



Muddy Water



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Imagine you are an unbeliever who comes to church. You become aware of your guilt before God and recognize that you are on a path toward destruction, unable to save yourself. Imagine your relief when the people share verses with you like Ephesians 2:8, 9 and John 3:16 which clearly teach that your eternal salvation is a gift through simple faith in Christ, who died in your place and rose again, and that it is not by your works. You are overjoyed and immediately put your trust in Christ alone for this wonderful free gift of forgiveness and eternal life. You feel so free from the once heavy burden of guilt and shame and are filled with gratitude and hope. It all seems so simple and crystal clear, like pristine water from a mountain spring.

In the following days and weeks, however, that once clear water seems to become increasingly clouded and muddy. This “free gift” now seems to come with an increasingly heavy burden of additional requirements. You hear well-known and respected Christian teachers use phrases like “no holiness, no heaven” or “if Jesus is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all” or “you must put Christ on the throne of your life to be saved”. As you struggle with sin, like we all do, you are taught to question your salvation. The people at church now seem to suggest that although perhaps you were initially “saved by grace through faith”, now you are told you need to have works to prove it and hold on to it or you will lose it. You might wonder if you have lost your salvation, and in some churches you will find many teachings reinforcing this fear. Or you might wonder if your faith was real in the first place, and these fearful thoughts are often encouraged as well. Were you sorry enough for your sins? Was your faith strong enough to qualify as “saving faith”? Did you really mean it? Instead of feeling safe in the hands of a loving Father, you increasingly feel fear and guilt. Where is the rest and peace and joy? You begin managing your behavior and your image, trying to assure yourself and everyone else that you really are saved. These “friends” and teachers have turned the clean water of grace into a muddy water of works.

Maybe your experience has been like this. Or perhaps after struggling to maintain the facade, you might even have given up and become a “backslider”. There was a time when you were all in, but now you push God and his people away from you to avoid all of the pressure and shame. Unfortunately, these experiences are very common.



Even more tragic than the stories above is the person who never receives a clear, clean glass of water but from the start is only offered a muddy one, a gospel that is tainted with works or human effort as a requirement for eternal salvation.

In future articles I will help you to understand what some of the most commonly misinterpreted passages mean, primarily by helping you to see them in *context*. Context is king!

So, hold on tightly to the good news that you originally heard: salvation by undeserved grace, a gift that we receive through trusting in Jesus, who died in your place and rose again. Or if this is the first time you have heard this, I encourage you to waste no time and put your trust in Jesus Christ today!

CrossWay International is committed to bringing the clear gospel of grace to those who are lost and hurting by sharing that a person is saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone apart from any works or human effort on their part.

Rev. 21:6 says, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.”



Dean R. Chollar in Africa with kids around.

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