that thief that he would be with him that very day in paradise. Instant conversion.

Instantly born again and dead a couple minutes later. Amazing. That is how quickly it can happen. People can walk into church dead and leave new creatures in Christ.

That was where I was going with Merritt. Thank you. When he preached here, when he finished, and you pastors may have heard this before from guys or maybe used it, but he preached heaven down that Sunday.

[28 : 34] He said, when you leave here, you're either going to leave, you've got these exits, they pointed the exits up in our sanctuary, and he said, you're either going to leave under the blood of Christ or you're going to trample over the top of it, but you're not going to go around it.

He said, today you heard a man of God preach the word of God in the house of God, and you've got to make a decision for or against God, because that's what he's calling for you to do. If you're dead in trespasses, today's the day of salvation.

And we wanted to see how people were going to live. that's where that's where I was headed with that. So people can walk into church, be born again, become new creatures in Christ.

We don't know when the Spirit of God will move upon a person in our congregation. That is why Jesus said, it's like the wind.

And we're going to really get into that in some detail weeks from now. I remember years ago a preacher talking about he preached 17 week series on salvation. Nothing happened.

[29 : 40] People liked it. It was a nice sermon. Then they'd go get the white meat before the Methodists got there. Nothing happened. Well, the week after concluding that series, he was worn out and he took out an old sermon one Sunday on tithing.

Don't do that very often. He preached on tithing. Fifteen people came forward for salvation. The Spirit of God moved.

And our kids would say, well, go figure. You know, go figure that out. I think people might have to go figure, might have said go figure in the opening verses of the book of Acts.

In that second chapter of that great book, we see Peter stand up on the day of Pentecost, and this is what Peter said. Men of Israel, hear these words.

Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst as you yourselves know.

[30 : 51] This Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

That's not a message I want to hear. It's true. My sins put him up there on the cross. God raised him up, loosening the pain, loosing, and by the way, that's not a word anymore in our dictionary, but it's in the Bible, loosing the pains of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

for David says concerning him, I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken.

Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced. My flesh also will dwell in hope, for you will not abandon my soul to Hades or let your Holy One see corruption.

You have made known to me the paths of life. you will make me full of gladness with your presence. Now I'm going to get a little drink here because I'm getting parched.

[32 : 04] Marsha Dursham shamed me the other day about Diet Coke so I went to Diet Dr. Pepper. Peter goes on, Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried in his tomb is with us to this day.

Being therefore a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on the throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ that he would not abandon to Hades nor did his flesh see corruption.

This Jesus God raised up and of that we are all witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

For David did not ascend into heaven, but he says of himself, the Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.

Quite a bit different from what David. Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.

[33 : 28] Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, brothers, what shall we do? And Peter said to them, do you notice something there?

They interrupted the sermon. You talk about conviction. we crucified him? And God said, need I say, our sins crucified him?

And they interrupted, they said, what shall we do? And Peter said, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

For the promises for you and for your children, for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself. And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, save yourselves from this crooked generation.

So those who received his word were baptized and there were added that day about three thousand souls. Amazing. And the words of Peter are right out of the Old Testament.

[34 : 39] There was no New Testament. He gives them passages out of Joel. He's all over the place in the Psalms. And remember we've already said that the word of God is the instrument by which the Spirit of God works to bring about the new birth.

Note also how the rebirth of these three thousand was instantaneous. And let me say it was individually instantaneous. Those three thousand got saved saved individually. They didn't go back to their homes and wait ten years for someone to show up with a four spiritual laws track. They even interrupted the sermon and wanted to know how they could be saved. These men were regenerated instantly and then started the process of sanctification which is a lifelong process. The Christian life is a long journey. And may I say it is not a sprint. Many an individual has fallen away because they left the starting blocks and they grew tired of sprinting.

[35 : 54] They didn't realize and no one was there to tell them Christianity is a very long marathon and everyone runs at a different pace. Everyone.

another great example of being born from above is found in the eighth chapter of the book of Acts. We normally associate that I think with the martyrdom of Stephen but the other things that happened.

It is there we read of the Ethiopian eunuch. He had made the journey to Jerusalem to worship but was unchanged by that act. Jerusalem was a lot like Rome.

It was evil. It had all kinds of evil. And I would imagine that this eunuch who wanted to worship the true God was embarrassed by the excesses he saw in Jerusalem.

Reminds me of when Martin Luther went to Rome and was mortified. They even had a special group of prostitutes that took care of priests.

[36 : 56] And he saw the priests going into their houses of prostitution. He just threw up. Spiritually maybe physically. This is what Dr.

Luke records for us in the book of Acts. Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans, half-breed Jews, hated by the Jews by the way.

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is a desert place and he rose and went.

And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning, seated in his chariot and he's reading the prophet Isaiah.

and the spirit said to Philip, go over and join this chariot. So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and said, do you understand what you are reading?

[38 : 10] And he said, the Ethiopian, how can I unless someone guides me? And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this, like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, like a lamb before it sure is silent, so he opens not his mouth, in his humiliation justice was denied him, who can describe his generation?

For his life is taken away from the earth. And the eunuch said to Philip, about whom I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?

Then Philip opened his mouth and beginning with the scriptures, he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road, they came to some water.

