

The following statement is a brief response to an email question concerning
VBF'S POSITION ON REGENERATION,
means of salvation,
and theological elitism

Although I feel it does cover our position adequately, It is not meant to be a complete response on the subject.

Both Bob and I realize the incredible responsibility to have and teach sound doctrine. We believe doctrine is not established primarily through the writings of others, but through the Word. This is the only forum we will be willing to discuss. "What does the Word say." We believe the Word alone is sufficient to answer all the answerable questions of doctrine. As Paul would tell Timothy: **"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.** (2 Tim 3:16-17).

In Scripture we have all that is needed to resolve the answerable questions of doctrine. We also believe it is not the elite few, the theologians, pastors, preachers, teachers who alone can grasp and understand the Scriptures and great questions of doctrine which arise. Paul shares that we (believers) have been given the Spirit so that we can understand the things given to us by God. It is our opinion that he is referring to the Word (read the context 1 Cor 2:1-11):

*"12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, **that we might know the things freely given to us by God,** 13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in **those taught by the Spirit,** combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. 14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. 15 But **he who is spiritual appraises all things,** yet he himself is appraised by no man. 16 For **WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE SHOULD INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.**" (1Corinthians 2:12-16)*

I hope the following will give you picture of where we are coming from doctrinally.

I feel that the root of our discussion was about the biblical meaning of Regeneration. As I argued, **I firmly believe that regeneration does not precede faith,** but is part of the very process of salvation and **is accomplished instrumentally through the Word of God,** in which you disagreed.

Now I'm not so sure that I adequately relayed that I firmly believe that the Holy Spirit is the one who accomplishes this regeneration. **"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,** (Titus 3:5)

Concerning the Word in relation to salvation, we see over and over in Scripture that the Word is heard, believed and then one is saved.

- "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who **hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life,** and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. (John 5:24)
- "For I am not ashamed of **the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation** to everyone **who believes,** to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Romans 1:16)
- **As I shared Romans 10, illustrates this point.** For it is speaking about the process of salvation: Romans 10:1 *Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is **for their salvation.*** 2 *For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.* 3 *For not*

knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.⁵ For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness.⁶ But the righteousness based on faith speaks thus, "DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, 'WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?' (that is, to bring Christ down),⁷ or 'WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). "⁸ But what does it say? "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART"-- that is, the word of faith which we are preaching,⁹ that **if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved**;¹⁰ for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, **resulting in salvation**.¹¹ For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him;¹³ for "WHOEVER WILL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED."¹⁴ **How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? (at this point he answers that question)** And how shall they **believe in Him** whom they have not **heard**? And how shall **they hear** without a **preacher**?¹⁵ And how shall they **preach** unless they are **sent**? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!"¹⁶ However, they did not all heed the glad tidings; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?"¹⁷ **So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.** (Romans 10:1-17)

- **Peter affirms that we are born again by means of the Word:** ²³ for you have been **born again** not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, **through the living and abiding word of God**.²⁴ For, "ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF,²⁵ BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ABIDES FOREVER. "And this is **the word which was preached to you.** (1 Peter 1:23-25)
- **Paul reminds Timothy that the Word was able to give the wisdom that leads to salvation** ¹⁴ "You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them;¹⁵ and that from childhood you have known **the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith** which is **in Christ Jesus**.¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;¹⁷ that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3:14-16)

With all this in mind, we feel the following relays our position on Regeneration as it relates to salvation

Regeneration

We teach that regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the divine nature and divine life are given (John 3:3 7; Titus 3:5). **It is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word of God** (John 5:24), **when the repentant sinner**, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, **responds in faith to the divine provision of salvation.**

Genuine regeneration is manifested by fruits worthy of repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct. Good works will be its proper evidence and fruit (1 Corinthians 6:19 20; Ephesians 2:10), and will be experienced to the extent that the believer submits to the control of the Holy Spirit in his life through faithful obedience to the Word of God (Ephesians 5:17 21; Philippians 2:12b; Colossians 3:16; 2 Peter 1:4 10). This obedience causes the believer to be increasingly conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Such a conformity is climaxed in the believer's glorification at Christ's coming (Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2 3).