



## Miracles that follow the plow :: A reluctant saviour?

### A reluctant saviour?, on: 2012/5/14 17:43

I wasn't sure where to put this post as it concerns an issue that is both doctrinal and personal. Please bear with me.

There is a teaching regarding salvation that I have come across, regarding how to be saved, that goes something like this:

If someone comes to the realisation that they need salvation then they should pray earnestly to God until he gives them an assurance that they are saved. Until it is granted, they are lost. They might be crying out for days, weeks or even months before this happens.

An example of this teaching can be heard from about 4min into this clip of Paul Washer preaching.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oo9uN76LoL0>

I have heard a similar thing was taught by the classic 'revivalist' preachers: I even understand that the Wesley brothers each had an agonizing period where they believed they were not saved - that was until they both felt they had received the witness of the Spirit (most notably John's Aldersgate experience).

Such a teaching would maintain that it is not enough to repent, believe and then trust in the promises of God - one must have an inner sense of peace, otherwise one is not saved.

I have a number of problems with this:

It suggests that God is reluctant to save and will only begrudgingly save when one has grovelled enough before him, which is contrary to the bible. I can't find a single case in scripture where someone was denied forgiveness and salvation (whether actually or in a parable) when coming with a penitent heart. Indeed "All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away" (John 6:37).

I can think of many examples to the contrary from just surveying the book of Luke: The penitent tax collector went home 'justified' (18:14), the desperate criminal was immediately assured of paradise after he cried out to Jesus (23:43), The father rushed to welcome the prodigal son while he was still far off (15:19) and sinful woman seemed to realize the mercy of Jesus, weep and serve simply by encountering him (7:36-50). The conversions recorded in Acts seem to take place fairly quickly and there is no incident of somebody being put to shame (Romans 10:11) or even held in suspense when they have come to God with a sincere heart.

More acutely, this kind of teaching has caused myself much inner turmoil. I have lacked assurance of my own salvation for many years now and have cried out to God many, many times. In fact, an almost daily prayer of mine is 'Lord, save me and if you already have, please let me know'. I have no inner sense of the 'Witness of the Spirit' so all I have to lean on, and trust on is Christ and the bare promises laid out in scripture that he turns none away who truly come to him.

In the words of the hymn "I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly trust in Jesus name".

If the kind of teaching I have mentioned is true, then it would strongly imply that I am in big, big trouble and that God has been refusing to save me for years. Such a thought makes it very difficult for me to love God (which then only exacerbates the situation, see 1 Cor 16:22).

Now, I understand that people definitely have strong experiences of the Holy Spirit after conversion - Indeed, I still hope and pray for one. It's just this whole experience as being necessary for salvation teaching that bothers me.

Any thoughts would be truly welcome

Butters

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**Re: A reluctant saviour? - posted by jimp, on: 2012/5/14 22:17**

hi, the two trees that were in the garden are still there. man continues to eat of the knowlege of good and evil. Jesus said i have come that you might have life... He said i came not to condemn the world but to save it.he said suuffer the children to come to me and told us to receive like children. paul told us that if we believe in our hearts and confess with our mouths we would be saved and whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.man wants to have some credit or input in this and this is not the gospel... it is the goodness of God that leads to repentance.He is the tree of life. that is why satan promotes religion.(the tree of the knowlege of good and evil)jimp

**Re: - posted by Giggles (), on: 2012/5/15 0:08**

I would think some of that teaching is reactionary against easy believism (on Mr. Washer's part) and ecclesiastical authority/salvific rites (on the Wesley's).

**Re: A reluctant saviour? - posted by wijnand (), on: 2012/5/15 2:44**

If you read acts, what do you see? Do you see anybody say: "Pray until you have assurance"? What you see is repent (turn from your sins to God + surrender to His Lordship) and believe (or baptism = act of believing), that is to go to Christ for salvation and believe that He only can save you!

After that you believe (I mean.. when you first believe) there is assurance or peace, but it doesn't mean that after that your assurance is always constantly the same. Otherwise the book of 1 john wouldn't be written because it says in 1 john 5:13: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

That's the key: stand on the Word of God.

