

The Regenerate Life
I John 5:16-21

September 23, 2007

A. Introduction

1. in simple terms, 'regenerate' means ...
2. Acts 2:42 - such people have lives marked by ...
3. John 3:3, 5; Titus 3:5 - this is a work done by ...

B. Living the Regenerate Life Means Praying for Our Brothers . 5:16-17

1. my own conclusions after considering the comments on these verses:
 - a. brother here means ...
 - b. death here speaks of ...
 - c. the sin here is ...

(Some references pertinent to these verses are: Mark 3:30-34; Acts 1:14, 16, 2:29, 6:3; Romans 9:3-4; Leviticus 10:1ff; Numbers 16:1ff; Acts 5:1ff; I Corinthians 11:20-21, 30; Hebrews 12:1-9)

2. what is one responsibility we have for a Christian brother?
3. how do we avoid being judgmental in this (cf. Hebrews 4:13)
4. Isaiah 1:15, Mic 3:4; why would God not hear their prayers?
5. Jeremiah 7:16, 11:14, 14:11; why was Jeremiah not to pray for them?

C. Living the Regenerate Life Means Depending on Christ to Keep from Sinning 5:18-19

1. I John 1:8; can we be sinless?
2. I John 3:9; what should mark God's children?
3. I John 3:4; sin is ...
4. I John 5:17; sin is ...
5. Isaiah 59:2, Proverbs 15:29; a consequence of sin is ...
6. Romans 7:15, I John 1:9; the reaction of a child of God to sin is ...
7. Four truths in these verses to help keep us from practicing sin
 - a. Hebrews 4:15, 7:25; God the Son ...
 - b. John 10:1-11, Job 1:10; God ...
 - c. Galatians 6:2; we are to ...
 - d. Colossians 1:13; we have been ...

D. Living the Regenerate Life Means knowing God Better and Better (v20)

1. I Corinthians 2:12-14; regeneration is necessary for ...
2. 'know' here is used in the sense of ...
3. Philippians 3:8-12; Paul's ultimate goal ...

E. Living the Regenerate Life Means Not Having Idols, (or, expressed in positive terms) Putting God Above Everything Else 5:21

1. what do I find that turns my heart away from God?
2. what am I going to do about this?

—{1}. **1 John 5:16–21** **The Regenerate Life**

A. Introduction

1. The regenerate life

- a. the word regenerate in simple terms means born again
- b. that term, 'born again', became popular 10-15 years ago
- c. it became a way of claiming a spiritual side to one's nature and was on the mouths of movie stars, politicians, as well as people on the street
- d. with being 'born again' viewed as a ticket to heaven
- e. yet many surveys of 'born again Christians' were shocking
 - (A) they claimed such diverse beliefs as reincarnation, astrology, possibility of communicating with the dead
 - (B) but the activities that marked the lives of the new believers in the early church – "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." (Acts 2:42) – were totally lacking in their lives
- f. Nicodemus approached and greeted Jesus one night; before he even could ask a question, Jesus said, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.' (John 3:3)
- g. the words 'born again' or 'born anew' can equally well be translated 'born from above' because both ideas are in the original language: and this is a work of God the Holy Spirit
 - (A) in John 3:5, Jesus says we must be born by the Spirit
 - (B) Titus 3:5 tells us that "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit"
- h. so being born again is to possess a new, spiritual life
- i. our text today, as with the rest of John's first letter, is addressed to the truly born again person – the person with a regenerate life – telling how they should live
- j. to try to teach someone not born again to live this way is like trying to teach a skunk to sing: no one will be blessed – you'll be extremely frustrated ... and it really annoys the skunk! —{2}.

2. the text, 1 John 5:16-21 (NAS ^{-{3}}):

- a. ¹⁶ If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not *leading* to death, he shall ask and *God* will for him give life to those who commit sin not *leading* to death. There is a sin *leading* to death; I do not say that he should make request for this. ¹⁷ All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not *leading* to death.
- b. ¹⁸ We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him. ¹⁹ We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in *the power of* the evil one. ²⁰ And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. ²¹ Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

3. Living the regenerate life, then, means

- a. praying for our brothers
- b. depending on Christ to keep from sinning
- c. knowing God better and better
- d. putting God above everything else
- e. so, let us look at this passage with this outline in view:

B. Living the Regenerate Life means 5:16-17

- 1. If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin *which does not lead* to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not *leading* to death. There is sin *leading* to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not *leading* to death." (NKJV)
- 2. ... it means praying for our brothers ... now, before we continue with that thought, you may have been startled by some fearsome words: '*There is sin leading to death*' or '*There is a sin to death*'
 - a. for these are spoken as a possibility concerning a brother and the question comes unbidden to us, 'could I sin a sin leading to death ... and what would that mean?'
 - b. our first response to such an idea would be rationalization
 - (A) well, 'brother' in the Bible sometimes means a person in the same family, so maybe this is meant here
 - (B) or, 'brother' can mean of people of our nation or local community, such as in Romans 9:3-4, '...

my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites ...'

