

Who gets the credit?

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(editing by Kathy Boynton)

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As a young Sunday school boy, I was often taught Ephesians 2:8-9 which says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Imagine then my shock, one day, when my Sunday school teacher said, "We are saved by doing the best we can." He then smiled and pointed out that, trusting the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior is the best thing we can do.

Over the years I have thought about that interaction and come to believe that my initial shock over that provocative statement was well founded. The statement ignores the fact that, according to God, we are all born dead in sin. Paul recognized this fact when he wrote to the Ephesian Christians, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;..." (Ephesians 2:1). A spiritually dead person has no capability to make righteous spiritual choices. He must first be "quickened" which means "made alive." Paul, the apostle, wrote, "...the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in

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the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:7-8). Yet Jesus said, "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:10). How is it that a spiritually dead person, who, according to Scripture, has no ability to please God, can cause such pleasure on God's part by his repentance? The answer lies in the fact that repentance comes from a heart made alive by God Himself! Christ's command, "Lazarus come forth," (John 11:43) illustrates this principle.

If you're saved, who made the difference? Was it your own spiritually dead nature which responded favorably to God? Were you less strenuously evil than those who go to their graves rejecting Christ? Was there a piece of your dead heart that wasn't really dead? Were you more righteous than other dead sinners? Was your final surrender to the Savior, who sacrificed His blood on Calvary, caused by you or by God? Will you take credit for your own belief or will you give the glory to God who quickened your heart bringing about belief and repentance unto salvation?

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