Butters, I know what you mean because I have struggling with the same in the past and even past week it was the same. But when I look in the word of God I see I am born again and I see Christ died for me. I see a changed heart. I see that Christ gives me power over sin. But still there is not always assurance, so I cry out for a deeper fellowship with my Lord and my God! And I just put my trust in Christ through the Word.

Maybe this will be an encouragement for you!

**Re: - posted by jimp, on: 2012/5/15 3:47**

dear wijnand, i see what you are saying but i would like to inject a truth that will make it easier to do.if a sinner could turn from their sin they would not need a saviour. i say that repentance is turning the rule of your life over to Christ...ergo dying to self,as we must do daily. we are told to reckon ourselves dead unto sin. dead men do not sin and altars are made for sacrifices.when we turn our lives over to Jesus we automatically turn away from sin.jimp after this the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin in our lives and we begin to grow in the Lord.

**Re: - posted by brothagary, on: 2012/5/15 4:20**

rather than a reluctant saviour a sourvern saviour

the apostal john said he who is born of god ,has the witness in him self

paul said his spirit witness with our spirit that we are children of god

this is a literal asurance ,one literally tastes the lord ,and one knows byt the supanaural gift of faith that one is saved ,,,,peter said times of refreshings will come from the presence of the lord

the presence of the lord MUST BE REAL in the new birth ,and it will refresh and regernerate the soul of men

as jim said repentance is granted by god ,and conviction of sin is wrought by the holy spirit ,,it is supanatural ,and captavating changes the verry center of our being ,,,,,,this will happen when one is born again ,,that not to say it will allways remain a powerfull reality ,,we do grow dim at times ,,,,,,and some times need to be reminded like the apostal john did in his letters

a peace that passes all understanding

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and a joy unspeakable, full of glory, we rejoice with at times,,, this is what the apostle Peter said that the born again one does

brother do you not see any of this as a reality in your life

loving God springs forth from this experience,

the Bible says, for the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit

have you felt His love shed abroad in your heart

we love Him  
because He first loved us

our affections are moved by His regenerating love

we don't love God at all unless His presence has become real to us,,, and the fear of God is manifest in our hearts

have you ever been cut to the heart by the Holy Spirit

have you ever wept at the Lord's feet, and wiped His feet with your tears

the Bible must be kept in context,,, the book describes what happens to a person who is born again under the new covenant,,,,, just because a few verses seem to give a picture that a person can be converted without any change, doesn't nullify the rest of the Bible

blessings

**Re: - posted by bible4life (), on: 2012/5/16 0:43**

thanks I have wondered about this too in the past, I still cry out to God waiting for Him, nothing really has happened though. Maybe believing them is the truth.

**Re: A reluctant saviour? - posted by Trekker, on: 2012/5/16 4:24**

Butters, thank you very much for posting this. I have had the same experience and am well familiar with the stuff from Paul Washer that you are referring to. It also bothered me and caused much confusion. I don't know if we are merely misunderstanding Mr. Washer or what. I recall specifically a story he gave about a "Mountain Man" who sought him out to be saved, but perhaps Washer did not explain a few things in enough detail, I don't know. I think the experience you have written about is EXTREMELY common and I am glad you brought this up.

**Re: A reluctant saviour? - posted by wijmand (), on: 2012/5/16 5:19**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AjA6fF-9uE4&feature=g-all-u>

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**Re: - posted by jimp, on: 2012/5/16 6:08**

hi, thank you for the site... what noone ever talks about is how we treat new converts. if a baby is born in a hospital and left to fend for themselves more than 97% would soon die. when one is born from above and left to fend for themselves it is not unreasonable to expect the same or similar results. i am old and can no longer go to my church but i will tell you that 30 to 50 people accept the Lord every week and are counselled with and if necessary are picked up sunday afternoon and brought to a dinner for new converts and a class on water baptism followed by a baptismal service. they are given a kjv bible and a booklet called what next which contains information on a free class on doctrines and how to read your new bible. on monday the pastor or some of the asst. pastors would give you a personal phone call giving them their number if they are needed. later in the week a local cell leader might drop by and invite them to a small group bible study and fellowship. they are invited to join the small group and are told again of free beginner classes offered in their new christian lives. none of this is done in a forceful manner but in christian love. this is just the first week or so and the church has classes and guidance that go on for a year. you are never asked to join the church but are always made very welcome when you come. jimp we are told to make disciples not converts.

