

REGENERATION

We believe In regeneration.

The doctrine of regeneration, or the new birth, is a central teaching of the Churches of God. This belief comes from the declaration of Christ to Nicodemus, "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again'" (John 3:7 NASB).

Regeneration is the radical transformation of an individual life from self-centeredness to God-centeredness. Christ speaks in Matthew of the necessity of becoming "like children." The disciples came to Jesus with the question, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Jesus set a little child in their midst. Then he declared, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:1-4 NASB).

Christ thus teaches the necessity of entering into a new kind and way of life, lived according to new principles of life. Through regeneration a new life is made possible by Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. It involves a new relationship to God, a new relationship to others, and a new attitude toward the world.

We believe we must respond to God's offer.

This new life is a supernatural change. It comes to the individual not by human efforts, but by the power and influence of God. This truth is expressed by John, who speaks of persons "which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13 KJV). God does not give new life to someone who is not willing to be changed. God offers salvation, but does not force any person to receive it. God does not destroy or alter our free moral choice to accept or reject this offer.

To experience regeneration, we must recognize our need for a new life, and that Jesus Christ is the only way to receive it. "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12 NIV). This involves recognizing one's sinfulness. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23 KJV). "Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:17 NASB).

Regeneration is needed by all who are in a state of accountability before God. This means their spiritual understanding has matured to the point that they are capable of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. They are able both to understand their own personal sinfulness and to respond to God independently. Although often occurring in later childhood, this may vary according to the spiritual perceptiveness and mental capacity of the person.

We must recognize that our sin is separating us from God, and must be willing to repent. Repentance means willingness to confess sinfulness and to turn from a sinful life. With repentance comes God's forgiveness. "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord" (Acts 3:19 NIV).

Through a sincere response to the marvelous forgiving love of God, Christ comes into our life and makes us new. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17 RSV).