

Reformation or Transformation? - 1 Thess 1:9*

A fundamental question must be answered in order to properly evangelize the lost and reflect assurance of our salvation. We must ask the question: What preparation qualifies the most eternally significant event of life: receiving Christ Jesus as Savior?

Believers are added to Christ's Body through re-birth (John 3:3, 5, 7). This spiritual birth into Jesus grants eternal life. The fact of "being in Christ" (Acts 17:28a) transforms a soul immediately and irreversibly. Receiving Jesus Christ's substitute sacrifice on Calvary automatically eliminates and overshadows any ability to offer one's own sacrifice, in whatever form. The Savior of the whole world becomes my Savior — and yours — **the exact moment** we respond to truth (1 Tim 2:4), being made alive by God's Word (1Pet 1:23).

Returning to understand **how** a life in Christ is qualified by the Redeemer, the Bible declares the nature of this (and other mysteries) is unsearchable, unknowable to limited minds and evil hearts.

But we do know this: The qualifying preparation that saves souls precedes the foundation of the world. In eternity past the Holy God of the universe made a way to redeem unholy man (even before all souls earned the wages of sin (death) in the Garden). This divine work of preparation marks the inception of biblical predestination¹. But this is NOT the erroneous "Unconditional Election" some teach. Biblical predestination (Eph 1:5) brings **all** those who are persuaded into the nexus of God's unmerited favor, into His unfathomable sovereign Grace. At this **exact divine juncture** a soul is redeemed, apart from any (reformative) repentant work.

But if this characterizes redemption, just where does man's responsibility figure in? **Nowhere**. But, we must ask, doesn't man analyze and angst over his sin, deciding he agrees to be rid of it, once and for all? Isn't this the 'cause', leading to the 'effect' — a "decision" for Christ, initiated by man?

No. It is God's goodness that leads to repentance (Rom 2:4). Redemption is **wholly** and miraculously the result of the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. Man's one decision in the matter is his willful yielding to the Holy Spirit's work, leading him to receive this free gift (Eph 2:8). And despite false Calvinistic teaching otherwise, it is possible for a soul to resist the Holy Spirit. This resistance is the unpardonable sin, leading to the second spiritual death, after a body physically dies (Rev 20:14, 21:8).

But isn't "reformed behavior" needed to effect salvation? **No**. Still, the law-bound Pharisee inspects for tangible qualifiers, while the **heart yielded to the Spirit repents according to 1 Thess. 1:9-10² and 2 Pet 3:9**. **This** repentance

¹ Ephesians 1:5 and 1:11

² 1 Thess 1:9b "...ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God..."

changes hearts, causing lost minds to agree that justice calls for punishment. **This** repentance agrees divine right warrants God damning unrighteous souls. **This** repentance agrees we are eternally lost without Christ. But this is not the ongoing repentance in behavior that follows the moment of salvation.

Why is the simplicity of this **work of God's grace** so difficult for the law-tuned mind of man to embrace? Because, operating in the flesh, a Pharisee, a legalist, prefers self-righteousness, refusing to agree salvation is by God's grace alone, and not qualified in some part by man's (reforming) repentance.

I have questions for any reader who claims (reforming) repentance qualifies and precedes salvation. Just how much must one reform? In what way, for what purpose, and for how long? What must one **do to fully repent**, turning from idols to God? **How much work must one do? How much sacrifice must one offer?**

This charade is of course what repentance becomes: man's **WORKS, not God's**. It is a perversion of the gospel when repentance is **unlawfully** used in an attempt to qualify redemption (1 Tim 1:8). In **Things Which Become Sound Doctrine** Dwight Pentecost declares: "Repentance is not a prerequisite to salvation; for if repentance is required, salvation is based, at least in part, upon works" (p. 70).

Are "unprepared" "walk-ins" or even "walk-ons" welcome to receive Christ, minus observable, tangible qualifying evidence? The answer is YES! Qualification to receive eternal life is demonstrated solely in SELF recognizing its need: a sinner agreeing they are LOST!

Only One divine Work, offered by the Only Mediator qualifies redemption of lost souls (Hebrews 8:6). Pharisees and legalists, cease your perverted preaching! A "Scarlet Letter" a red Letter "R" is a millstone of feigned Righteousness around your neck, evidence of WORKS weighing down your claim that your salvation is predicated on GRACE when in fact you believe it is your (reformative) repentance that saves you. Shame on you!!!

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