

## Paradise Lost and Restored: What is the Gospel? (Part 4)

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### I. Introduction

God unequivocally says that those who believe in His Son are eternally saved. But then you turn to another place in the Bible and it appears that He's saying you can lose your salvation? Does God actually say that you can lose your eternal salvation or is He saying something else?

### II. If You Can't Lose Your Salvation, Why are there Bible Passages that Seem to Say You Can?

It's clear from the whole Bible that God is not a Tyrant who threatens us with hell every time we sin. Instead, He's a Loving Father who sent His Son to die for us in order to adopt us into His family. And once born into His family, there's nothing nor anyone who can change that. We are forever united to His Son and secure in His hands, John 1:12; 6:47; 10:25-30; Ephesians 2:5-6. But aren't there Bible passages that seem to question this?

**1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:5)**, this passage seems to say that if you live a life of sin, then you will lose your salvation. Is that what it says? *Frist*, who is God addressing, His children or those outside God's family? He is addressing His children, those who are saints that have been sanctified in Christ Jesus and who have been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of Jesus by God's Spirit, 1:2; 6:11.

*Second*, were these sanctified Corinthians living in sin? Yes! the majority of this letter is about their sins. In fact, one of them was fornicating with his stepmom and yet when this fornicator repented, God reaffirmed His love for him, 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; 2 Corinthians 2:1-11. The point is that they're not supposed to live in sin precisely because they have been washed and justified, 6:11!

*Third*, does 6:9-10 say that fornicators and the like will not "enter" or "inherit" the Kingdom of God? It says that those who behave this way will not "inherit." Is God's Kingdom something you inherit based on good behavior or a gift from God based on your faith in His Son? It's a gift based on our faith and God's grace, Ephesians 2:8-9. Additionally, who normally inherits something, a family member or non-family member? It's usually a family member. Thus, this passage is talking to God's children who will inherit something (or not) based on godly behavior (Ephesians 5:5).

**2 Timothy 2:11-12**, this seems to say that if we deny Jesus, He will deny us our salvation. Is that what it's talking about? *Frist*, who is God addressing? Timothy, who among other things is a beloved son, has genuine faith in Christ, has been given a spiritual gift by God, and has the Holy Spirit dwelling inside him, 2 Timothy 1:2, 5, 6, 14. Thus, it's impossible for Jesus to undo everything that is true about Timothy regardless of what Timothy denies Jesus.

*Second*, what is being denied, salvation? In 2:11 God says that if we've been identified with Jesus' death, then we will be identified with Jesus' resurrection life (cf. Romans 6:5-8). And in 2:12 God says that if we endure, then we will get to reign with Jesus. But if we deny Jesus, then Jesus will deny us. However, the question is, "Deny us what?" In context, God is telling Timothy to be a faithful servant to Jesus Christ, i.e., to "endure" hardship like Onesiphorus and Paul instead of denying Jesus service like Phygellus and Hermogenes, 1: 15-18; 2:3, 10. Thus, if Timothy endures, he will get to reign with Christ. But if Timothy denies Jesus his faithful service, then Jesus will deny him. Deny him what? The reward He spoke of for enduring which is reigning with Christ.

Third, something else that makes loss of eternal salvation impossible in this passage is 2:13. God basically says that if we stop believing, Jesus remains faithful because He cannot “deny” Himself. Thus, if we turn our backs on Jesus altogether, He remains faithful to us. Why? Because since we are now part of Him (2:11), there’s no way that He’s going to deny Himself. Therefore, Jesus cannot deny us our eternal salvation because our life is forever united to His.

**James 2:14-26**, this passage sounds like eternal salvation is not just based on faith, but that it’s also based on good works. Is that what this passage is saying? First, who is God addressing? Several times James calls them “brethren,” thus, they and James have the same Father, God, 1:2, 16, 19; 2:1, etc. In fact, James flat out says that God gave birth to them, 1:18—the original Greek word for “brought [us] forth” means *to give birth to*. So these are God’s children. Why is this point so important? Because regardless of what a parent says to a child, they are still talking to their child. Nothing can undo this fact, not even if a parent says, “You are no longer my child!”

Second, what is the context of 2:14-26, is it about losing your eternal salvation? From the beginning, James tells his audience that this is about how they will respond to the various trials they’re facing, 1:2-15. In light of this, they need to be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath, 1:19. Then he tells them that it’s not enough to hear God’s word, they have to obey it, 1:21-27. He then gives them an example of obeying their faith, i.e., what they believe. If they believe that they should not show partiality, then they should treat a poor person the same as a rich one, 2:1-13. Thus, prior to 2:14-26, the context is about how God’s children will behave, i.e., how they will apply their faith. James then gives further examples of applying what they believe and shows them how useless their faith will be unless it has accompanying works, i.e., unless they apply it.

Thus, if they believe that they should help someone who is naked and hungry but they don’t clothe or feed them, then their faith/belief that they should help the naked and hungry is useless to those who are naked and hungry, 2:14-17. If Abraham failed to apply his faith/belief that God could bring Isaac back from the dead (Hebrews 11:17-19), then his belief that he should offer Isaac would have been useless in justifying him before others (cf. Romans 4:2), who then would not have called him a friend of God (2 Chronicles 20:7), 2:20-24—notice too that offering Isaac came long after Abraham had already been justified by faith before God. Rahab was likewise justified before the eyes of Israel when she added the work of protecting Israel’s spies to her faith/belief in Israel’s God (Joshua 2:11). Thus, James shows that the faith of those who fail to act on what they believe is useless; it will not save them. Save them from what? What was Rahab saved from? Death.

Third, what salvation is James talking about, eternal salvation or something else? In 1:21 James appears to be talking about the salvation of your eternal soul. Is he? The Greek word for “soul” can also mean “life.” And it’s used this way elsewhere in the Bible, e.g., “lives” in Acts 27:10. Is that what it should mean in James 1:21? Before James talks about saving your “soul,” he mentioned the deadly consequences of sin; it could take your life, 1:14-15. And in the very verse where James talked about saving your soul, he warned his audience to stay away from sin and instead apply God’s Word which would result in saving their “soul.” Finally, at the end of the letter James encourages his audience by telling them that if any of them turn a sinner away from his sin and back to God’s Word, then they will save a “soul” from death, i.e., a life from death, 5:20. Therefore, James is talking about saving your life from death not your soul from eternal damnation.

### III. Conclusion

*“And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand.”*