

Paradise Lost and Found

Rockey Jackson, April 22, 2018

“And because wickedness is multiplied, most men’s love will grow cold. But he who endures to the end will be saved.” (Matt. 24:12-13)

“Paradise Lost and Found” is the antithesis of the last article “How Sinners Become Saints.” This essay reveals how a redeemed saint may die spiritually, leave the Kingdom of God and return to the Kingdom of Satan. It also shares how redeemed saints keep their relationship with God vibrant and their spirit alive in the Kingdom of God. This is written with the purpose to affirm, liberate and empower God's redeemed saints.

The Parable of the Sower is found in all three of the synoptic gospels, but Mark 4:3-20 also contains an explanation of the parable by Jesus. In it the Lord says that when an evangelist shares the good news, some of it falls on hard hearts and the devil immediately snatches it away. Other seed of the gospel falls into stony ground where there is no depth of soil. It brings forth new life quickly, but when the first persecution comes it dies just as quickly. Still other seed falls into the weeds and over time riches, lusts and other desires of the flesh choke the life out of it. Finally there is the seed that is planted in the good ground, into hearts that hear the gospel, receive it gladly and do not let it go. This seed brings forth the fruit of eternal life in abundance.

In the third chapter of Hebrews the Bible teaches that there are three ways for redeemed saints to leave their relationship with God and return to a state of spiritual death. The three ways are: rebellion, loss of faith and sinning unto death. Usually some combination of all three ways play a role in the spiritual death of a redeemed saint. First, rebellion is turning against and resisting God's authority. It is willfully returning to spiritual death. Second, redeemed saints are saved from spiritual death, the consequence of original sin, by their faith in God's grace to provide the way of salvation. If they loose their faith, then their relationship with God dries up and their spirits die. Third, sin puts an obstacle of shame in the middle of the redeemed saints relationship with God. This can be seen in the story of Adam and Eve. When they sinned they covered their shame with fig leaves and hid from God. The Father still came looking for his children. When He found them they confessed, God extended His mercy to them and relationship was restored. He then showed them that it was not by their works (the fig leaves) that their shame was covered, but by His grace and the shedding of innocent blood (the animal skins) that their sin was forgiven.

The downward spiral staircase of sin that ends in spiritual death is revealed in James 1:14-15: ***“But each one is tempted when they are drawn away by their own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”*** There are five steps of sin from temptation to spiritual death. They are:

1. Tempted by desires (what the flesh wants instead of what God wants)
2. Enticed by desires (thinking about or dwelling on the temptation)
3. Conception of desire (the plan to fulfill the temptation)

4. Birth to sin (executing the plan to fulfill the desire)
5. Sin full-grown (the desire becomes a way of life with no repentance).

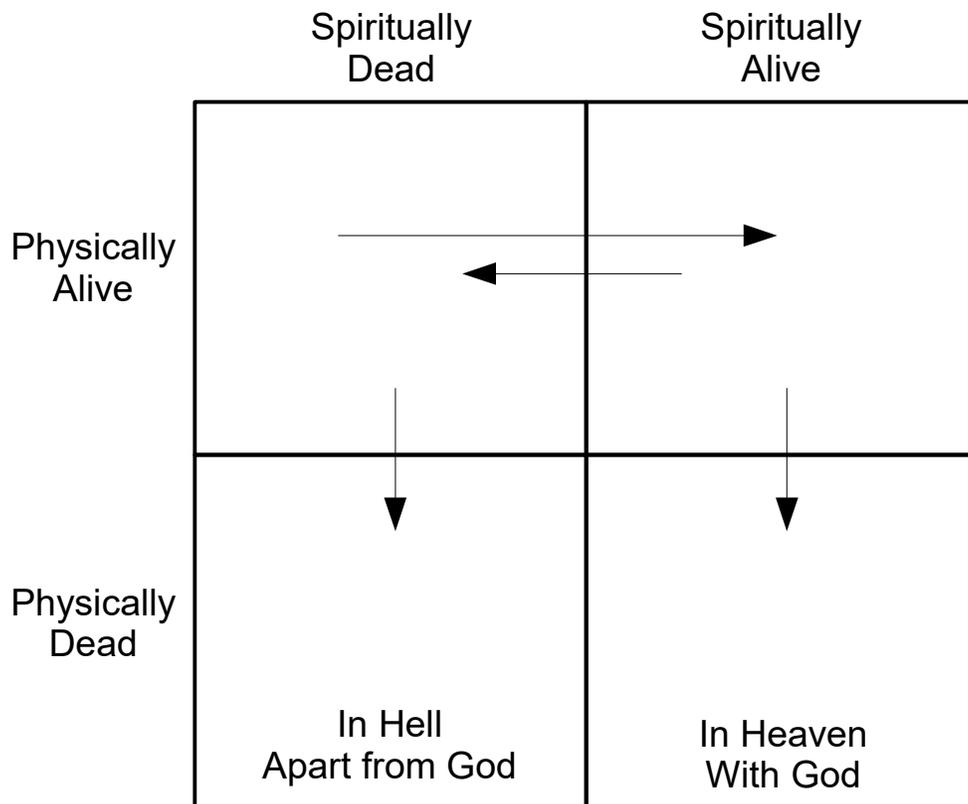
When Adam and Eve broke their covenant with God, their sin and shame became an obstacle in their relationship with the Father. It is the same with all redeemed saints. In the beginning when God created the human race, he gave them a bit of his own spirit as it says in Genesis 2:7, ***“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”*** Both for redeemed saints and for sinners, God's spirit is eternal and it carries a person's soul (mind, will and emotions) into eternity. Spiritual death is not like physical death where one ceases to exist physically. Spiritual death is separation from God. It only takes one original sin to become a sinner. However, once the sinner receives the grace of God and becomes a redeemed saint, then it takes the five steps listed above to place so many obstacles in the relationship that complete separation eventually occurs. A physical body that receives no nourishment withers and dies. A redeemed saint's spirit is nourished by their intimate relationship with God. If there is no relationship with the Heavenly Father then the spirit withers and dies. All the while, just like the Prodigal's father (Luke 15:11-32), their loving Heavenly Father is waiting for them to repent so relationship may be restored.

