

Paradise Lost and Restored: What is the Gospel? (Part 3)

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I. Introduction

Jesus gives me eternal life; therefore, I'm guaranteed to go to heaven, right? But isn't it possible to lose my salvation? What if I live a life of sin? Won't that disqualify me? Or won't it prove that I was never really a child of God in the first place? After all, doesn't God change you from the inside out? Doesn't He give you His own Spirit which keeps you from a life of sin? Thus, if I live in sin, doesn't it prove that I was never really saved to begin with?

II. Is it Possible to Lose Your Salvation?

Some people think that your life reveals whether or not you're truly a child of God. If you live a life of sin, then you will either lose your salvation or it proves that you were never really saved to begin with. Is that true, does your sinful conduct reveal if you're eternally saved or not? Or can it jeopardize your salvation? Can you really tell who's eternally saved by looking at their life?

Is God a Loving Father or a Trigger-happy Judge? *First*, as you read the Bible, does God sound like a father who would adopt you one minute and the next minute kick you out of His family for breaking His rules? Over and over the Bible reveals just how loving and patient God is with humanity. In fact, from the beginning He was this way toward us.

Second, how did God respond to His first children Adam and Eve after they committed the sin that ruined life for all mankind? Did He kick them out of the family or threaten them with hell? No, He rescued them, thus, reaffirming His love for them and their status as children, Genesis 3:9-21. Now you might say, "But He cursed them and kicked them out of the Garden of Eden! How is that reaffirming love?!" First, the penalty for their sin was death, not a curse that made life more difficult, Genesis 2:16-17; Romans 6:23. Second, kicking them out of Eden was not an act of hate but love. If God had allowed them to stay in Eden, they would have eaten of the Tree of Life and then they would have lived in a state of curse forever, Genesis 3:22-24.

Third, the whole point of the entire Bible is that we CANNOT save ourselves. God has to save us, which is why He sent His Son to die a brutal death. It makes no sense that this Loving Father, after adopting us into His family at the cost of His Son, would then turn around and threaten us with hell. If human parents wouldn't do this to a child, what makes us think that God would?

When God adopts you into His family, it's a permanent thing not a trial period and it's not based on what you do in life, *first*, there's only one condition to salvation: faith. Your eternal salvation has nothing to do with your works good or bad, John 1:12; 3:15, 16, 18, 36; 5:24; 20:30-31; Acts 16:31; Ephesians 2:8-9. Some try to argue that "believe" in Greek means more than simply possessing certain knowledge. They think "believe" has a deeper meaning in Greek than it does in English. However, God tells us what "believe" means in Acts 28:24; it means to be persuaded of something. Thus, "believe" in Greek means the same thing it does in English.

Second, the salvation you get is forever, that's why God calls it **eternal life**, John 6:47. Thus, it can NEVER be taken away from you, John 10:25-30; 11:25-27.

Third, God also calls it being born again, John 3:3. So we notice that God refers to our eternal salvation as a birth, James 1:18; 1 John 3:9. Why does He use birth terminology? Because the moment we believe in Christ we become God's children. And like human birth it can never be undone. Once you are born into God's family, you are His forever, John 10:25-30. Just like you will always be your parents' child no matter how many sins you commit.

Fourth, the moment you believe in Jesus Christ, God joins you permanently to Jesus. One way God communicates this is by using Greek verbs that mean *together-with*: the moment we believed in Christ God *made-us-alive-together-with*, *raised-us-up-together-with*, and *seated-us-together-with* Christ, Ephesians 2:5-6. Thus, there's an inseparable bond between Christ and us.

But what if you really mess up and live a life of sin, won't you lose your salvation? No! Why not? First, can sin, whether one or one trillion, keep us out of heaven? No! Why? Because Jesus Christ paid for ALL sin, Mark 10:45; John 1:29; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 John 2:2. In fact, God warns us that we will sin, which is why He tells us not to grieve and quench His Spirit who dwells inside us, Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19.

Second, there are many examples of individuals in the Bible who lived a life of sin, yet who did not lose their salvation. For example: Saul, even though he was terribly wicked at the end of his life, God told him that he would go to Abraham's bosom instead of Hades at his death, 1 Samuel 28:19, (Luke 16:19-31). David, he committed adultery with Bathsheba, got her pregnant, then tried to cover it up by murdering her husband Uriah, 2 Samuel 11. In spite of this, God used David as the model king for those who followed him, 2 Chronicles, 7:17; 17:3; 28:1; 29:2; 34:2. And in the future God will place David as king over Israel, Ezekiel 37:24. The criminal who died next to Jesus, he lived a life of sin yet on his 'deathbed' he believed in Jesus and Jesus told him that he would be with Him in paradise that very day, Luke 23:39-43. Peter, not even denying Jesus will keep us out of heaven. Peter denied Jesus not once but three times yet even before Peter did it, Jesus assured him that his place in heaven was secure, John 13:36-14:3 (Luke 22:54-62).

Third, instead of using our sin against us to keep us out of heaven, God is always looking to rescue us from our sin in order to get us back into His fellowship. For example, the young man having sex with his stepmom, 1 Corinthians 5: 1-5; 2 Corinthians 2:1-11. In fact, even if you fail to produce good works and instead produce bad works, when Christ evaluates you, He will burn up your bad works, but you yourself will be saved, 1 Corinthians 3:9-15.

III. Conclusion

When it comes to heaven and how you get there, people get two things confused: birth and life. That is, the moment you believe in Jesus Christ, you're born again and eternally saved, John 3:16. This is your birth. But after, you still have the rest of your life to live. And during your lifetime, you will sin; you may even live in sin. But this doesn't mean that you've somehow lost your salvation. It simply means that you're a disobedient child, like David, Saul, the Corinthians, etc. Just because you're born again and have God's Spirit, doesn't mean that you won't sin or live in sin. We see this in life: children of wonderful parents still sin or live in sin. They sin not because they're not really their parents' children, but because after they were born they chose to lead disobedient lives.

Two Questions: if someone is unsure if they'll go to heaven, I often ask two questions: "Where do you think you'll go when you die?" If they say, "Heaven," I ask a second question, "Why?" If they say anything related to themselves, e.g., "Because I'm a good person," then they have not understood the Gospel. The Gospel is all about Jesus Christ saving you, NOT you saving you. It's all about the fact that you need a Savior, Jesus Christ.