- (C) so in this way 'brother' here might not apply to me
 - (D) but, the normal New Testament meaning of 'brother' is those who are fellow-children of God, our spiritual brothers who belong to the household of faith, and this is consistent with the immediate context of this passage as well as with the rest of John's letter
 - (E) so this description could apply to me
- c. with that settled, our next concern is, 'what is this death?'
- (A) I think that we all know that in interpreting the Bible we need to take into the context: there apply within this rule of context a number of canons or standards of interpretation, founded upon this being God's word
 - (1) because we believe in the plenary (full) inspiration of Scripture, the canon is that context includes not only the immediate words but all of the Bible
 - (2) we believe in the verbal (each word) inspiration of Scripture, so another canon is that where two like items or two unlike items are 'juxtaposed' – ie., laid out side by side – as being similar or being dissimilar, then the same sphere of comparison must exist in the meaning of each
 - (3) for example, if verse 16 is talking about 'spiritual life' then it cannot be talking about 'physical death' or even about 'both physical and spiritual death'; it must be talking about 'spiritual death'
 - (4) so, which is being spoken of in this passage ... 'spiritual life' or 'physical life'? ... then we will know which kind of death is involved.
 - (B) now we go to the immediate context and in verses 11 to 13 John speaks of the life which we have by virtue of our union with Jesus Christ, the life that is in the Son of God, eternal life, spiritual life
 - (C) is John still speaking of spiritual life? I believe not, for there he refers to it as 'the life' but here he simply says 'life' (without any define article), and so we gather that he is talking about physical life being granted; hence the death in view is physical death
- d. well I don't want to die (just yet) so what is this sin so that I can avoid it. The word 'a' which would indicate it being a particular sin was added by the translators. The original is non-specific as to this sin. But, we can look at the Bible and see what is common in situations where God punished sin by premature death
- (A) Nadab and Abihu were of God's chosen people, Israel; of the tribe, Levi, chosen by God to serve Him; sons of Aaron, the family chosen by God to be priests; they were the chosen of the chosen

of the chosen; but they disregarded God's will and followed their own will in how they worshipped and were struck down by God

- (B) Korah rebelled against God's spokesmen Moses and Aaron and the earth opened and swallowed them up
 - (C) Ananias and Sapphira sought to deceive the Holy Spirit in their worship and were struck down dead.
 - (D) People in Corinth who profaned the Lord's Table by the way they acted for which cause some died and some were sick, on the way to death.
 - (E) So death came in instances where the lives and words of God's people denied the one they called their Lord
- e. could this apply to me? Hebrews 12:1ff tells of the steps that God takes to discipline us, His children, and in verse 9 concludes by saying, "Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?"
- f. Christians who refuse to be subject to God jeopardize their lives – and so we are warned – but, to return

3. ... it means praying for our brothers

a. being part of the community of believers

- (A) the household of faith
- (B) the family of God
- (C) means that we have a responsibility one for another

b. note first that the community in view

- (A) in the words 'if anyone sees his brother sinning a sin'
- (B) it is not the church universal but one which we can see
- (C) that comprised of people we know and observe
- (D) one of our responsibilities is the approving and reproving one another
- (E) we cannot slough this off with the words of Cain, 'am I my brother's keeper' because we are to be that

c. next note the way we are to carry this out

- (A) elsewhere in the New Testament there are laid out the steps in the discipline of a Christian in the church

- (B) but, John gives us the fundamental first step
- (C) that of intercessory prayer to God for our brother
- (D) this is in private prayer and not the airing of dirty laundry in the guise of prayer in public
- (E) it is hard to maintain a judgmental attitude when in prayer to God; *"And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."* (Hebrews 4:13)

- d. it may be that a child of God may become rebellious like those we described a few moments ago
 - (A) like the people of Isaiah and Micah's time whose prayers God would no longer hear (Isa 1:15, Mic 3:4)
 - (B) or like the Jews for whom Jeremiah was instructed not to pray (Jeremiah 7:16, 11:14, 14:11)
 - (C) who by their walk are enemies of the cross of Christ
 - (D) concerning whom we can find no assurance of God's will in our praying for them
 - (E) from whom we can be excused this responsibility

4. living the regenerate life means that I will show my love and care for other believers by praying for their spiritual well-being

C. Living the Regenerate Life means 5:18-19

1. *We know that no child of God is a sinner; it is the Son of God who keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot touch him. We know that we are of God's family, while the whole godless world lies in the power of the evil one.* (I read this from the New English Bible, which is somewhat of a paraphrase, for it helps us to see the true intent of these verses)

