

# The Brown Street Beacon

*"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,  
holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)*



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## Is a Miracle Needed in Order to Be Saved?

**R**.C. Sproul, a very popular preacher and teacher among Evangelicals and a renowned theologian among denominational scholars, wrote this in one of his commentaries:

"In order to embrace the things of God—spiritual things—a new birth is required, a birth wrought in our souls by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit" (*R.C. Sproul, St. Andrew's Expository Commentary – 1–2 Peter*).

This is classic Calvinism, of which Mr. Sproul is a staunch advocate. Calvinists call this monergism. Monergism is the teaching that the Holy Spirit acts, separate and apart from human will, in the conversion or regeneration of man. Wikipedia defines monergism as such: "The position in Christian theology that God, through the Holy Spirit, works to bring about the salvation of an individual through spiritual regeneration, irrespective of the individual's cooperation."

According to this popular position, then, a miracle is necessary in order for a person to be saved. The miracle consists of the Holy Spirit working on one's heart, changing the heart from one that is hard and callous to one that is believing. In other words, God miraculously causes man to believe. It is from that standpoint that advocates of this position say that faith is a gift from God. Listen to this Baptist preacher:

"Faith is not something that man does; faith is something that God does within the heart. Unregenerate man has the inability to regenerate himself" (Billy Jenkins, Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Louisville KY).

Here's the question. Since faith is something that God does due to the fact that man doesn't have the ability to have faith on his own, whose fault is it that a man is lost?" The answer has to be God's fault, and indeed, when pressed, that's the answer men like R.C. Sproul and Billy Jenkins will give. The problem is their whole thesis is wrong. Man doesn't receive faith miraculously. The Bible clearly teaches that faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17), and there is nothing in it that suggests that man needs miraculous help in order to believe. In fact, we have clear examples of when such wasn't the case. Do you remember when God sent Jonah to the Ninevites in an attempt to get them to repent? I guess God forgot about man's inability to believe when He sent Jonah to Nineveh to preach to the people and turn them away from their sins. The truth is God didn't forget anything; He knew that the Ninevites had the ability to believe, and that is exactly what they did.

Jonah 3:6-10

6 The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. 7 And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, 8 but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. 9 Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish." 10 When God saw **what they did**, how **they turned from their evil way**, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

Clearly, there was no miraculous operation on the hearts of the Ninevites. God didn't see what He had done to them; He saw what they did after hearing the word of God. Isn't that what the text says. "*God saw what they did...*" How can anyone miss that? And what about those who obeyed the gospel on the Day of Pentecost? The text clearly tells us that the hearts of the people were pricked, not when it was operated on by the Holy Spirit but when they heard the preaching of Peter concerning the crucifixion of Christ (Acts 2:36-38). The record specifically said, "*Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart...*" (ver. 37). No outpouring of the Holy Spirit took place. No supernatural working on the part of God occurred. The word was preached, and they believed. You see, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. That's all that is needed. God did His part by sacrificing His Son and raising Him from the dead (Romans 4:25). We do our part by obeying the gospel (Romans 1:16). Will you do your part by believing and being baptized (Mark 16:16), and then living faithfully (Revelation 2:10)?

Is a miracle needed in order for man to be saved? The answer is no.

*Don*

## It's Not How You Feel!

By Aubrey Belue

**D**oes it "feel good"? Does it feel "right"? If so, today's culture says, "go for it"! Thus, we make "right" what our feelings say it is, rather than what it really is. Somehow, we have reached the point in contemporary reasoning that most say that one can pursue his individual dream without having to confront the consequences of bad or wrong choices. Believe in God, or not; accept Christ, or not; live morally, or not--to those people, it is all the same. Do what you want to do, what you feel like doing, what you think is right in doing, and God will just set aside HIS rules to approve of you regardless. We confuse civic freedom with divine approval, and so long as it is "legal" (and some are not too "picky" about that), it is seen as acceptable.

The question is, "Is our standing WITH GOD determined by our feelings, or by the rule of divine law?" Is it a matter of God's will, or ours? Serious consequences follow the reasoning described above:

1) It nullifies the Bible as a defining book. In fact, the Bible becomes largely useless, since it can at any point be superseded by one's personal feeling. No doubt we "feel" like it has some value, but it can always be overridden by our feelings. There is no sense of responsibility to conform to its message.

2) It glorifies HUMAN wisdom and authority. The highest court of appeal becomes the human mind and thought, rather than the mind of God. If what I feel is right, even if it contradicts what God teaches in His word, then MY idea is seen as better than His; my authority as greater than His. In so doing we minimize the greater wisdom and power of an Almighty God.

3) It results in anarchy and chaos. Rejecting a common source of authority -- the written word of God -- each becomes his own source. There are as many "rights" as there are people to think them up. No wonder we live in troubled times. No wonder our children are so confused as to morals and religion. Countless competing human ideas bombard them (and us) with equally justifiable claims to what is "right".

4) It ignores God's place in our universe. He has defined right from wrong, sin from righteousness, truth from error. Any course conflicting with His "law" exacts terrible penalties.

THE TRUTH? The solution to mankind's problems lie not in human minds, but in the unsearchable mind of an all-wise God. As we have observed before in this column, it is His world, we eat His bread, drink His water, and breathe His air. In addition to being ill-equipped by nature and inclination to determine "right", we belong to Him, and are obligated to be obedient. Man's way never "fixes" anything important, nor moves us one step toward fellowship with God. This may not be the popular line, but we are interested in TRUTH, not compromise, and all human objections aside, God's word is still TRUE, and His way is still the only way (John 14:6).