

Regeneration

Rev. George M. Schwab, Ph.D.

March 21, 2016

Titus 3:5

(NA 27th ed.)

(ESV)

	1	he saved us,
οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων	2	not because of works
τῶν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ ἃ ἐποιήσαμεν ἡμεῖς	3	done by us in righteousness,
ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ αὐτοῦ ἔλεος	4	but according to his own mercy,
ἔσωσεν ἡμᾶς	5	
διὰ λουτροῦ παλιγγενεσίας	6	by the washing of regeneration
καὶ ἀνακαινώσεως πνεύματος ἁγίου	7	and renewal of the Holy Spirit

Line 1 relates to line 5. This illustrates what sometimes has to be done to translate into English, even with a rather literal correspondent translation like ESV. Line 5 has an augmented verb, the Aorist of *sōzō* (pronounced “soad-zoe”). The noun form is *sōtēr* (you know, the Σ in ΙΧΘΥΣ), from which we get “soteriology,” the study of salvation. Line 2 has preposition *ex* (as in “exit”), “not out of works.” *Ergon* relates to “erg” the scientific unit of energy. Line 7 uses *ana+kainos* = upward+new, “renewal, positive change.” Line 6 uses *palin+genesia* = again+genesis, or “re-generation.” The Holy Spirit washes and renews, gives new genesis, new life, due to his mercy. We are born again. We become a new creation. We were once dead, but are made alive in Jesus.

“Regeneration” is often taught in conjunction with other elements of the Order of Salvation, the *Ordo Salutis* (go ahead and google it if the term is new to you). Having been regenerated, we can reach out in faith and believe the gospel. Lots of benefits logically flow from that: we are justified by faith, adopted, sanctified, and so on.

These are benefits that we receive through our union with Christ in his death and resurrection. But in my experience, we tend to focus so much on his death that we neglect the resurrection as little more than an afterthought. Sometimes I wish some session somewhere would mandate to their pastor that for at least one Sunday, the sermon focus not on Jesus' atoning death, but instead on his resurrection. Like, how about Easter?

Jesus was the Son of God and Second Person of the Trinity from all eternity. But at his resurrection, he entered into a new dimension of messianic Sonship (Rom 1:4; Acts 13:33). Our union with this constitutes our adoption. Our justification is also seen in Jesus being declared, "Not guilty!" through his resurrection. And so on.

Palingenesia is found only one other place in the Bible. Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, in the *palingenesia*, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt 19:28). There is a rebirth in store for the world, a new genesis, a new creation, with a new political and social order.

In fact, every element of the *Ordo Salutis* has a future consummate aspect. For example, we are adopted as God's children now, but we await our future adoption. This consummate Adoption will happen when we are resurrected (Rom 8:23). This is also true of your regeneration. Someday, the everlasting and complete Regeneration will be experienced by the whole world. There will be a new heavens and a new earth. And God's people will share in that newness.

Look at it this way. Like justification and adoption and other elements of the *Ordo*, you are regenerate now, but your participation in his resurrection is not yet fully abundant. You have spiritual life now, but there is an even better kind of life that awaits you. You look forward to a sort of existence scarcely imaginable today. It is in this hope that the Spirit empowers us to press on.

When speaking of this glorious reality, Paul notes that the creation is “groaning” now, suffering “bondage to corruption” (Rom 8:21 – 22). We feel this acutely. We get discouraged. We have hard struggles. We suffer. Sometimes, we suffer for being Christians. But usually, we just experience what seems to be meaningless pain. It is important to remember in those times that Christianity isn’t at home in this present age. We are destined for future glory. In fact, the need for a universal new creation, for a *palingenesis*, is never more obvious than when we endure severe trials.

So hold on to the resurrected Christ. Don’t allow your afflictions to be the weightiest things in your mind. Outweigh them with a vision of future glory. And remember that the *palingenesis* you already have is a down payment on the future *palingenesis* of the universe. Amen, Come Lord Jesus!