

From the Nugget Series (#283) by Elder Ralph Harris

*"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).*

This verse is frequently used by unenlightened religionists to try to prove that spiritually dead sinners, dead in sins, must hear and believe the gospel in order to have divine life and to escape eternal hell. However, in order for it to teach that idea, it would have to read as follows: Verily, verily, I say unto you, If those of you who are devoid of divine life, and do not have 'ears to hear' will hear my word, and if you who have no faith will believe on God, then you will never be cast into hell but will pass from death in sin into life eternal.

Of course the text teaches no such mumbo Jumbo. Rather, it is clearly saying that those who *are* (already) *hearers* of the word of Christ and *are* (already) *believers* in the heavenly Father, *already possess* ("hath" or "have") everlasting life, and consequently they shall not come into eternal condemnation because they have already *passed* ("is passed" or "are passed") from death unto life.

The hearing and believing of this verse are *evidences* of divine life, not the *causes* of divine life. If we make the hearing and the believing conditions unto life, then we make eternal life contingent upon the works of men who are incapable of performing the works. We thus make it contingent upon the works of men who are dead in trespasses and sins. This is an unworkable theology.

Salvation by grace is described very clearly in the second chapter of Ephesians and it involves the *quickening* of God's people into divine life "even when they were dead in sins," and the *creating* of them in Christ Jesus *unto* good works—not *because of* good works. It also has to do with those who "were far off" being "made nigh by the blood of Christ" so that they are "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of faith." Even the faith through which they are saved by grace *is not of themselves*, but is "the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8), so that their works are entirely eliminated from the picture "lest any man should boast." God will not share His glory with another (See Isaiah 42:8,11). —Elder Ralph Harris