

Saved By The Holy Spirit

In case you are wondering, it was my computer that expired rather than me. For more than two weeks I have been banished to the Stone Age. Without a computer, life suddenly becomes primitive. Now I have a new computer whose new tricks this old dog must try to learn. All the proper software has not been installed. I can only receive and send email. No printouts.

Your recent message meant for me may be floating out in the vacuum of cyber space. If it was due a reply which you did not receive, please send it again. I had my sendout for last week ready but I can only hope it can be recovered from the old computer. Having given my attention to other things, such as income taxes, I have lost my train of thought, which train was short and slow to begin with. I hope to hook up again though I may have some deliberate skips in weeks ahead.

I am hoping that with the new computer with updated software my essays will not lose format in being sent to you. But so far it does not seem that much improvement is forthcoming.

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During my teenage years my brother and I would sometimes visit the open-air revival meetings of other churches in our community in West Texas. In retrospect, I will have to admit that our purpose was not to participate but to pick flaws with what we observed. Even now, I have to admit that some of the things we observed were sincere misdirections and questionable procedures. Those were related to the part attributed to the Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost, as the King James Versions of the day had it).

The preachers would present their lessons and with refined skills build to an emotional high, laying on the guilt and creating fear of dying that very night without Christ. Then the altar call would be given and a haunting invitation song would be sung with added exhortations and extended singing. Those sincerely seeking salvation, along with some reluctant ones who might be towed by a sincere "personal worker," knelt at the altar. They prayed for the Spirit to touch their hearts with salvation. Some who were more susceptible to suggestion "got the feeling" very quickly and became happy in their supposed salvation. Altar pleadings continued for those less moved. Some of the more left-brained ones could never get the feeling. Some of them would try again the following nights. On rare occasions, one of these would find his way to the Church of Christ { : -(where he was taught to obey the gospel, with instructions from the Scriptures which he could understand -- nothing mystical about it. After his baptism, he "*went on his way rejoicing.*"

Were some persons saved by the Holy Spirit and others saved by obedience? Surely, no

amount of works can remit our sins, but those who "*obey not the gospel*" will suffer the eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord.. " (2 Thes. 1:7-9). There is a difference in supposed works of merit and necessary "*obedience of faith*" (see Rom. 1:5).

Attributing salvation to our own good works is a bad idea, but expecting the Holy Spirit to save us is not the best of ideas either, especially since there is no stated purpose or any record in Scripture of the Holy Spirit saving anyone. In fact, there is no record of the Spirit ever even telling a sinner what to do to be saved. Our works are not our savior; neither is the Holy Spirit. There were stated purposes Jesus gave for sending the Spirit which we want to discuss later, but saving the sinner is not one of them. Yes, he was to convict the world even as many were convicted on Pentecost, but he convicted them through the message of the inspired apostles, for "*When they heard this they were cut to the heart ..*" (Acts 2:). It was not a direct operation on the heart overpowering the conscience.

Faith is not a gift package put in one's mind. "*So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ.*" "*Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, that they may not believe and be saved.*" Please read those passages (Rom. 10:17; Lk 8:11-12) in context, for they are only two of many setting forth this truth. In demonstration of this truth, no believer has ever been found who had not first heard the word of God.

Neither is salvation a gift package put in a person's mind / heart / life. Has "salvation" come to be a loaded term? What is salvation? Although the words salvation, forgiveness, and remission of sins are not synonyms, they actually amount to the same thing. To be saved is to be forgiven by God, to have one's sins remitted or blotted out. Are these implanted in a person? Are they something possessed? Are they things accomplished in a person? None of the above. Forgiveness is in the mind / heart of God rather than in the person. It is not a package deal infused into a sinner. Rightness with God is not something accomplished in a person, but after being forgiven one continues to be a sinner to whom rightness with God is accounted or reckoned. Is forgiveness and salvation the gift of immortality? Immortality is accomplished only when the believer leaves this earthly body in death (1 Cor. 15:42-55). Until that transpires, we are yet mortal which also means that we are yet vulnerable.

Since forgiveness is in the mind of God instead of being in us, how can we feel it? How would we know what kind of feeling was proof of God's remitting out sins and no longer holding us accountable for them in judgment? To illustrate, let us suppose that I offend you, sinning against you in some grievous manner. We both lie sleepless that night many miles apart. In time you decide that the loving thing to do is to forgive me, so you forgive me from your heart. Do I suddenly feel a great surge of joy and peace as I lie in my bed? Certainly not. However, if you were to call me and express your loving forgiveness, my emotions would suddenly rise from contrition to extreme joy. The emotional change would be due to information received rather than some mystical

feeling. In like manner, we cannot know of God's forgiveness by some mystical emotion but can have true confidence when we have assurance from the Scriptures that we are accounted as righteous.

By denial that the Holy Spirit saves sinners by a direct operation upon their heart, we are not excluding other activities of the Spirit. If the Lord wills, we will touch on other points in lessons to come which are yet unwritten.

(Cecil Hook: February 2004)