

I Heard Myself Saved

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When I hear God's Word proclaimed ... both the law which shows me my need and drives me to despair and the gospel which meets my need and gives me life, I find myself believing it. It isn't a decision on my part, it simply happens. In other words, I didn't believe, then I found myself believing after the hearing of the message of Christ.

That "experience" of hearing myself saved, occurred at my baptism and it occurs regularly when I hear the gospel. It is life to me. I love to hear it again and again.

I'm told that there is an old word or expression in Norwegian that means just that: "I heard myself saved". I don't know that word, but I'd love to learn about it. (If anyone knows it, I'd love to hear from you)

This thought has significance to me in these ways:

It impacts my idea of evangelism. There is enormous freedom in it. Evangelism no longer carries with it the idea of needing to convince or somehow persuade unbelievers to decide or accept or respond in a particular way to God's redemption story. My only responsibility is simply to proclaim His word, both the Law and the Gospel. It does its work. I don't always know when it is doing its work to hearers and that's okay. I simply proclaim the message God has given us to proclaim.

In much of 'evangelicalism' today, there is a western idea imposed upon the gospel that demands a purpose driven, decision making, evidence showing, prosperity producing, particular way of doing evangelism and living out the Christian life. I think that way works against the gospel because it clouds the message and makes hearers feel more like a project than recipients of the best news they have ever heard.

"Conversion" may look much different than what we've been conditioned by our 'evangelical culture' to expect. It may look more like a nod, a smile, or a simple sigh of relief. I think many of the passages of scripture used to tell people exactly what they need to say and do to be saved, were meant to be assurances for believers rather than a club to beat unbelievers. Indicative statements have been made into imperatives.

My experience in ministry has shown this whole idea to be true. I've known many individuals with a disdain for Christ who, after hearing the message of the gospel again and again, found themselves eventually resonating with Him. I didn't always know when it happened, it just did. The good news had its effect. That makes me want to tell it more and more.

All of this doesn't fit nicely into a graph or a year end annual report on numbers of conversions. It doesn't jive with our bottom line ways of thinking but I'm confident that in God's economy no one is missed.