



The Drawing of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit in the Conversion-Regeneration Process

At Christ's Table - ACTpublications

"Explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words."

1 Corinthians 2:13

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The Drawing of the Holy Spirit

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Introduction

The subject matter of this teaching concerns the influence of the Holy Spirit on the human soul during the **conversion-regeneration process**. By this term, “**conversion-regeneration process**”, I mean specifically *the process of coming to “repentance” and “faith” in Christ, which would be followed by baptism and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit*. The process being discussed in this teaching concerns that work of the Holy Spirit upon the human soul **prior to** someone actually receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Actually, there are different schools of thought regarding this process. While it is not within the scope of this teaching to present, criticize and defend the various theological arguments, at the risk of oversimplifying, I’ll try to encapsulate the major views.

The Calvinist perspective would see this conversion-regeneration process starting only **after** the receiving of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Because this view is not open to the idea of interplay between the human will and the sovereignty of God before regeneration, this view would see repentance and faith as part and parcel with regeneration, or at least being activated only **after** regeneration.

The view I presently hold would be of a more Arminian perspective. This view sees the Holy Spirit being at work upon the human will even prior to the receiving of the gift of the Holy Spirit. This view is open to what might be termed an “external” interplay between the Holy Spirit and the human will even prior to a reception of the Holy Spirit “inwardly”. This activity of the Holy Spirit convicts, convinces, and draws the soul to repentance and faith, which, in this view, must precede regeneration and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.¹

Where the two views agree is that this process of conversion-regeneration is indeed the work of the Holy Spirit and not human effort.

This summary I’ve just presented is an exceedingly simplistic representation of exceedingly complex and profound spiritual realities. I strongly recommend a thorough investigation into these essential doctrines of Biblical Christianity.²

So, to be clear, this teaching will be discussing specifically *the activity of the Holy Spirit upon the human soul bringing someone to the point of*

¹ This view corresponds to the Wesleyan doctrine referred to as “prevenient grace”.

² Again, I recommend my essays, “*Foundation Stones*”, “*Repentance*”, “*You Must Be Born Again*”, and “*Receiving the Gift of the Holy Spirit: 2 & a 3rd Views of When*”. For complimentary .pdf copies of these and any other essays, email: AtChristsTable@gmail.com

repentance and faith prior to regeneration and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Firstly, I'd like to define the terms "repentance" and "faith" - two essential aspects of **the conversion-regeneration process**. The Greek word translated "repentance" in the New Testament is *metanoia* – *meta*, meaning "change", plus *nous*, fundamentally meaning, "perception", and by extension, "heart" or "mind". So, *"repentance" means a change of perception, which results in a change of heart and mind, being evidenced by a changed lifestyle.* And the Greek word translated "faith" in the New Testament is *pistis*, which means "belief", specifically, "trust" and "dependence". The object of Biblical faith is Christ, so "faith" is best understood as *an exercise of dependence upon Christ, a leaning upon the completed work of Christ, as well as the living Spirit of Christ.*

In this discussion of **the conversion-regeneration process**, there are some things which we must keep in mind: Firstly, it is, in fact, *a process*. Secondly, that this is a supernatural process – *a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit*. This process is a very personal interplay between the Creator and each individual whom He has created. It seems to me that God the Father desires to bring each of His billions of children into an individual, personal encounter with Himself. Therefore with each individual, this

process of conversion leading to regeneration will be both *sovereign* and *unique*.

If we are aware of HOW the Holy Spirit works in this conversion-regeneration process, we can better understand and co-operate with the Holy Spirit in His workings. I don't pretend to know or understand everything about this sovereign miracle. There is more to the mystery than I am able to expound upon. But from the Scriptures we know that, in this conversion-regeneration process, the Holy Spirit will work in some or all of the following ways in a person's life:

- ❖ **Drawing with Loving-kindness**
- ❖ **Drawing with Teaching, Hearing & Learning**
- ❖ **Convincing & Convicting**
- ❖ **The Ministry of the Word of God**

Drawing with Loving-kindness

Jeremiah 31:3 reads: *“The Lord appeared to him from afar, saying, ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have drawn you with loving-kindness.’*³ The literal translation says, *“The Lord appeared to me from afar...”* In other words, a man may be far away from God, but God can still reveal Himself to the man. Here the Lord says: “I have always been loving you.” This is something we realize only after we come to the Lord: We realize that He was always there – even when we made our bed in the pit of hell – He was always there loving us and bringing us to regeneration. The Lord goes on to say: *“I have DRAWN you with loving kindness.”* The Lord said something similar in Hosea 11:4: *“I led them with cords of a man, with bonds of love, and I became to them as one who lifts the yoke from their jaws; and I bent down and fed them.”* Where the NASB says *“I led them ...”*, the NKJV says *“I drew them ...”* The Hebrew word used is *mashak* which actually means to draw along or to draw out, as in a patient process. The verse says: *“I drew them with cords of a man”* or *“with human cords”*, that is, in a human way, namely *in a way which we can relate to on a human level – appealing to our mind or our emotions.* The

³ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible*.