**Re: - posted by roadsign (), on: 2012/5/16 7:40**

Quote:  
----- It suggests that God is reluctant to save and will only begrudgingly save when one has grovelled enough before him, which is contrary to the bible.  
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So often a marvelous truth gets pushed over the edge into falsehood. And the glorious liberating truth becomes eclipsed by imprisoning assumptions. That may be the problem here.

Personally I am not troubled over proof of my salvation. But I do often find myself feeling like I'm barely there. I get depressed over how bad I am or did, and how I can never measure up. When God does finally break through my dark despondent cloud here is what he always consistently points out to me: "You have been thinking about YOURSELF and not looking to me." That's the problem - every time.

As long as you and I obsess over ourselves, then our eyes are in the wrong place. We are not resting in HIS salvation but leaning on ourselves. It's a form of unbelief is it not? So then - in faith we are free to take our eyes off of our own insufficiencies - according to whatever criteria we use - like the "failure" to grovel enough. (The devil can get us to grovel too) Keep our eye on Jesus - the sufficiency of his gift of salvation. Make it a goal to gain understanding through his Spirit - and to grasp and know his love more and more deeply. And as our heart grows softer towards him we will find ourselves weeping and grieving over human sin. There is no need to force it!

Meanwhile, we can trust that his light is able to shine through mortal clay vessels like ourselves. It's the cracks (of all things!) that let the light through.

"Lord I believe. Help me in my unbelief!

Diane

**Re: - posted by MaryJane, on: 2012/5/16 7:45**

roadsign you wrote: "You have been thinking about YOURSELF and not looking to me." That's the problem - every time.

As long as you and I obsess over ourselves then our eyes are in the wrong place. We are not resting in HIS salvation but leaning on ourselves. It's a form of unbelief is it not?

I have learned this very important truth as well. Thank you for your post.

God bless  
maryjane

**Miracles that follow the plow :: A reluctant saviour?**

**Re: - posted by roadsign (), on: 2012/5/16 7:54**

Quote:

----- I have learned this very important truth as well.  
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Yes, there's a fine line between holy "grovelling" and unholy "grovelling".

Diane

**Re: - posted by MaryJane, on: 2012/5/16 8:13**

by roadsign on 2012/5/16 1:54:53

Quote:

----- I have learned this very important truth as well.  
-----

Yes, there's a fine line between holy "grovelling" and unholy "grovelling".

Diane

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Again I have seen this same truth.

I have come to realize that one can grieve over their sin in such a way that does nothing but draw attention to self and can actually feed the attitude of "look at me, look at how well I repent" instead of truly bringing one to a place of understanding their sin has crucified CHRIST and is a stumbling block in their walk with HIM.

Again thank you for sharing, such good seeds there in so few words! :)

God bless

mj

**Re: - posted by roadsign (), on: 2012/5/16 9:59**

Quote:

----- "look at me, look at how well I repent"  
-----

Mary Jane, I think this is a good point. People naturally want to feel accepted by the group. Let's admit, nothing can be more shaming and rejecting than being told you are not "one of us", because you are not "right" with God! So I think it's natural to do whatever the group expects - whatever that denominational branch or the leader expects.

But then the coveted behaviors may promote falsehood - hypocrisy. I think that's how appropriate legitimate practices turn bad: They become enshrined.

I agree with you. It's people fear at the core, and I think preachers should avoid exploiting that.

I appreciate how David Wilkerson respected the importance of truthfulness over and above conformity. In his sermon I hear him leaving room for the Spirit to work in his timing and in his way. Maybe that's why I appreciate his preaching so much.

Diane

**Miracles that follow the plow :: A reluctant saviour?**

**Re: A reluctant saviour? - posted by twayneb (), on: 2012/5/16 11:03**

Butters:

The early Methodists held this view. I know that when I was born again, I knew it. There was a definite witness of the Holy Spirit. The scriptural defense of the doctrine would be Romans 8:16

(15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.)

I am not sure one could be born again (have their spirit regenerated) and not have some knowledge that it happened. But I think sometimes we look for some kind of emotional release to give us that knowledge. Sometimes there are things that I am assured of that are not accompanied by a "feeling". It is a witness in the spirit, not in the flesh (mind, will, emotions).

