

The preaching of the gospel that is *close* to the truth. Can man *really* reach out and choose to be saved?

By: Geoffrey R. Kirkland

Text:

Ephesians 2:1 (cf. 2:5) — Καὶ ὑμᾶς ὄντας νεκροὺς τοῖς παραπτώμασιν καὶ ταῖς ἀμαρτίαις ὑμῶν

Translation:

Ephesians 2:1 (cf. 2:5) — And as for you, you were **dead** in your trespasses and in your sins

This morning I heard a sermon from Ephesians 2:1-10. In my opinion, this proves to be one of the most crucial texts in all of the NT—along with a myriad of others!!—because it speaks in no unclear terms of the radical depravity that encompasses every aspect of every human being.

I found it quite interesting to note that the preacher said quite repeatedly that “you are dead” (quoting Eph 2:1). With this, I heartily agree. Most evangelical preachers would (probably) say this when preaching this text (because it’s *in* the text!). However, it’s where the preacher goes *from* there that always intrigues me.

He proceeded to illustrate the way God saves us by the analogy of the drowned sinner. He said that if we were sinking in the sea and God was on a life-preserving boat, he would throw to us a life preserver. Then he said these lines (and I quote verbatim):

“God throws the life-preserver and He can’t force you to take it.”

And again,

“All you need to do is reach out and receive the preserver.”

Then he continued preaching the sermon on salvation by God’s grace. Here’s where I take great umbrage with what the man said today. **If** I am really *dead* in sin and if I’m *not* sinking or drowning but if I’ve *already drowned* and if I’m totally *lifeless* and *helpless* and *hopeless*, then **how** could I extend my hand to reach out and receive the life-preserver? **Answer? I can’t!**

This is where evangelicalism so often fails today. The Bible reveals that God does not just throw a preserver out to the world and *hope* that some people see the love of God and respond to it in saving faith *out of their own intuition* and *by their own initiative*. This is an absolute impossibility.

If God’s Word is as clear and unambiguous as many claim that it is, then the Scriptures say that we are **dead**. That means there is no life; there is no extending of the hand; there is no choosing God; there is no deciding to “receive Christ”. *Why? Because dead people don’t move, or respond, or initiate.* We must strive with all our might to preach the biblical truth with all gentleness, love, and *biblical accuracy*. We must proclaim that God, in His divine sovereignty and out of His sovereign prerogative, chooses to *completely* save and regenerate *deadened, lifeless, and hopeless* sinners by His sovereign grace and mercy. Then, *after HE regenerates them*, they are able to respond to Him in saving faith and a life of obedience and Lordship submitting to Jesus Christ as a slave submits in *everything* to his master. All this happens to the praise of the glory of God’s grace. God gets the glory—not man! *Soli Deo gloria!*