

Why I Finally Researched the Topic of Salvation

A young man from Asia emailed me his journaling. I saw demonic interference in it and suggested he read over our salvation blog to make sure he was saved.

He read it and followed the steps it outlined for salvation and then let me know he felt nothing happened!

Well, that is not what I was hoping for. I believe the Spirit bears witness in our hearts that we are children of God (Rom. 8:16), so I expect people to feel something. Not that I always believed this. I used to believe feelings were soulish and you didn't need to feel anything when you experienced salvation. I believed you accept salvation by faith, based on the facts of Scripture, thus ruling out any heart sensations.

Cigarettes, really? His next suggestion was he felt he needed to give up cigarettes before he could be saved. I asked him if he felt the Lord told him that. He said, "No." My inner conclusion was that he didn't need to give up cigarettes in order to get saved. That is something God could work out with him at a later time.

Was there something wrong with my salvation article? I decided I should review what I had written on salvation and see what I had said that made him think he needed to give up cigarettes. I read it and discovered that three of the first four steps were acknowledging, repenting of and forsaking your sin, and this was all before you invited Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit into your heart.

Wow. That would make the overcoming of my sins a work of my flesh, rather than a work of the Holy Spirit. Yikes! The biblical definition of this is a dead work, something I do by the flesh rather than by the strength of the Spirit (John

6:63). Dead works need to be repented of (Heb. 6:1-2). OK, I was now sure my salvation blog definitely needed to be re-written.

My misplaced faith and fear. The reasons I had neglected researching salvation up to this time were: I believed what evangelicals taught about it had to be right, so I never double-checked it.

I figured that if I did research “salvation” and came to a conclusion different than evangelicals, I would be rejected, and I didn’t want that, so I simply avoided the subject.

Now that God had gotten my attention and made it clear to me that it was time to explore salvation in depth, I began my research by typing three words into E-Sword, my computerized Bible program. The words were “repent, sins, saved.”

The startling results! The search came back with nothing! There was no verse in the Bible that said to repent of our sins to be saved! And the church I was saved in at age 15 had us spend six months examining our lives in depth, making sure we had repented of all sins before we could be water baptized, join the church and be saved.

What does the Bible say? It says, “*Repent and believe the gospel*” (Mark 1:15). Of course, that verse doesn’t tell what I am repenting of or what the gospel is that I now believe in. So I decided I needed to explore further to see if I could find the answers to these two critically important questions.

Are sins dealt with before or after salvation? I did note that many verses speak of putting off sins after being saved and that this is accomplished by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit within us (Rom. 8:9-14; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 5:16-25; Eph. 4:22-32; 1 John 1:5-10; 2 Pet. 1:2-11).

So what is it, then, that we repent of? I came to the conclusion that we repent for believing Satan’s big lie

introduced in the Garden of Eden that you can know (Gen. 3:4-5). Satan suggested that it's all about me and what I think to be true. "You" became the false god of humanism. "Know" became the false god of rationalism. All other sins in my life are an outworking of this one big lie and these two false gods. Other sins will fall away once Satan's big lie is dealt with.

So salvation begins with me renouncing Satan's lie of independent living and turning back to God's original intent, which was that I live out of daily walks with Him in the garden in the cool of the day (dependent living—living and walking by the Spirit—Gal. 5:25). Sins of my flesh will be overcome by the power of the Spirit within me (Rom. 8:13). I will not be overcoming them through battling them using the strength of my flesh, as the efforts of the flesh profit nothing (John 6:63).

We preach the gospel of what? Now for the second part of Mark 1:15: What is the gospel that I am asked to believe in? I concluded that it is the gospel of the kingdom, not the gospel of salvation. I noticed that the "gospel of salvation" is only mentioned once (Eph. 1:13), and "gospel of the kingdom" is mentioned six times (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; Mark 1:15; Luke 16:16; Acts 8:12).

Out of these seven times, we are never commanded to preach the gospel of salvation. Four times the Bible says Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; Mark 1:15; Luke 16:16), once that Phillip preached the gospel of the kingdom (Acts 8:12) and once it states that the end will come after the gospel of the kingdom has been preached to the whole world (Matt. 24:14), which seems to quite clearly mean that we are supposed to be preaching the gospel of the kingdom.

What was the climax of Peter's altar call? Finally we get to the altar call. What is the conclusion at the end of our salvation message? Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of

you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Wow! Just a bit different from my close, which had always been, “You get to go to heaven.” One of us needs to tune up his message!

Honoring the Holy Spirit: In examining websites to see what they listed as “Steps to Salvation,” I was shocked that many ministries and churches do not list anything at all concerning how to be saved! We didn’t on our website for many years, until I finally was convicted by God and put up a salvation article which unfortunately had wrong steps in it. Salvation is the church’s No. 1 message to the world. We need to post it, and the steps of salvation must include the Holy Spirit, as He is central to the salvation experience!

That is why we created a salvation website which honors the Holy Spirit, [. {eo}](#)

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