Holy Spirit draws us in *a way which we can understand* even if our spirit being is not yet regenerated – that is, even if we are not yet “born of the spirit”, “born of God”, “born from above”, “born again”.⁴

As I studied this subject, I began to see that this is the “operating principle” of the Holy Spirit when bringing us along in the process of conversion-regeneration. He deals with us on the human level – in ways that we can understand – appealing to the mind and emotions. Throughout this teaching, I will refer to this concept as the “human principle”.

“I have drawn you with loving-kindness”.⁵ The Hebrew word *cheched* means kindness in the form of favor and good deeds i.e. blessings – The goodness and kindness of God draws us.

The apostle Paul asked those in the church in Rome: *“Do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?”*⁶ We come to appreciate *“the riches of His kindness, tolerance and patience”*, because we come to realize that it is *“the kindness of God (that) leads (us) to repentance.”*

⁴ John 1:12-13; 3:5-8

⁵ Jeremiah 31:3

⁶ Romans 2:4

Drawing with Teaching, Hearing and Learning

The Scriptures also show us that the Holy Spirit draws us with **teaching**, as we **hear** and **learn**. In John's gospel, Jesus is quoted as saying: "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me **draws** him; and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be **taught** of God.' Everyone who has **heard** and **learned** from the Father, comes to Me."⁷ The Greek word translated "draws" is *helkuo*. It means **pulling in**, but not violently dragging.⁸ The Father "draws" him HOW? Look at the verbs in this passage regarding the one coming to Jesus: by being taught; by hearing; by learning.

Firstly, let's look at the idea of being "**taught of God**". The Greek word, *theodidaktos*, is a combination of two words - *theo*, meaning "God", and *didaktos*, meaning "taught" – that is: "God-taught". Jesus was actually making a reference to something spoken by the prophet Isaiah: " All your sons will be taught of the Lord; and the well-being of your sons will be great."⁹

⁷ John 6:44-45

⁸ "violently dragging" would be (Greek) *suro*.

⁹ Isaiah 54:13

Now before we are substantially converted, we probably won't often be found sitting humbly at the Lord's feet to receive instruction and obediently taking notes. The psalmist David said that before he surrendered to the Lord, in a sense, he was like an animal. He said of himself: "Then I was foolish and ignorant; I was like an animal with You."¹⁰ The phrase "taught of the Lord" might better be understood as "trained by the Lord" - the way one would train an animal to do something. The Hebrew word which was translated "taught" is *limmud*. Its root word is *lamad* which means to goad with a rod or to push with a stick. In this the Holy Spirit uses the "human principle". For example: The Holy Spirit allows events or circumstances in our life which get our attention and start us thinking about God and issues concerning salvation.

Next, let's consider the idea of our "hearing" the Lord.¹¹ Instead of "hearing", the New International Version uses the word "listening" to translate the Greek word *akouo*. Again, before we are substantially converted, we probably won't often be like Lazarus' sister, Mary, "who sat at Jesus' feet and heard (or listened to) His word".¹² Again, in this the Holy Spirit uses the "human principle". For example, He will allow events or circumstances in our

¹⁰ Psalm 73:22

¹¹ John 6:44-45

¹² Luke 10:39

lives which get our attention and cause us to begin to think: “Maybe God is trying to tell me something!”

