



VERSE OF THE WEEK

Romans 10:9 3

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Does One Need to Be Saved to Go to Heaven?



I will never forget the morning I played 3-on-3 basketball with Pete Maravich in Pasadena, California. That very morning he would die from a massive heart attack. How well I remember Dr. James Dobson and myself trading back and forth in our attempts at mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. After what seemed like an eternity, the ambulance finally arrived a half-hour later. During resuscitation attempts, we had no response at all—no sign of life in Pete whatsoever. The autopsy would later reveal that one of the all-time greatest basketball players was dead the moment he hit the floor, incapable of benefitting from our futile attempts, incapable of responding to any stimulus, incapable of any ability of his own to respond. That chilling, stark memory, which will forever remain etched in my mind, serves as a poignant picture of this lesson’s Scripture passages.

Ralph Drollinger

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- Former Cabinet Members / White House Senior Staff:* Wednesdays 7am, Zoom.
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♥ VERSE OF THE WEEK

Romans 10:9

That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.



If you have not placed your faith in Christ for salvation, I encourage you to invite Him into your life today.



I. INTRODUCTION

Spiritual death is the complete inability and incapacity to respond to spiritual things, especially the Word of God. Accordingly, I would like to unpack the meaning of Ephesians 2:1–5:

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins ... but God ... made us alive together with Christ.

II. A SPECIFIC UNDERSTANDING OF EPHESIANS 2:1

A. DEAD

All men and women—declares the Bible—are dead in their trespasses and sins. I know of no clearer insight than this in the entire Word of God regarding the spiritual status of mankind: physically alive, but spiritually dead.

In Matthew 8:21–22 Jesus is found responding to a reluctant follower. Notice the parallel thought in this passage:

Another of the disciples said to Him, “Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.” But Jesus said to him, “Follow Me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead.”

The man’s response to Jesus’ call was one of delay. He wanted to wait until his father died (for which there is no indication he was even about to pass away). His motive was most likely to inherit his wealth—in essence revealing that material things were of greater importance to him than following Jesus. That being the case, Jesus said, “Follow Me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead.”

What Jesus said similarly reveals God’s perspective of mankind—physically alive but spiritually dead. In 1 Timothy 5:6, Timothy receives instruction as a pastor on how to handle widows in the church. Paul counsels him, She who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives. Note again the clear biblical perspective on mankind’s spiritual status: physically alive but spiritually dead—the sad but real state of every

human being who knows not the Redeemer. Everyone needs to be resuscitated by the breath of Jesus in order to go to heaven.

B. IN

Further investigation of the passage involves a careful analysis of the word “in.” The Greek case used here indicates sphere—the sphere in which something exists, i.e., spiritual deadness does not come from trespasses and sins. Rather, within the sphere of deadness, or born out of deadness, are trespasses and sins. To illumine the textual meaning: people do not become liars because they tell a lie; they tell lies because they already are liars. The same is true with all sins, such as adultery, theft, homosexuality, murder or bearing false witness (cf. 1 Timothy 1:9–10). Committing sinful acts does not make a person a sinner; rather, sinful acts vividly and accurately reveal man’s sinful nature.

In Genesis chapter 3, the Fall of man occurs; mankind has been cursed by spiritual death ever since. All are the ancestors of Adam’s fallen race. Romans 3:23 says, For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Ecclesiastes 7:20 states, Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins. To broaden this understanding, consider the following:

Today’s outward manifestations of sin are not a result of improper environmental conditioning, a lack of education, or squelched opportunities.

Biblically, per this proposition and the remainder of God’s Word, quite the opposite is true. An improper environment, a withheld education or opportunity serve to illustrate the sinful, base nature of man. Even though man is created in the image of God, which explains the goodness in him, he is tainted by the Fall wherein sin entered the world and forever tarnished God’s image in everyone He created.

C. TRESPASSES AND SIN

Trespasses (paraptoma) means “to slip, de-



viate or go the wrong direction.” *Sins* (*hamartia*) derives its original meaning from the sport of archery, where the word meant “to miss the bullseye.” In a spiritual sense, “sin,” as used 173 times in the New Testament (NT), means “to miss God’s perfect standard of holiness.” Both words are used in this verse in stereo to illustrate the breadth of hazardous emissions spewing forth from spiritually dead people. Whereas Scripture teaches that people can evidence genuine Christians by their love (John 13:35), dead men will be known by their trespasses and sin.

D. THE DEPTH OF SIN

Concerning the depth of sin’s corruption in the life of unregenerate man, 1 Corinthians 2:14 provides profound insights:

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.

