

SAVED and BORN AGAIN

There is a difference between being "saved," and being "born again." I did a survey (not exhaustive) of the contexts in which this word "saved" was used, and perhaps I will later share that with the group. But one example, is that when Peter was walking on the water (Mat. 14:25 -31), and began sinking, he called out to Jesus and said, "Lord, save me!" I think that we can all understand how he was using this word, which has become a theological "catch word" among evangelicals.

Using the history of Israel in the OT, we can see that being "saved" can come and go. God saved them out of Egypt, at Sinai made them His people, preserved them in the wilderness (well, until the older, unbelieving generation died off) and then took them into the promised land. There, depending upon their behavior, they went through a cycle of being "saved" from their enemies when God would raise up a "judge," or they would lose that safety and be harassed by enemies, then cry out to God and repent, and God would give them another savior, etc.. Finally, God evicts them from their promised land and they are returned to slavery (e.g., in Babylon) for a time of His dealing judgment upon them. Depending upon their behavior they were "saved," or "lost" -- they lost the privileges of freedom and safety.

Yet, through all this history, they were always God's people, His collective son. This is why He kept disciplining them.

Turning to the NT, we see in the parable of the prodigal, that he was allowed to use his will and leave the father's house. To the father, he became dead. And none of us would call his being destitute and feeding pigs "being saved." But he knew he still had a father, and used his will to return, and the father later says "this, my son, was dead and is alive again." (Lu. 16:24) Though metaphorically "dead," he always remained the father's son. Likewise, when the sheep was lost, it was still the shepherd's sheep, and that's why he went to find it.

The word "saved" means "rescued; delivered; healed; made whole." These are actions that are usually made to change the conditions of one who needs them. It is an entirely different concept from "being born," which, with humans, is supposed to be the result of love, or the desire to have children (& hopefully both). Being born does not save someone -- actually, literally, in this life, it means that those who bear children give birth to someone who now needs to be saved.

Repentance -- which means to have a change of mind, a change of thinking, and often a resultant change of behavior (because, as a man thinks, so he is) -- in relation to God, is the result of an impartation of life and faith by the action of the Holy Spirit. We are first given faith, from hearing the Word and that Word being implanted in our hearts, and then we believe. The birth, the implantation of Christ within our spirits, happens first. Then we respond because of the life that is now within us. Having the mind of Christ (which is definitely a change from having the mind of the first Adam) is the result of a gift. The grace that imparts life, which results in birth, is a gift. New birth is the result of the life-imparting action of our Heavenly Father, through His Spirit. The reason that this is important to us who do not believe in free will, is, first, because we believe that the Work is entirely of God, in bringing us to birth. It is also fundamental to our understanding who we are. We are not humans who made a decision for Christ, we are sons of God just as our elder brother, Jesus, was -- when He walked the earth as a man. Those who "receive It (the Word; or "Him," the Christ)" were those who had already been born of God (John 1:13). Those who are now habitually believing into Him are those who have been given His faith, so that they can believe. It is by the Faith of Christ, Who has become incarnated within us, so that we no longer live, but Christ within us. By believing that we must exercise our will, and thus, choose Christ to be birthed within us, for us to become one spirit with Him and be born again, means that we must participate in our birth -- that we must do something -- and this means that ultimately, we have something in which to boast, just as did the Jews by believing that to our faith must be added circumcision. By believing that the Spirit (or, grace) simply enables us to respond or repent, and now it's up to us, is as if He throws us the rope (the gift of grace), and now we grab hold and begin climbing out of the pit.

As others have pointed out, it is God who is working in us, both TO WILL, and to do His good pleasure (which begins in receiving Him/It). He is the Inaugurator (Prime Author) and the Bringer-to-maturity-and-fruition of faith (Heb. 12:2). It is never our faith, it is His faith, as He enters into us, responding for us and as us, as we become one spirit with Him in that Divine conception. This is new birth (literally: born back up again). This is the "new creation," -- we become a part of the Last Adam, the Second (Collective) Man. Then He begins the process of saving us (healing us; rescuing us; delivering us; making us whole).

So, I agree with you, in the NT, salvation is for those who believe, but this believing is the result of the awakening -- the resurrection of our spirits -- the impartation of His faith. If we reject the proclamation of the good news, it is because we, at that time, were not yet given faith, and were not yet born of God.

You cited Heb. 12, where we [my emphasis] -- the believers, the born-ones of God, the sons who are being disciplined by the Father -- are warned "to not refuse [your emphasis] Him who speaks..." Amen. WE, who are His children, are not to refuse our Father, or the results will be hard on us. Now note: in the context of ch. 12, we are told (in vs. 8) that those who are without this discipline do not have Him as their Father, and are "not sons." All the imperatives in this chapter are to sons (cf. vs. 5, "which speaks-through (discourses) to you as to sons").

You quoted Jesus saying "He who hears My word, and believes on Him who sent me, has eternal life." This is not an "if-then" statement. It is a statement of fact. It does not say, "If you hear My word and if you believe on Him who sent me, then you will have aionian life." The statement could be translated, "The man continuously having (holding [in himself]) aionian life is the one [who is] constantly hearing My word and habitually believing within the One (or, as an instrumental: trusting by the One) sending Me." The statement is an equation. The one identifies the other. Further, notice the rest of the verse: "... and is not repeatedly coming (or: going) into judgment, but rather, he has departed [perf. tense: completed action] forth from out of death, into the Life [i.e., Christ, who is our life]." Thus, the one hearing and believing is one who has "gone from one state to another": Gr. metabaino. By the way, folks, this is John 5:24.

You quoted Paul saying to the jailor, when he asked "What must I do to be saved?" and Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." But what was the jailor really asking? I do not think that he was referring to Jesus or aionian life. He had a huge problem, with seeing the prison door open, and was about to kill himself rather to be tortured by his superiors, and then killed. When he asked Paul this question, I think that he was saying, "What must I do to be kept safe?" Paul tells him to put his trust upon the Lord Jesus and he would be kept safe. Prior to this, there is no indication that the jailor knew anything about Jesus, or the Christ. Paul and Silas had been brought to him as ones who were troublemakers (vs. 20). Note, that Paul tells him that not only he, but his whole household would be kept safe (vs. 31). This is not a case of where a father believes in Jesus and his whole family is saved. Now in vs. 32 we find Paul presenting the gospel to all that were in his house, and in vs. 33 they were baptized. I think that they "believed in Christ," after the preaching of the Word. It is in vs. 34 that we find him "believing in God, with all his house." God used fear for his life to open his soil to receive the incorruptible Word.

You mentioned that Paul was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, when Jesus called him from heaven. But this obedience of Paul's followed his conversion. He was a man struck down by God. He was blinded, until one was sent to heal him. He became a man who was "no longer [him] but Christ." This is why he was obedient to the vision. Could he have been disobedient? Could Christ have been disobedient? It's the same question.

We do not "water down" the gospel by tossing out obedience or action or accountability. I believe that His judgments -- his corrections and disciplines -- come if we ignore all those imperatives. It happened to Israel. It happens to us.

In your closing paragraph you said, "The Gospel provides man with the faith to obey the call." I say a hearty "Amen!" But one must be given ears to hear, as well as being transferred from the authority of the Darkness

into the kingdom of the Son whose origin is His love, before he can even hear the call. Once born of God, once a son, then are we required to obey.

May He continue to remove the veil from the eyes of all of us, and progressively seeing Christ may we be transformed from glory to glory.

**Shalom,
Jonathan.**