I do think that often those who struggle for a long time with this are looking for something emotional, something of the flesh, to tell them that a transaction has occurred in the spiritual realm. That may not happen. It is a witness in the spirit.

Salvation is by grace through faith. It is received, not earned or "prayed down". But Jesus also says that if any man would come after Him he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Christ. Paul teaches us in Romans 6 that we are crucified with Christ and die to our own life. This, I believe, is an important part of salvation that we cannot omit. Salvation is free in that we cannot earn it but must receive it as a gift, but it is not free in the sense that it does not cost us anything. It will cost you absolutely everything.

I believe that there are many who have repeated a sinner's prayer who have never been born again. The lack of fruit until repentance would attest to this. In this sense you might say that the teaching you refer to is reactionary toward the trend of having large numbers of people repeat a prayer and then telling them that by simply saying the words they are now born again. Although some are truly born again in that way, I believe many are not.

So I guess I would say that thinking that one needs to cry out until there is an emotional release is wrong thinking, I do know from Romans that God will give assurance of salvation through a witness of the spirit. I do think that when we come to God we need to "do business" so to speak. Not that we are earning anything, but we are receiving that which we have been given. When scripture says, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ", it does not mean a simple mental ascent to the fact that He lived, died, rose, and paid a price. It is trusting in that atoning sacrifice and receiving forgiveness. This involves receiving Him as Lord and Savior. It is believing that when I repent of my sins, His forgiveness is mine and my spirit is reborn. I think it goes a little bit deeper than mere acknowledgement.

Anyhow, that's my take.

**Re: , on: 2012/5/16 11:53**

Thank you for all the thoughtful responses.

In addition, I notice some of the recent George Whitefield sermons that were posted in the articles and sermons section hint on the kind of view I'm mentioning.

The main problem with this kind of struggle is that it is very difficult to go and 'get on' with the Christian life if you're still wondering if you're saved or not. I have on more than a few occasions almost felt bullied out of prayer - you begin praying but are automatically bombarded with thoughts like "you're probably not saved so what's the point?".

I have not grown up and lived in a Christian environment where "easy belivism" is the major problem. At least, from a very young age I became aware that being a Christian is a total life commitment. If I were to receive greater assurance I know that it would only increase my love and commitment to Jesus - not cause licentiousness.

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I don't want to question or criticize the preaching of men who sharply counter nominalism - it is probably what they've been called to do. However, I would say that I have often been wounded (and not the 'good' sort of wounding) and severely discouraged by their words.

**Re: - posted by twayneb (), on: 2012/5/16 13:32**

Butters: Having the assurance that you have been born again does not insulate you against the enemies attacks He will undoubtedly come against you with fears, doubts, etc. This is where faith based on the word of God is important. I know that I have been born again. The enemy comes at me with the lie, "you have not been born again." What do I do? I stand strong in the authority of the word of God and use that word to cut his lies to pieces. I pull out the word and say, "The word says this about my salvation...", and I fight him with the word of God. I may wake up one day and in the emotional realm I am battling. I do not "feel" saved. But I know I have been born again and I use the word of God to realign my emotions.

**Re: - posted by brothagary, on: 2012/5/16 15:33**

but dont be fooled into thinking that one can be born from above „recieve a new heart ,experance the peace that passes all understanding ,and the joy unspeakable „with our the emotions being moved some what „god will soften the heart and you will experance bodily afections which sture the emotions

and repentance is decribed by james

cleanse your hands you sinners  
and purifie your hearts you double minded  
be afflicted and morn and weep  
let you laughter be turned in to morning  
and joy into dejection  
humble you self in the sight of the lord ,and he will lift you up

james didnt say to the sinner , just hold on to your promises

true repentance will contain abroken spirit

have you known a broken spirit

this will also effect the emotions

dont be misled ,into a false chep conversion

it not worth it

blessings

**Re: A reluctant saviour?, on: 2012/5/16 18:23**

I wonder how many that have been saved, have sought The LORD for the Baptism in The Holy Spirit.

Brother Travis does well with this teaching on the baptism.

Meant to say also, that Corrie Ten Boom put the baptism in her list of our "Needs", right along with knowing The Word and prayer.

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