In this passage, the spiritually dead man is referred to as a “natural man” in contrast to the “spiritual man” who has been made alive to God through Christ (vv. 2:15; 3:1). Spiritually dead people cannot even begin to reason their way to knowing God because the Fall has gone so far as to corrupt and darken their thinking when the mind also fell.¹

E. THE SEVERITY OF SIN

The severity of the sin problem is described in the remaining section of Ephesians 2:1–3. Stating to the redeemed (believers) Paul states:

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Many today may think these words are too harsh. But note this: there are those who are outwardly better than others; history has recorded a wide variation in the levels of human goodness and evil.

As we reflect on the twentieth anniversary of the September 11, 2001, attacks on America, the actions of the hate-driven terrorists that resulted in the loss of thousands of innocent American lives indeed provide a vivid picture of an extreme degree of human depravity. But in all sobriety and contemplated through the lens of Scripture, from God’s perspective both—terrorists as well as those who do not know God—are in desperate need of Jesus Christ to satisfy the payment for sin in order to be saved from an eternal sentence of separation from holy God.

Certainly not all are equal in their level of sin, but all are equal in their separation from God. Related to God’s standard of holiness, all are equal in their failure to even come close to His standard of perfection.

F. TO ILLUSTRATE THE POINT

For most of my life I have enjoyed mountaineering in our nation’s magnificent Sierra Nevada. Having studied its climbing history, I have often been fascinated with the routes and ascents of Norman Clyde, who is by far the premiere explorer in all Sierra Nevada climbing history, having notched up over 2000 ascents! Personally, in more than half a century of climbing, I have made more than 300 ascents. Compared to a novice who has climbed Mt. Whitney, I may appear quite superior in comparative accomplishment, but in light of Norman Clyde’s standard for excellence, both the novice and I are dismal failures!

God says, “**YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY**” (1 Peter 1:16). God’s standard is perfect holiness, and all who rely on an economy of personal achievement fall comparatively short. Make no mistake: salvation *cannot* be attained by personal merit or works. Salvation is achieved by Christ’s

work on another’s behalf. A person needs to be saved by the propitiatory work of Christ to go to heaven.

Whereas the world in gushy sentimentalism enjoys characterizing everyone as being “children of God,” Scripture makes it clear that apart from an imputed righteousness through Christ’s work on man’s behalf, all are doomed for eternal failure. God’s sober perspective? Mankind is dead—as evidenced and revealed by sin—and Ephesians 2 subsequently states are by nature children of wrath—not children of God.

When John Newton penned the famous hymn “Amazing Grace,” he said of God’s grace *that saved a wretch like me*. The word *wretch* is a biblically apropos description.

III. A SPECIFIC UNDERSTANDING OF EPHESIANS 2:4–5

How are people made alive to God?

A. BY THE GRACE OF GOD

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).

Again, a person is not saved by any form of human works, but keep in mind the book of James says that good works are always indicative of those who are truly saved). Specifically note what Paul states in Ephesians 2:8–9 regarding how a person is made alive to God:

B. BY FAITH ALONE IN CHRIST ALONE

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

In this passage, God’s means of salvation could not be any clearer. Salvation is not achieved via personal works; rather, it is achieved by God’s work on our behalf!



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God's standard of holiness is far too lofty to be achievable through any and all of man's self-efforts.

The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:20–47 unavoidably portrays this truth wherein God peers underneath seemingly good outward actions to judge mankind's sinful, condemning inward thoughts.

C. BY A GIFT OF GOD

Salvation cannot come from self; rather, it is a total gift of God. Romans 5:8–9 reinforces this:

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us ... by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

The biblical teaching on salvation is consistent and repetitive. By placing our faith in Him, we are justified and made alive together with Christ. Speaking of this glorious salvation in Romans 6:4, Scripture attests, so that ... *we too might walk in newness of life*. Accordingly, those who have received Christ have been born spiritually (cf. John 3:3–6); they have God's nature and are spiritual people capable of living spiritual lives via the now-empowering, now-indwelling Holy Spirit. 2 Corinthians 5:17–18 attests to this fact:

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ....

IV. CONCLUSION

Scripture provides a tremendous contrast relative to a person who is born spiritually through Christ versus one who has yet to make that life-changing discovery. Whether or not you know Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, you are welcome to study His Book with us in the Members Bible Studies. On behalf of those in each group, we desire your participation where, hopefully, you will experience the love of Christ and will grow in His grace and knowledge. Come just as you are.

Does man really need to be saved to go to heaven? Contemplate what the book of Romans records in verses 9 and 10 of chapter 10:

That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

If you have not placed your faith in Christ today for salvation, I encourage you to invite Him into your life.

1. The mind also fell at The Fall. This is theologically referred to as "the noetic effect of sin".

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