

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

Ricardo Campos, Pastor Grace Chapel, Orange, CA June 28, 2020

## I. Introduction

Does God ever question or threaten our eternal salvation? If our eternal salvation is never under threat, if it is 100% secure no matter how badly we behave, no matter how many sins we commit, why should we be good? Are there consequences to being a Christian who lives in sin?

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

### Chapter 5

**5:5-6**, though Ephesians 5:5-6 sounds like it's saying that those who live in sin can't go to heaven and will instead get God's wrath in hell, we've seen that this is not at all what God is talking about in this passage. What about other similar sounding passages, does God ever threaten or question our eternal salvation?

*Does God either question or threaten our eternal salvation?* Never! Like any loving father, God wants His children to be good not bad. He doesn't want us to suffer the consequences of living in sin, which can include death. In fact, not only does God want us to avoid His wrath against sin, He wants us to be good so that He can reward us with future inheritance, i.e., He wants us to rule with Him in His future Kingdom. Thus, God wants us to be good not only to be blessed in this life, but in the one to come. That's why He says things like, "Those who fail to serve Me, will experience loss of reward when I return to evaluate them." "Those who live in sin, get no inheritance." and "Those who fail to endure, to live a life of faithful service to Me, will not reign with Me."

**1 Corinthians 3:10-15 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-11**, at first glance, these two passages seem to discuss one's final destiny: will we go to heaven or hell? The first passage mentions a judgment of fire that will test our works. Will our works endure or burn up? Those whose works endure, get a reward; those whose works don't, will suffer loss. The second passage clearly states that the unrighteous, i.e., anyone who practices the sin of idolatry (which includes workaholics), fornication, adultery (which includes in your mind, Matthew 5:28), homosexuality, theft (which includes doing personal business on company time), etc., etc., will not inherit God's Kingdom. Are these passages talking about heaven and hell?

The first question we need to ask concerning such passages is who's the audience? If the audience is made up of God's children, i.e., born-again Christians whose eternal destiny is certain, then whatever God says, He's saying it to individuals whose eternal destiny is 100% secure. So who are the Corinthians? They're God's church, sanctified in Christ Jesus, God is their Father, God's grace was given to them in Christ Jesus, Christ enriched them in everything, Christ's testimony was confirmed in them, Christ will confirm them to the end so that they'll be blameless when He returns, God called them into the fellowship of His Son, and Jesus is their Lord, 1:2-9. Additionally, in the very passage that talks about a judgment of fire, the Corinthians are Paul's Christian brothers and sisters, 3:1. And in the passage that threatens no inheritance for those who live in sin, God clearly says that the Corinthians **have**

**been** washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by God's Spirit. Therefore, the Corinthians are God's children; their eternal destiny is 100% secure; they cannot go to hell.

The second question we need to ask is what is God talking about in these passages; what does the context actually say? Is He talking about heaven and hell or something else? 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 is not about heaven or hell; it's about whether or not Jesus will reward you for the work you did while He was gone. And right now the Corinthians' chances of getting a reward are not good. Why? Because instead of being mature Christians, they have reverted back to spiritual babyhood, 3:1-2. They have become groupies of Paul and Apollos and are fighting over who's greater, Paul or Apollos. Instead, the Corinthians need to realize that the entire process belongs to God: the building is His and so are the laborers, which is why it will be God who rewards Paul or Apollos for their own labor, 3:3-9. It is at this point that Paul mentions the judgment of fire which will test each one's work to determine whether or not they'll get a reward. The merciful part of this judgment is that, if you fail to labor for the Lord, you will suffer loss of reward (inheritance) but you will still be eternally saved, 3:15.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 is likewise not talking about entering God's Kingdom but whether or not you'll be rewarded with inheritance. Entering the Kingdom happens by simple faith, nothing else: the Corinthians **were** washed, sanctified, and justified in the Lord's name and by God's Spirit the moment Paul preached the Gospel to them and they believed, 6:11; 15:1-2, 11. So what is the context of 6:9-10, what is Paul talking about that leads him to say that those who live in sin won't get any inheritance? Instead of taking care of their personal disputes within the church, Christian to Christian, the Corinthians were taking each other to court and asking non-Christians to settle their disputes. They were doing this because there wasn't anyone among them capable of judging such disputes, 6:1-6. And instead of declining non-Christian court and taking a loss, the Corinthians were using the courts to cheat their Christian brethren, 6:7-8. It is at this point that Paul says that the unrighteous will not inherit the Lord's Kingdom, including thieves and swindlers, which is what some of them are doing to their fellow Corinthians. So this is not about heaven and hell but what you'll lose if you live in sin. And as mentioned before, some of the Corinthians used to be fornicators, adulterers, homosexuals, swindlers, etc., but now they've been washed of these things. However, there's a danger that they may return to these sins and lose inheritance/reward, which is why God is warning them not to go back. This means that God's children, those bound for heaven, are capable of living in sin.