And now, let’s consider the idea of “learning” from the Lord. The prophet Isaiah describes the condition of the unregenerate soul to which the Holy Spirit is ministering: “He said, Go, and tell this people: ‘Keep on listening, but do not perceive; keep on looking, **but do not understand.**’ Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim, otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, **understand with their hearts,** and return and be healed.”¹³ You see, people who are not yet regenerated have a problem with regards to not being able to “hear”, “learn” and be “taught” by God. But this is not an intellectual problem. We don’t have a problem understanding the things of God because we lack intelligence. For years we might continue to hear the word of God, but not understand it – not because there is something wrong with our hearing or our mind – but because there is something wrong with our **heart**. Our problem with understanding God is a heart problem. God tells us in this passage that **it is with the heart that we understand.** This is why

¹³ Isaiah 6:9-10

repentance and rebirth are absolutely necessary – we need a change of heart¹⁴ - a new heart.¹⁵

Again, in this process towards being “born of the spirit”, “born of God”, “born from above”, “born again”¹⁶, the Holy Spirit uses the “human principle” to bring the needed heart-change and “understanding”. The Greek word John uses in his gospel regarding “learning from the Father”¹⁷ is *manthano*, which means “understanding”. In drawing those who are not yet regenerated, The Holy Spirit begins to “open the eyes of the understanding” as Paul prayed for the church in Ephesus.¹⁸ This is a preparation for repentance: a preparation for a change of perception, and a turning of the heart and mind towards God.

¹⁴ Acts 26:18 & 20b

¹⁵ Ezekiel 36:26

¹⁶ John 1:12-13; 3:5-8

¹⁷ John 6:44-45

¹⁸ Ephesians 1:18

Convincing & Convicting

The Scriptures also speak to us about the Holy Spirit's **convincing** and **convicting** influence on the human soul during the conversion-regeneration process. This is one of the things which Jesus said about the Holy Spirit:

“And He, when He comes, will **convict** the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.”¹⁹ The Greek word translated “convict” is *elegcho*, which can also be translated “convince”. So, Jesus said the Holy Spirit will “convince” or “convict” us about “sin, righteousness and judgment” - not just convicting us of being sinful, unrighteous, and worthy of judgment; but also convincing us of the true nature of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

Jesus tells us that the nature of sin is to “not believe in Him”. The Greek word translated “believe” is *pistis* – it means much more than what we usually mean by “believing”. It actually means to depend upon – to lean upon. The nature of sin is to take the approach of living life without

¹⁹ John 16:8-11

depending upon and leaning upon Jesus. This is what happened at the Fall – humanity began living independently of God, and the result was that “the creation was subjected to futility”.²⁰ In this process of the Holy Spirit drawing us to the Father He deals with us in such a way that we come to the place of “losing faith” in our selves and in others. We do not really come to the place of depending upon and leaning upon Jesus until we come to the place of saying with Solomon: “Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.”²¹ We do not really come to the place of depending upon and leaning upon Jesus until we come to the place of saying with David: “Behold, You have made my days as handbreadths, and my lifetime as nothing in Your sight; surely every man at his best is a mere breath. Surely every man walks about as a phantom; surely they make an uproar for nothing; he amasses riches and does not know who will gather them....²² Men of low degree are only vanity and men of rank are a lie; in the balances they go up; they are together lighter than breath.”²³

Jesus informs us of the true nature of “righteousness” with these somewhat cryptic words: “I go to the Father, and you no longer see Me.” This is a righteousness which requires faith in Him Who is not seen. Jesus

²⁰ Romans 8:20

²¹ Ecclesiastes 1:2; 12:8

²² Psalm 39:5-6

²³ Psalm 62:9

is referring to the “righteousness of God” – a righteousness which is achievable only through faith in the resurrection of Christ and living by depending upon and leaning upon the resurrection life of Christ.²⁴ But we do not really come to the place of depending upon and leaning upon Jesus for the righteousness of God until we come to the place of agreeing with what Isaiah said: “For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.”²⁵ In this process of the Holy Spirit drawing us to the Father He deals with us in such a way that we come to the place of “losing faith” in our own righteousness, which we come to see as “filthy garments” and begin to see our need for a Savior and Redeemer.

Jesus also informs us of the true nature of judgment – the fact that the “ruler of this world has been judged.” In this process of the Holy Spirit drawing us to the Father He deals with us in such a way that we come to the place of realizing that Satan is real, and that he is a “thief (who) comes to steal, kill and destroy”.²⁶ Our eyes become opened to the fact that we have been “lying *under the sway of the Wicked One*”²⁷ – that is, we come to realize that we have been living like zombies – walking around under the

²⁴ Romans 1:17; 3:22

²⁵ Isaiah 64:6

²⁶ John 10:10

²⁷ 1 John 5:19

trance of Satan,²⁸ and that if we continue to, we will judged – condemned²⁹ - along with him.

²⁸ This is the literal meaning of the Greek verb *keimai*, translated with the phrase: “lying under the sway of”.

