

Is Receiving Believing?

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Pure Grace is grace alone. Unless you complicate things by turning the act of Grace into something I have to do in order to initiate the whole process of first believing in salvation.

A work is a work plain and simple. Faith is the gift, Ephesians 2:8,9. Life begins at faiths conception. The new birth is not a by-product of a dead will, ensnared in the bondage and the inability to stop from sinning! 2 peter 2:14 "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot *cease from sin*; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children:"

The whole issue amidst the current debate in evangelism is who starts the salvation process. Who begins the work?

Clearly it is God. Philippians 1:6 "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath ***begun*** a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:"

It is clear that if God began it, then I am out of the picture as far as being the responsible agent in starting my own salvation experience.

When Paul was on his way to persecute believers on the road to Damascus, he thought he was doing God service. Was he?

What did the Lord say? Acts 9:5 "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" Paul was the Lords worst enemy at the time when the Lord interrupted his pursuit. Paul's activity was halted in his tracks by a direct revelation from a glorified Savior. This pattern has not changed in two thousand years! It happens the same way every time someone gets saved as Paul did. We are headed in the wrong direction, our way. Proverbs 16:25 "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

We choose death every time. It is God who intervenes in the middle of our life and turns us around. 1Timothy 1:16 "Howbeit for this cause

I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.”

The word for pattern is *hupotuposis*. It means a sketch (figuratively) for imitation:— form. In other words, Paul is saying that his salvation experience is the mold. The Lords uses the same form or sketch in our experience as he did in Paul’s. This sets the record straight.

This is exactly how I first started out. I was pursuing what I thought was the correct way. The gospel according to Mike Szafranski.

But God, who was rich in mercy, reached down to my save me from myself. He stopped me cold in my tracks and regenerated my dead soul! I can honestly say it was the Lord that began my repentance experience. I wanted nothing to do with any of that. Neither did the Apostle Paul on that infamous road to Damascus some two thousand years ago.

This must be so also today every time God begins that same salvation experience in every potential convert. It is only the sick who are called to the mighty Physician. Luke 5:31 “And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.”

What is this sickness the Lord is referring to? Is it a totally debilitating sickness or a partial one?

Our word here is *kakos*. It means, amiss, diseased, evil, miserably, sick, sore. We are diseased from birth. This is what David meant when he said in Ps. 51:5 “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” This was the sin of Adam. From birth we are without spiritual strength. Even in conception we are sin laden!

Here is the magnitude of such passages as Luke 7:2 “And a certain centurion’s servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die.” and Mark 2:17 “When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them,

They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Who are the righteous in the above verse? They were like those today who insist on free will. Have you ever heard the expression, “dead does not necessarily mean totally dead!”

A little righteousness means a free will. That tiny desire to choose right over evil. He that is sick needs not a physician, or is it he that is a little sick!

Sick is sick without borrowing from a current quote about what does a word mean, which was a total denial of the truth.

Luke 2:7 states that the person was ready to die, at the mouth of death. Ever witnessed a person ready to die at the jaws of eternity? It is not a pretty site, as a matter of fact the main reason why we die physically is because we run out of the ability to either breathe or continue normal life support systems. Thus the definition of “without strength” Romans 5:6 “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”

Without strength to do what? To do anything period. It is God who must re-breathe life into our dead souls.

Yes dead means totally dead. I remember I went to see my cousin on his death bed. He was suffering from lung cancer from smoking cigarettes. I didn’t realize how bad he was until I entered the room and saw him struggling to breathe. There was no doubt about it. He was very close to death and that night passed into a Christless eternity. What a tragedy! His skin was all yellow from an almost non-functioning liver, literally skin and bones. Gasping for every breath and unconscious, no response as everyone spoke to him. That night he died and he was without strength.

This is what the lord meant spiritually when he described to the Pharisees in John 8:23+24 “And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.”

We are from beneath because we are dead spiritually. We cannot crawl out of our crypt. We don't even know we are dead before salvation. We think naturally that I am ok and that you are ok!

But God would have us know our dead condition. My almost dead cousin could not even drink water anymore with his throat. He was on life support but even that was ineffective.

Thus the expression twice dead in Jude 1:12 “These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;”

To quote Calvin "Twice dead" “is deemed by some a proverbial expression to signify what is altogether dead; or, as by Macknight, it means that they were dead when professing Judaism, and dead after having made a profession of the gospel.—Ed.”

Many today are “twice dead”. They may even be very active in a church ministry! Their church talk at times has a stale air that revolves about these twice dead ones.

Simply because we in our own strength imitate someone else does not necessitate the work of the Holy Spirit. Walking the isle, raising a hand or what ever we are instructed to do by someone else. Why is it that even undertakers try to make corpses look cosmetically good in our coffins!

But the truth of the matter is dead is dead and until the Lord does the work in the ministry of the convert, he remains in his sin, despite the feverous efforts of a desperate evangelist.