Now here's how serious the eunuch was. See, here is water. What prevents me from being baptized? and he commanded the chariot to stop and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.

And when they came up out of the water, the spirit of the Lord carried Philip away and the eunuch saw him no more and he went on his way rejoicing. That's how quickly the rebirth comes, the new birth.

[39 : 42] The Ethiopian eunuch was instantly born again and he bore fruit. They get baptized. And I imagine the people of Ethiopia heard about this.

We're going to have one more example of the instantaneous nature of the rebirth. It is found in Acts chapter 9. It involved a man by the name of Saul of Tarsus.

Some of you have heard of him. We now refer to him as the apostle Paul. How long did it take God to save Saul? It wasn't very long. What Paul experienced was an act of sovereign regeneration. Every regeneration is a sovereign regeneration. Yours, mine, Paul, the Ethiopian eunuch, everyone's. And again, it was in the twinkling of an eye.

Some try to argue that Saul is a bad example because his salvation was so different from everyone else. But actually the opposite is true. His rebirth is an example to everyone who is or will be born again.

[40 : 57] Listen to this. But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus so that if he found any belonging to the way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus and suddenly a light from heaven shone round him and falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

And he said, who are you, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. That sent a chill down your spine.

He killed followers of Jesus or encouraged people to kill them while he held their coats. Jesus says, but rise and enter the city and you will be told what you are to do.

The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but seeing no one, Saul rose from the ground and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing.

[42 : 22] So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. Here we have this spiritually dead man who is making every effort to stamp out Christianity.

he may have tasted blood when he super intended the death of Stephen. Remember how Stephen was martyred and they stoned him to death and he held their coats so they could throw those rocks harder.

Now he wants more blood of the infant church, this time in Syria. And as he was traveling, a light from heaven shone on him suddenly.

the next thing he knows he was on the ground. We like to say Jesus knocked him off his horse. I've never read a reference to any horses. Maybe he was. I mean why walk when you can take a horse? But who knows? There is so much to learn here. We really don't have time. Jesus asks Saul why are you persecuting me?

[43 : 24] when someone persecutes a Christian, when someone persecutes the church, he is persecuting Christ Jesus, the king and judge of the universe.

Boy, that's a frightening thought for nations and individuals. Saul answers and says, who are you? And he adds this word Lord.

Lord. One speaker said, there we have the greatest example of Lordship salvation ever recorded. Because that was a big argument in the church a few years ago.

Well, you don't have to accept him as Lord. Just send me a Savior and you'll be saved. Don't worry about anything else. Malarkey. And people say, well, he was my Savior in 1952, but in 1982 I made him my Lord.

You make him your Lord. He's already Lord. We don't make him Lord. He is Lord. And so we have this great example of Lordship salvation.

[44 : 32] In every salvation there is a recognition of the sovereign authority of Jesus Christ to be totally in control of that life that has surrendered and is now committed to the Lord by faith.

In that moment Saul of Tarsus was immediately and instantly born again. all of this to say that regeneration is a decisive act.

It is not an ongoing process. It is a single point on a timeline. It is the life of God entering into the vacuum of a spiritually dead soul. It is the same life that entered into the dead soul of every man in this room that has been born from above.

real briefly the last instant rebirth I will tell you about is Rodney Henson. Nobody in here except me ever knew Rodney.

We were detectives together. We worked some great cases together. We worked dangerous stuff together. I probably shouldn't even go into that but we did.

[45 : 35] after I joined the FBI and left Texas Rodney is still a detective down there and I found out later that Rodney had died.

He was just a couple of years older than me and he was a runner. He ran marathons and the cause of death was he ran so much his heart, heart's a muscle, it enlarged.

His aorta didn't and it wasn't providing the blood and he shut down. He was jogging one day and it shut down. And I was despondent because I'd been saved a few months earlier, never went back, never told anybody back there and we had a little revival here.

Miles Seaburn, he died in 2012 I found out. And Miles said I was in my office one day and this young guy walks in and said if I die today I'm going to hell and I don't want to.

Can you help me? I said I think I can. He said I can't but I know someone who can named Jesus.

And Miles talked to him about Christ. He talked to him about being born again, born from above. He unloaded on him.

[46 : 45] And he said what does it take? He said believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, repent of your sins and be baptized. He said is a baptismal like a pool of water?

He said yeah. Do you have that here? Yeah. Can I be baptized now? He said well normally we do it on a Sunday morning with witnesses but we got staff here. We could go in there.

There's water in the baptistry. And they took Rodney right then to the baptistry and baptized him.

Immersed him right then on the spot. And he came up a new creature, lived for Christ two or three weeks and died suddenly of heart failure.

And I'll never forget Miles telling that story that he said to our congregation. His name was Rodney Henson. And that's the first I'd known about Rodney being born again. First I knew about it.

So we see Saul of Tarsus. We see the Ethiopian eunuch. We see Rodney instantly born again.

Instantaneous. Immediate. It is a decisive act.

[47 : 51] It is the same life that entered into the dead soul of all of us. Brothers we are all Lazarus called forth from our tomb where we were buried dead.

Dead in trespasses, dead in sins. And Jesus called us through the Spirit of God and we came forth into light and life in the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's what it means to be instantly born from above and regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit. . .