

Ephesians: What's God Saying to You? What are You Going to Do About It?

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I. Introduction

Does a sinful life prove that you're not a Christian? Can sin keep us from heaven or condemn us to hell? Is faith not enough to save you; must we do more than simply believe something? Would God disown you because of your sin? Would He ever threaten or question your eternal salvation? What do the Old Testament Scriptures say about these things?

II. Ephesians: What is God Saying to You and What are You Going to Do About It?

Chapter 5

5:5-6, since God clearly says that no one who lives in sin has any inheritance in His Kingdom but instead gets His wrath, many believe He's saying, "If you live in sin, you're not really a Christian, you never were and your sinful life proves it. Therefore, since you're not really My child, you're going to end up in hell." Is this what God means by these verses? ABSOLUTELY NOT. We've seen how Ephesians argues against any such notion. What about the rest of the Scriptures? Do the Old Testament Scriptures show that man's problem is death not sin? That eternal salvation is by faith not works? That entering God's Kingdom is different from inheriting it? That faith means "believe" and nothing else? That a sinful life proves nothing concerning your status as God's child or your eternal destiny? That you cannot lose your eternal salvation? That God never questions or threatens our eternal salvation?

Is man's problem death or sin? It's not that sin is not a problem; it is. But it's not the main problem. Our main problem is the result of our sin: *death*. Sin leaves us dead and separated from God. It also leaves us unable to rescue ourselves from the ultimate sting of death, which is eternal separation from God in the Lake of Fire, which God calls the "second death" (Revelation 20:14). And this reality is present throughout the entire Old Testament, from Adam and Eve's sin which left them dead (Genesis 2:17) to Israel's continued rebellion in the book of Malachi. As man's history unfolds, every individual keeps walking away from God because they are dead in their sin, incapable of remaining faithful to God, incapable of rescuing themselves because there is no one who does good, No, not one (Psalm 14), which is why God has to rescue them (Genesis 3:15; Malachi 3-4). Therefore, sin is not be man's problem because God Himself pays for all sin (Isaiah 53: 5-6, 8, 10-12). And through His death, He takes the power of death from the one who had it: Satan (Genesis 3:15; Hebrews 2:14-15; Revelation 1:18). The entire Old Testament Scriptures are about God coming to rescue us from sin and death (Luke 24:44-47).

Is eternal salvation by faith or works? It's clear from the beginning of the Bible that man is in a state of death and therefore cannot do any good works to save himself because "*there* is none who does good, No, not one" (Psalm 14:1-3). Therefore, someone else has to save him. Thus, the only other option is faith, i.e., he has to trust the work of someone else, a fact that is evident throughout the Old Testament. For example,

Abraham, he was justified, declared righteous, by faith not works (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:1-5).

Moses and the Bronze Serpent, Israel is not only ungrateful but accuses God once again of trying to kill them. So God sends fiery serpents to kill the people. When they repent and beg for mercy, God has Moses make a fiery serpent and whoever simply *looked* at the bronze serpent lived (Numbers 21:4-9—this was a picture of the salvation Jesus would give anyone who simply *believed* in Him, John 3:14-15).

Israel and the Lamb of God, perhaps the greatest example that eternal salvation is by faith and not works is the Passover Lamb. The Passover was the last plague God visited upon Egypt; He would kill every firstborn male and animal in Egypt. How would the people of Israel escape this plague? Did their salvation from death depend on their good works? No, it would depend on their faith in the blood of an innocent lamb. Once they placed the blood of this innocent lamb on the doorposts and lintels of their homes, God passed over their homes and they were saved (Exodus 12:5, 7, 12-13, 21-23, 29-30—this is another picture of the salvation that Jesus, the Lamb of God, would bring to the world through simple faith, John 1:29; 3:16).

Is entering God's Kingdom different from inheriting it? We saw in Ephesians that entrance into God's Kingdom is by faith alone but inheritance in the Kingdom depends on our good works. This is clearly seen in the difference between Israel's ownership of the Promise Land vs. their enjoyment of it: God gave the Promise Land to Abraham and his descendants forever, regardless of their behavior, a promise He repeated to Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 13:15; 26:3; 28:13). And Israel could expect tremendous blessings from the Promise Land, but only IF they obeyed God (Deuteronomy 28:1-14). If they disobeyed Him, they would get God's severe wrath including scattering them from the Land even though it was completely theirs (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). The wilderness generation is a vivid example of this. They owned the Promise Land but because they refused to enter it as God commanded, they never enjoyed it; however, their children did (Numbers 14).

