

Regeneration and Renewal ~ February 2017

From the Desk of Pastor Rich

As I have had the chance to visit in the states of Georgia and South Carolina I have observed a different type of lifestyle much different than ours back in the Midwest. For instance, I stopped at a Hardee's in Charleston and asked the young attendant for a pop and he looked at me rather funny and asked me what in the world was a pop? You see they call pop, soda down here in the southern part of the country much like other things that are different from other parts of the country.

However, there was one thing I noticed around the area we were staying was the effects that a hurricane has had upon the region. Talking with several area residents really spoke to the resolve they have down here in the southeast part of the country. Looking around at the landscape I have a new appreciation what a hurricane can do. There were areas where it looked like a bomb went off with trees uprooted, houses damaged, and areas roped off because they were still cleaning up after the hurricane from last year.

What really caught my attention was not the actual damage that was done but the attitude of the people around the area. Many of them talked about this just being another storm in which they had to clean up and continue living as normal as they could. They did not look at the damage as something that could not be dealt with. Even though there was much cumulative damage they did not see the damage as something that could not be dealt with but talked of cleaning up, rebuilding, and starting anew in the coming months and years ahead. In their words, "We just have to clean up, renew the things that were damaged, and regenerate the energy and passion of being alive."

Regeneration and renewal. What wonderful words to hear. Hearing these words brought to mind what happens for Christians like you and me on a daily basis. Paul talks about this in Titus 3: 4-8. This idea of regeneration and renewal for Christians is centered around our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Instead of looking to the world for regeneration and renewal Paul speaks about our total reliance upon the Lord for this regeneration and renewal throughout our lives on a daily basis. ***"But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life..."***

You and I have this gift of regeneration and renewal each and every day of our lives for through our Baptism we are assured of being regenerated and renewed by the Holy Spirit because of our Baptism in Christ Jesus. How awesome is this promise of God! Even though the world may crumble around us, our days might be filled with stress and pessimism, God in His mercy regenerates and renews us because of His love for us.

This is what I heard from those in the area the hurricane hit. It did not dampen their spirits of knowing it would be a long time to clean up so everything might be somewhat normal again. But for you and I we do not have to wait a long time to be regenerated and renewed. God promises us He will grant us this regeneration and renewal immediately because of what Jesus has done for us in His death and resurrection. Paul reminds you and me of this great gift in Romans 6: 3 – 4: ***"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death. We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."***

Newness of Life! Regeneration and renewal! This is God's gift and promise to you and me! Being regenerated and renewed has a totally different context to it than what I heard while down south. They were talking about fixing things up to as close to the original that they could. It would never be the same. But God is talking about new life for us when He regenerates and renews us. Not someone to be fixed up and close to the original. But new life! Regenerated and renewed because of His suffering, death and resurrection. A life that has been changed and given hope in every circumstance. This is truly a regeneration and renewal.

May God grant to you every day that regeneration and renewal we all crave to have. The regeneration and renewal which brings about thanks to Jesus Christ for what He has done for each of us. Giving up Himself so we may experience the new life that God only gives.

In Christ's Service and Love, *Pastor Rich*