²⁹ (Greek) *krino*

The Ministry of the Word – Read, Preached or Taught

The Holy Spirit influences the human soul during the conversion-regeneration process through the ministry of the word of God – be it through reading, preaching, or teaching.

“Is not My word like fire?” declares the Lord, “and like a hammer which shatters a rock?”³⁰

Everyone consciously or unconsciously holds some belief system or worldview. When the Word of God comes into our lives, it begins a process of “deconstruction” – a “burning up” or “breaking down” - of the person’s belief system or worldview that is at variance with Divine realities. The word of God carries out a process of “Divine Rectification”, which is pictured by the prophet, Isaiah with these words to the people called by God:

“Comfort, O comfort My people,” says your God. Speak kindly to Jerusalem; and call out to her, that her warfare has ended, that her iniquity has been removed, that she has received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.”³¹

This is a process of grace – it does not destroy the person – only the false belief system or worldview.

³⁰ Jeremiah 23:29

³¹ Isaiah 40:1-2

“A voice is calling, ‘Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness.’”³² “A voice is calling ... in the wilderness.”

After we are regenerated, we recognize the simplicity and familiarity of the gospel message; but before regeneration, there is a strangeness or foreignness to the Word of God.

“Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. Let every valley be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; and let the rough ground become a plain, and the rugged terrain a broad valley.”³³

“Valleys being lifted up” and “mountains being made low”! We must realize that this season of “deconstruction” of the one’s worldview can be a very traumatic and revolutionary time of turmoil in one’s life. It is at this time that we begin to see the Lord – and our sin. When we see spiritually, we can feel like Isaiah did when he saw the Lord and said, “Woe is me. I am undone.”³⁴ This season of “deconstruction” can be very distressing to the soul. We should never try to play the role of the Holy Spirit – that is, to force the “burning up” and “breaking down” in someone’s life - leave this to the

³² Isaiah 40:3a

³³ Isaiah 40:3b-4

³⁴ Cf. Isaiah 6:1-5

Holy Spirit. We should just observe and support the working of the Holy Spirit.

“Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all flesh will see it together; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken. A voice says, ‘Call out.’ Then he answered, ‘What shall I call out?’ ‘All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.”³⁵

When we begin to get a glimpse of the glory of the Lord”, we also begin to realize that we are like “all flesh” – i.e. we see the human condition for what it really is – fallen, even at its best - “withered and “faded” by comparison. So, this supernatural, sovereign process of “deconstruction” takes place in the soul, “because the breath of the Lord blows upon it” – that is, the Word of God brings this Divine Rectification to our perception.

“The Word of God” – the writer to the Hebrews defined it this way: “The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”³⁶

³⁵ Isaiah 40:5-8

³⁶ Hebrews 4:12

The Greek word for “word” here is *rhema* – referring specifically to the spoken word – the word that God speaks. God speaks to the heart of a person. This speaking can take place through reading the Scriptures, or hearing preaching, or teaching, or a Christian’s testimony, or a Christian song, etc. The Word that God speaks in this way is “living and active” - it can produce supernatural effects on our soul and spirit. Through the prophet, Isaiah, the Lord declared: “So is My word which goes out from My mouth; it will not return to me empty but will accomplish what I desire and will achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”³⁷

When a person begins to “hear” from God in this way for the first time, he experiences the reality of God, and comes to understand that there are significant differences between his human self and God. The word that God speaks to you makes a distinction between what is of the human soul and what is of the Spirit of God. The word that God speaks tells you: “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways...My ways are higher than your ways and My thoughts (are higher) than your thoughts ...”³⁸ The word that God speaks to you exposes, “judges” and convicts the you of the sinful thoughts and attitudes in your heart. This is the beginning of the supernatural gift and work of **REPENTANCE**.

The apostle Paul wrote: “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”³⁹ When the spirit of God

³⁷ Isaiah 55:11 *New International Version*

³⁸ Isaiah 55:18 *New International Version*

³⁹ Romans 4:17 *New International Version*

speaks the message of Christ to you, that message is accompanied by the gift of **FAITH** required to believe the message.

The apostle Peter wrote: “For you have been **BORN AGAIN**, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”⁴⁰ The word that God speaks is a seed - **A LIFE-GIVING SEED** – which germinates within the spirit of an unregenerate person, infuses the life of The Eternal One, and brings forth **a new creation created in the image of God**. This is called “regeneration” – the Biblical understanding of what it means to be “born again”.

