

heaven; it begins in this life!

And so, as far as our emphasis in communicating and understanding the gospel is concerned, it is more accurate biblically to say that the gospel is deliverance from sin rather than deliverance from hell.

Now I think we are in a better position to ask the question: Why do some people respond favorably to the gospel and others do not?

Part of the difficulty lies in our natural addiction to sin, part of it lies in the nature of faith as a gift of God, and part of it lies in what the Bible teaches about being chosen by God.

The Bible teaches that we are naturally addicted to sin. Since the downfall of human beings at the beginning of human history, we have gone our own way and followed the path of our sinful desires and habits. We sin by inner compulsion. We are addicted to sin, and can't seem to find the strength or the will to turn ourselves around. The Bible uses the figure of enslavement to speak of our addiction to sin.

The Bible also teaches that faith is a gift of God. Ephesians 2:8-9 states: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." The whole of salvation, including grace and faith, is a gift from God.

On the other hand faith is how we are to respond to the gospel. God does not do the believing for us; we must do that ourselves! How then can faith be a gift of God?

Perhaps we can reconcile these seemingly contradictory ideas by realizing that, although we do the believing, God is the One who gives us the ability and the inclination to believe. He is the One who opens our hearts and persuades us to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and His redemptive work. And just as we are naturally not inclined to turn from our sinful desires and habits, we are naturally not inclined to trust in and commit ourselves to Jesus Christ to deliver us from our sins.

The Bible also teaches that God has chosen those whom He saves. In John 15:19 Jesus says: "If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you." In Romans 8:33 Paul asks: "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies." In Ephesians 1:11 Paul writes: "In Him we were also chosen, having been