2. ... it means depending on Christ to keep from sinning

- a. let me remind you again that what we have before us
 - (A) is not teaching the possibility of sinless perfection
 - (B) John dealt with that for once for all at the start of his letter: *"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us."* (1 John 1:8)
 - (C) no, it is talking about the ongoing practice of sin as a way of life – life-style if you will
 - (D) rather than a life in which the Holy Spirit is given rule

- b. children of God, as we noted some weeks ago in looking at chapter 3, should show their family resemblance to their Father both to each other and to the world around them
- c. the regenerate life, the person into whom there is infused a new nature by the working of God's Holy Spirit, is to be marked by a new attitude toward sin
 - (A) first, this new nature recognizes what sin is
 - (1) practising sin is practising lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness (3:4): it is disobeying the Law-Giver
 - (2) all unrighteousness is sin (5:17)
 - (B) second, this new nature recognizes sin's consequence
 - (1) "But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden *His* face from you so that He does not hear." (Isaiah 59:2)
 - (2) "The LORD is far from the wicked, But He hears the prayer of the righteous." (Proverbs 15:29)
 - (3) sin destroys our fellowship with God, particularly that of prayer
 - (C) third, when the believer does sin, he hates it (Romans 7:15) and will seek forgiveness (1 John 1:9)
- d. yet, Hebrews 12:1 speaks of '... the sin which so easily entangles us ...' – how do we get untangled?

3. we find here four helpful truths

- a. God the Son is on our side to protect and keep us;
 - (A) "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15)
 - (B) "Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." (Hebrews 7:25)
- b. He prevents Satan from having his way
 - (A) Jesus describes Himself as the Good Shepherd who puts His sheep into the fold and Himself forms the gate that bars the enemy from entering. (John 10:1-11)
 - (B) Satan complained that God had set a hedge around Job, protecting him (Job 1:10) – so God protects us
- c. We are of God's family
 - (A) we should be able to count upon intercessory prayer by other members of the family, as well as their being watchman on our behalf, guarding our souls

(B) who follow the command of Galatians 6:2, "Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ."

d. We have been removed from Satan's domain – "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son," (Colossians 1:13)

D. Living the Regenerate Life means 5:20

1. And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we know the true One, and are in union with the true One—that is, we are in union with His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and the Life of the Ages. (Weymouth)

2. ... it means knowing God better and better

a. natural birth normally confers with it a number of benefits: consider this, a baby grows to age 3 and learns many things

(A) how to walk (on 2 legs, yet!)

(B) how to talk (a brand new language!)

(C) how to be bad; how to be good (sort of)

(D) 1 Corinthians, particularly in chapter 2, teaches us that as a part of our spiritual birth, being regenerated, we gain spiritual knowledge

(1) we learn to walk in a new fashion

(2) we learn to talk to our spiritual Father

b. in short ... we get to know God!

(A) first in the Person of the Son of God

(B) and then by the Person of the Holy Spirit

(C) to recognize our Father God

3. How does this happen? ... this miracle takes place through the mystical union we have with God the Son, with our abiding in Jesus Christ and His abiding in us ... it takes place by the Spirit of God shed abroad in our hearts

a. its byproducts are eternal life

b. its fruit are those of the Spirit

c. but its purpose is that we know God – not know as a fact or a piece of information, but know as a person, in a vital relationship between the Creator and we the created

4. Paul says this as his foremost life goal: “More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, ... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection ... I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 3:8-12)

E. Living the Regenerate Life means 5:21

1. Dear children, keep yourselves from idols. (NIV, or, in the more non-literal NLT) Dear children, keep away from anything that might take God’s place in your hearts.
2. ... it means not having idols, or expressing it positively, putting God above everything else
 - a. God has made a beautiful world
 - b. even with all the curse of man’s fall into sin, it is filled with wonderful and marvellous things
 - c. and to man has been given, even in his fallen state, wisdom and ingenuity to fashion all sorts of devices
3. how many of these things can seduce our souls
 - a. causing us to desire what is created more than the Creator
 - b. displanting our Saviour God from our lives
 - c. we have been regenerated, born again, born anew, so that God can once more have his rule in our hearts

F. Conclusion

1. the regenerate life
 - a. praying for our brothers
 - b. depending on Christ to keep from sinning
 - c. knowing God better and better
 - d. putting God above everything else

2. is God's plan and purpose for every believer
 - a. not a super-spiritual few
 - b. may this be your prayer for your life
 - c. in singing our closing hymn, 'Living for Jesus'

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Various English versions of the Holy Bible are used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in {braces}. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
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PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

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2. Adapted from Fredericksburg Bible Illustrator Supplements – Kerux illustration #` 10887
3. Except as noted, all Bible quotations are from the New American Standard version.