Does faith mean more than believe? There are several examples which show that faith means nothing more than *believe*: Abraham placed his faith in God, i.e., he simply believed and God saved him, eternally and otherwise (Genesis 12:1-4, Hebrews 11:8-10; Genesis 22:1-14, Hebrews 11:17-19; Genesis 15, Romans 4:1-8 [Psalm 32]). Moses' Bronze Serpent, the Israelites put their faith in the bronze serpent and were saved the second they simply looked at it (Numbers 21:4-9), which was a picture of the eternal salvation that everyone would receive who simply put their faith in Jesus, i.e., who simply believed in Him (John 3:14-15).

Does a sinful life prove you're not really saved and on your way to hell? Not at all. First, no one will ever go to hell because of their sin. Why? Because Messiah (Jesus) paid for ALL sin (Isaiah 53:5-6, 8, 10-12). Second, being God's child doesn't guarantee that you'll be an angel. Third, you can't tell who's a child of God by their sin just like you can't tell who the bad child belongs to. Good parents have bad children too and God's children likewise sin. Open the Bible anywhere and you'll find a child of God sinning. Fourth, even if you live the most sinful life ever, if you're a child of God, you will go to heaven when you die. Why? Because sin can't keep you from heaven nor does it prove who your parents are. Once a child of God, always a child of God. Case in point: Saul. At the end of his life, Saul, who was the king of Israel, kept trying to murder David, the one God had anointed as the next king! Saul also consulted with a medium, which was another capital crime under the Law (Leviticus 20:6). So, does God condemn Saul to hell for his habitual sin? NO, instead, when the Lord allows Samuel to come up from paradise, Samuel tells Saul that he and his sons will die in battle but instead of going to hell, they will be with him in paradise (1 Samuel 28:1-19).

Is it possible to lose your eternal salvation? Not in the least. First, every argument in favor of someone losing their salvation revolves around the person's sins. However, sin can no longer send anyone to hell. Why? Because Jesus paid for ALL sin (Isaiah 53: 5-6, 8, 10-12). Second, no matter how badly you sin, God will NEVER disown you. Once you're His child, you will always be His child. Case in point: Adam and Eve. They committed the worst sin in human history; their sin led to Hitler's sins, Stalin's sins, Mao's sins, babies dying at birth, nation rising up against nation, pandemics, and on and on. And yet what did God do, did He condemn them to hell? NO! Instead, He ran to their rescue and covered their sin (Genesis 3 [3:15, 21]).

Does God either question or threaten our eternal salvation? Never! Like any loving father, God hates it when His children sin. He hates it because we inflict pain on ourselves and Him (Genesis 6:1-6). And like any loving father, He will discipline us, even severely, but He will never disown us. For example,

Moses completely disrespected God in front of the entire nation (Numbers 20:1-12). And God disciplined him severely; He refused to let him enter the Promise Land, even though he begged and begged (Deuteronomy 3:23-26). But even though God so disciplined Moses, He didn't disown him. Instead, God showed him mercy and supernaturally enabled him to see all of the Promise Land before he died (Deuteronomy 3:27).

Saul, the first time he sinned against God as king, God stripped him of a dynasty (1 Samuel 13:13-14). The second time he sinned against God, He rejected him completely and stripped him of his crown (1 Samuel 15:23, 26, 28). But God never disowned him, in fact, God not only allowed Saul to worship Him once again (1 Samuel 15:30-31), He allowed him to go to paradise at his death even though he was living in sin (1 Samuel 28:8-19). Disobeying your parent can NEVER undo your birthright in the family. Likewise and even more so, once you're born into God's family, you will always be God's child. You may be a disobedient child, but a child nonetheless.

What is God saying to you when He says that you will always be His child? He's saying, "My child, don't ever believe that your sinful behavior can EVER undo the new birth and place in My family that I've given you. It doesn't matter how bad you behave, you will always be My child. Now, don't get it twisted; I will discipline you. The worse your behavior, the more severe My discipline will be. But never forget: you are My child and nothing can undo that, NOTHING!"

III. Conclusion

What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.