So how does a redeemed saint remove the obstacles they've placed in their relationship with God by sin? They confess their sin to the Father, repent of their sin and ask to be forgiven. As it says in 1 John 1:9, ***“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*** This can be just between the redeemed saint and the Father or the redeemed saint can set up an Ebenezer by including one or more other believers to hold them accountable. A very thorough set of steps might include:

1. Repent – the redeemed saint makes a clear statement of what was done and that they intend to turn their back on that behavior so as not to do it again.
2. Renounce – whenever someone says or does anything, they announce it before heaven and earth. Words and actions have power. When a person renounces something, they remove that power.
3. Break – a simple statement that the curse that came with the sin is broken and a clap of the hands at the same time can be a physical representation of what is broken in the spirit. When Adam and Eve sinned, they each received a curse. The devil only has authority over things that God has cursed. Jesus became a curse for the redeemed saints by hanging on a tree. This removed the curse from the redeemed saints, but unrepented/unforgiven sin in their life reopens the door to the curse.
4. Petition – ask God to forgive the sin.
5. Receive – let another redeemed saint proclaim that God has forgiven. It is written that God forgives those who ask him and there is something that touches the heart when another redeemed saint speaks the forgiveness before heaven and earth.

A redeemed saint may rebel, lose their faith or sin unto death at any age, but it is perhaps most common during the time of life when a youth is straining to become an adult. Many give their lives to God and receive His salvation when they are young and their hearts are tender. Then approaching adulthood they may rebel against their parent's or other authority and carry it over to God. They may feel an injustice if a significant person in their lives dies suddenly from trauma or disease and blame it on God. Then again they may just desire to be lord of their own lives apart from God. Others lose their faith through worldly education that denies the creation and the existence of God. Then there are those who are over taken by the desires of their flesh as they become acquainted with the sinful pleasures of the world. Their relationship with God and their spiritual life dies as sin grows in them. Whatever the cause, it is plainly visible that many youth who make a good start with the Lord do not make it to adulthood as redeemed saints.

In summary, a person may be physically alive or physically dead. At the same time they may be spiritually alive or spiritually dead. This means that a person can be in one of four states that can be shown in a common four-pane illustration. Because of original sin, everyone begins life in the upper left box as sinners who are physically alive and spiritually dead. If they recognize that they



are sinners and in faith receive God's forgiveness, then they move to the physically alive and spiritually alive box in the upper right hand quadrant. People can move between the spiritually alive and spiritually dead sides of the illustration as long they are physically alive. (See Ezekiel 18, specifically verses 21-32.) When people die physically, then they move to one of the boxes in

the lower half of the illustration. If they are spiritually dead when they die, then they are twice dead and move into the lower left quadrant where they spend eternity separated from God in the place prepared for them called Hell. If they are spiritually alive, they move into the lower right quadrant and they spend eternity with God in Heaven.

In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Paul compares life to running a race: ***“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”*** What is the prize? It is eternal life with God in heaven. God does not give participation awards, but to every redeemed saint who endures to the end of their physical life God will give them the Crown of Life. They will then continue in their relationship with God forever. No one will be forced to spend eternity with God. Those who choose to do it their own way and follow their own desires will be granted their wish. They will remain separated from God for all eternity. As the scriptures say in 2 Corinthians 6:2b, ***“now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.”*** Everyone must choose while they still have physical life, hopefully they choose wisely.

The next article will discuss three big theological words and how they relate to the spirit, soul and flesh of redeemed saints. Those three big words are: [“Regeneration, Sanctification and Resurrection.”](#)