

Are the Unsaved Dead or Alive?

Written by K B Napier

Wednesday, 18 March 2015 12:04

The unsaved have living, breathing bodies. They walk around, eat, sleep, do things, think, speak... then they die, after being alive. So, how can we say they are dead, when they are so obviously alive? As a Bible teacher I often refer to the unsaved as the “walking dead”. What is the truth? After all, if they are dead, how can they possibly hear the Gospel and respond to it? The answer is in scripture.

God does not act as we do. His ways transcend and are unlike the actions of men. He lives completely outside the physical laws we use every day, the laws designed for our benefit and guidance, and He is not bound by them. The answer to the queries above are found in this other realm, the realm of the Creator. In this realm the living are counted to be already dead, and the dead can be brought back to life in God.

Every person who enters this world is spiritually still-born, even those who later become believers. At birth, their lungs expel newly acquired air in a tiny cry, but, for all that, they are dead in the eyes of God. This is because they are conceived in sin, and sin sends us to hell unless we repent. Of course, we can only repent if we are elect... which brings us back to the unsaved... how can they hear if they are dead?

Psalm 51:5

“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.”

The mother of David was an ordinary woman, yet she conceived David in sin. In some way, sin passes on at the moment of conception, as if it were a genetic flaw. Each one of us is conceived, and therefore born, in sin.

Romans 6:23

“For the wages of sin [is] death; but the gift of God [is] eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

We earn our wages at conception! We are born to God’s judgment, which is, to die. This is not just death of the body but eternal death, leading to hell. The opposite is also given – eternal life

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through Jesus Christ. So, we have the basic statement: ALL people are conceived, and born, in sin. Sin leads to eternal death. But, Jesus came to save, and salvation is assured for all who are elect. What, though, of those not elected to salvation. They remain unsaved and are deemed to be already dead by God. The solution is to be 'born again', but it is a limited solution, limited to those who are elect.

John 3: 3,5

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

"I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and [of] the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Jesus plainly says we must be 'born again', or regenerated, by the Holy Spirit. If we are born again we will enter Heaven. If we are not, we remain dead.

Dead or Alive?

Ephesians 2:1 says we were dead in our sins but made alive again by the Spirit. To be dead in our sins means to be *nekros*. This is an adjective describing our state before God. The root, *nekus*

, means 'a corpse'. In the text it means to be without life. How can this be, when a man is walking, talking and obviously alive?

The same meaning applies, but metaphorically. (This is not an excuse – the Greek word can be used literally or metaphorically). That is, the man is physically alive but spiritually dead. It thus holds the same potent meaning of having no life, inoperative... dead. The man whose spirit is dead is just as much a corpse as the man who is physically dead. And what is dead cannot respond. It is this fact that obliterates the Arminian idea of free will and choosing Jesus as Saviour.

Interestingly, the same deadness is also applied to Christians who are 'dead to sin'. In this case it means that we are new creatures who have escaped spiritual death and the result of an unsaved physical death, and so are now alive in Christ. This is why the 'old man', which is of

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this world, cannot again dominate us, though it can certainly pester us at times. We are dead to its previous power.

The deadness of the unsaved, then, refers to spiritual deadness that is just as fatal as physical death. It is sometimes used hyperbolically and proleptically in scripture to mean 'destined to die' or to 'inevitably die'. God guards those who are alive, not dead, which is why Jesus told His disciples to let the dead bury the dead... those who are spiritually dead can take care of their own unsaved relatives. "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." (Matthew 22:32).

We are told that the Gospel is the power of God leading to salvation. But how do dead men hear and accept this Gospel? By being elected in eternity. If they are chosen by God, they WILL be saved. The Holy Spirit defies ordinary nature and makes the dead man alive spiritually. His soul or spirit is regenerated, made alive. Though previously deaf and dumb because of death, the man now hears God for the first time and is able to respond.

We go through "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). 'Regeneration', *paliggenesia* = new birth (born again), renewal, a radical newness of mind. Beforehand the mind is shackled to Satan and sin, oblivious to God and His Gospel. When the Spirit renews the mind the man can at last hear and respond. But beforehand, he is dead in sin, which is as good as being dead physically.

I must emphasise these vital facts:

1.

All men are conceived, and born, in sin

2.

This means every person is spiritually still-born and dead

3.

The person lives physically but his spirit is dead

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4.

Because his spirit is dead it cannot do anything, let alone respond to God

5.

Mankind does not have free will; but a very limited will, small and weak

6.

Though he has a will, he cannot choose God. That is what God says.

7.

So, even if his spirit was alive a man cannot and will not choose holiness

8.

The only way a man can be saved is if: he is elect in eternity. The Holy Spirit will make his dead spirit alive during his lifetime, and the man will then hear God and seek Him. He cannot and will not seek God whilst his spirit before he is born-again. The very seeking is an action prompted by God, not by the man. Then, at some point, the man will repent and be forgiven, and is saved on this earth. This is completely God-driven, so the man cannot refuse salvation nor choose it. It is God's gift.

9.

His previously dead spirit is now alive and cannot revert back to death, so can never, ever be lost again. He can now hear God (mainly via His word) and communicate with Him by prayer.

10.

The spiritual deadness of a man can ONLY be overcome by divinity and not by mere human will-power. Until he is regenerated, his dead spirit cannot do anything, cannot think, cannot respond. If a man remains spiritually dead until his physical death, his spirit/soul will enter hell, being the place for the spiritually dead.

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As you can see, the concept of 'free will' is involved in the idea that we may choose God. Free will is an absurdity in mankind, because we are finite. Only God can have free-will, but even He limits His own will by His own promises. Free will, then, is the excuse used by Arminianistic humanists to reduce God's sovereign power to their own level of human power, which, by definition, MUST be less than the power of God. Indeed, God's power is eternal and beyond the power of mankind, whose human power is given by God for this earth alone. It is as minor as a speck of dust is to the entire universe!

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