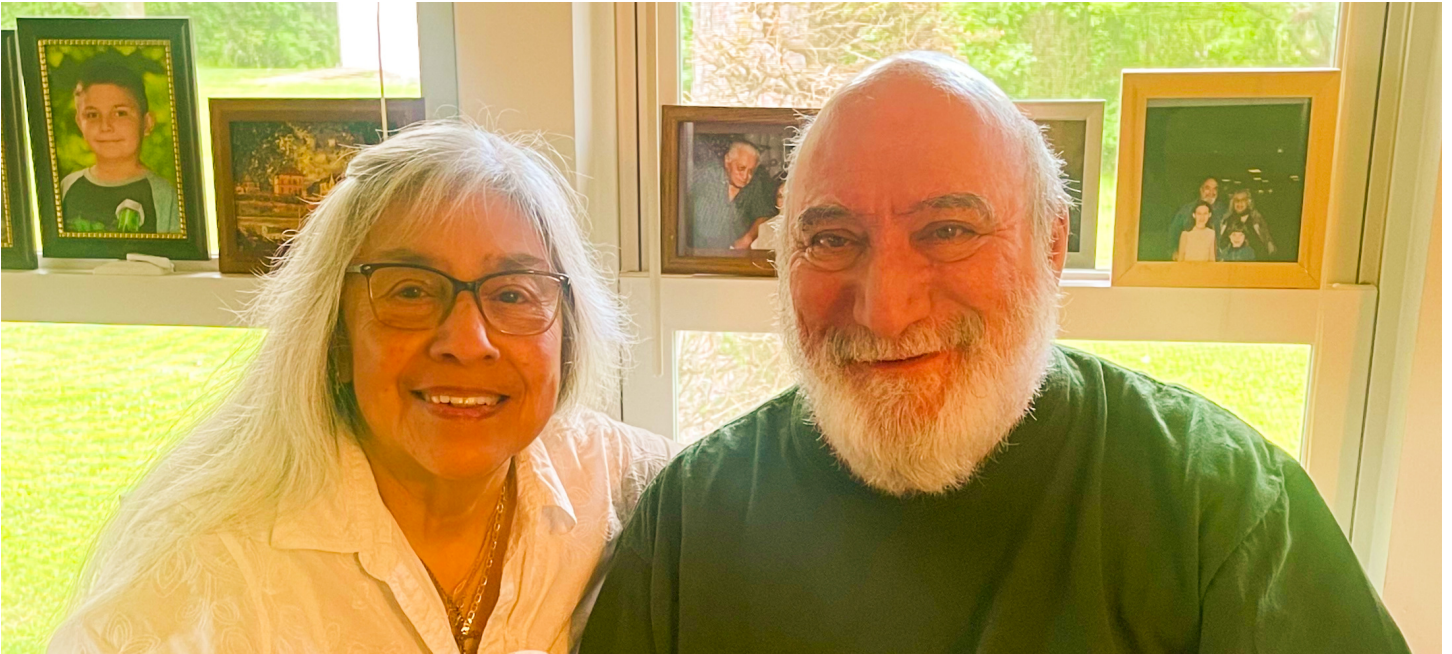
As I said at the beginning, this conversion-regeneration process is, in fact, a process - a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit. This process is a very personal interplay between the Creator and each individual whom He has created. Therefore with each individual, this process of conversion leading to regeneration will be both sovereign and unique.

Yet, if we are aware of how the Holy Spirit works in this conversion-regeneration process, we can better understand and co-operate with the Holy Spirit in His workings. I believe that the Scriptures have given us

⁴⁰ 1 Peter 1:23 New International Version

invaluable insights in this uniquely beautiful process and interplay between the Heavenly Father and each of His children.

Bill & Frances Furioso
~ At Christ's Table ~



Bill Furioso and his wife, Frances, have been married for more than 40 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Bill and Frances served as missionaries in South Africa for thirteen years making disciples, establishing churches, and training church leaders. Over a span of 40 years, they also traveled extensively in an itinerant Bible teaching ministry which took them to hundreds of gatherings on four continents ministering in churches, conferences, spiritual formation seminars, and home gatherings. They have shepherded several churches, discipled many to Christ, and mentored church leaders in the USA and abroad.

Being an avid student by nature, Bill has done both formal and informal study in various fields including Education, Music, Philosophy and Theology. As a writer, he has authored many publications which are distributed worldwide. Because of Bill's disabilities resulting from a spinal cord injury, he can no longer travel, so their ministries of writing, recording, distributing, mentoring, and correspondence are now shared primarily via the Internet... www.AtChristsTable.org

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with a view to

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