

The Quick And The Dead

The word 'quick' has an old meaning of 'alive' or 'animated' and this is the sense in our Bible verses today from Ephesians. Here Paul tells the church that God the Father has quickened, or given spiritual life to them when they were spiritually dead in sin. The emphasis in Paul's words is that spiritual life comes from God when sinners, being dead in trespasses and sins, are incapable themselves of doing anything for their own spiritual good.

The new birth

Paul shows the Ephesian believers that the motivation, or moving power, for quickening comes from God's love and mercy. The spiritual transformation that follows is a new creation into which spiritual life is infused. Spiritual sense is enabled where before there was none. Suddenly, there is an awareness of sin, an attraction to Christ, a felt need for acceptable righteousness that cannot be known except it be supplied by God.

A triune work

Scripture tells us all the Persons of the Godhead are engaged in this quickening work. As well as Paul's words to the Ephesians, we also learn in Romans that the Father 'quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were' (4:17). The Saviour referring to His Father and Himself says, 'For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will' (John 5:21). Also, the Lord Jesus says of God the Holy Ghost. 'It is the Spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing' (John 6:33).

A necessary work

We have learned from the Bible's description of the human condition about the necessity of this life-giving work in the experience of a sinner, 'the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually'. The spiritually dead cannot make themselves spiritually alive. The Lord told Nicodemus, 'Ye must be born again'.

A gracious work

We have learned, too, that God in eternity chose to save a named and fixed number of sinners according to His own will and purpose. To accomplish their salvation He committed their every need into the hands of His Son in the covenant of grace and peace. It was the elect whom the Saviour came to redeem. On the cross the Lord Jesus satisfied the justice of God, upheld the holiness of the Law and paid the debt of sin with His own precious blood. Everything needful for the salvation of the elect was accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ.

A transforming work

Now we see the importance and necessity of quickening. Those elected by God in eternity and redeemed by Christ at the cross are the very same individuals who in their lifetime are quickened in their soul and made alive to spiritual things. It is the work of the Divine persons to form a new creation, implant spiritual life and bring all those loved and chosen by God to experience the new birth and conversion by the preaching of the gospel. Paul tells Titus, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost' (3:5)

An irresistible work

The power of God is manifested in our salvation. The grace of God cannot be resisted and the will of God cannot be denied. All those whom the Father chose, and the Son redeemed, are regenerated by God the Holy Ghost. Not one individual upon whom the love, grace and mercy of the Triune God has settled will fail to be gathered. They all will be quickened by grace and converted through the preaching of the gospel. Nor do the elect wish otherwise. Quickening makes willing. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation and God makes Christ's people willing to receive it and believe it in the day of His power (Romans 1:16; Psalm 110:3).

A blessed and glorious work

It is our delight as believers to trace the purpose and work of God in every part of our deliverance. We speak of God's will, not man's will. We cherish Christ's work on the cross not our own works of self-righteousness. We confess that

when we were wandering far from God; careless, contrary and hard-hearted, 'He saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began'. All true believers happily acknowledge, 'Salvation is of the Lord' and thank 'the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus'.

Amen

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