**2 Timothy 2:11-13**, on the surface, this seems to say that if we fail to live a good life, if we deny Jesus a life of good works, then He will deny us heaven. Is this what 2 Timothy 2:11-13 says? First question, who is the audience? Timothy. And who is Timothy? He possesses genuine faith, God's gift is in him, God has given him a spirit of power, love and a sound mind, Jesus is his Lord, God saved him and called him not according to his own works but according to His own purpose and grace which God gave to Timothy in Christ Jesus before time began, Jesus is his Savior, and the Holy Spirit dwells in him, 1:5-10, 14. Therefore, Timothy is a child of God, eternally saved, and cannot go to hell.

Second question, what is God talking about; what does the context say? A key word in 2:11-13 is "endure" and Paul mentions it twice in 2:1-10 as he urges Timothy to endure all things so that he can be rewarded for his faithfulness to the Lord. So Paul says that in order to please Christ, Timothy must endure the hardships of ministry like a good soldier, 2:1-4. Timothy must realize that if he wants to be rewarded the way an athlete and farmer are, he must compete, he must work hard, 2:5-7. Timothy must also remember the greatest example of reward for

endurance: Jesus Christ, who suffered the ultimate but was rewarded with resurrection, 2:8. Paul also suffered, including imprisonment, but since nothing can stop God, he endured all things for the sake of God's elect so that they too can experience Christ's salvation from all their hardships which comes with eternal rewards, 2:9-10. Notice the theme running through this passage: if you work hard and endure, God will reward you. That's when we come to our verses, 2:11-13. In these three verses Paul tells us about the reward we'll get for enduring, the consequences we'll suffer for not enduring, and the incredible mercy that the Lord shows us for completely turning our backs on Him. In essence, here's what these verses are saying:

2:11, we have a permanent connection with Jesus' life

2:12, this is what happens if we're faithful to the Lord (we'll reign with Christ) and if we're not (we won't reign with Christ)

2:13, the incredible faithfulness that the Lord shows us, even though we're completely faithless, all because of our permanent connection with Jesus Christ

So the first thing Paul mentions is the permanence of our spiritual birth, i.e., if we've been identified with Jesus death, then it is certain that we will not remain dead but instead live again with Jesus, 2:11 (cf. Romans 6:3-4). Next, Paul picks up where he left off regarding the themes of endurance and reward, i.e., if we endure the difficulties of our Christian life and ministry, then Jesus will reward us with reigning with Him. But if we deny Jesus our endurance, then He will deny us reward, i.e., ruling with Him, 2:12. But what if we completely turn our backs on Jesus, what happens then? Jesus remains faithful because there's no way that He can deny Himself, i.e., our eternal security is not dependent on our performance; it's dependent on our connection to Jesus Christ, which is permanent and unbreakable, 2:13 (we are in Him and He is in us, 2 Timothy 1:9, 14).

**What is God saying when He says that He'll never disown us?** He's saying, "My child, your eternal destiny with Me is completely secure, no matter how sinful you are. However, there is a price to pay for your sinfulness. When My Son returns to evaluate your performance, you will suffer a terrible loss that could have been avoided: you won't get to reign with Him."

### III. Conclusion

*Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*