

Eternal Security

A Look at God's Greatest Gift

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Can Christians lose their salvation? This is an issue that every Christian must face at one point in their life, and is by far one of the most important questions one might ask. The way one answers this question will shape their view of God, works, and will form ones perception of salvation itself.

Paul Describes Salvation

When we discuss salvation, we must set aside our preconceived notions. Set the modern teachers, culture, and denominations aside, and simply look first at how the Bible describes salvation. Ephesians 2:8-9, *For by **grace** you have been **saved** through **faith**, and that **not of yourselves**; it is the **gift of God**, **not of works**, lest anyone should boast.* In this passage Paul seems tells us that we are saved not because of our works or righteousness, but simply by the grace of God given due to our faith. He makes the point that salvation is not about our deeds or acts, or of our doing, but it is simply a **gift**. Romans 6:23 also defines salvation as a gift, *but the **gift of God** is **eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord***, and Romans 4:4-5 states, *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**.* If we cannot obtain salvation by our goodness or works, then it should be sufficient to say that we cannot lose our salvation due to our works, or lack thereof. Moreover, the prophet Isaiah says that even our most righteous deeds are as filthy rags before God (Isaiah 64:4).

Defining a Gift

*If someone wants to give you a gift, what must you do to receive it? Simply hold out an empty hand.*¹

The google dictionary defines a gift as, *a thing given willingly to someone **without payment**; a present.* For something to be truly defined as a gift it must be given **freely**. Once given, the gift is owned by the recipient and the giver holds no claim or authority over it. If the giver was to put a condition on the recipients' ability to keep the gift, or was to ever demand it back, it would no longer be viewed as a gift. Therefore if the Bible defines our salvation as a gift of God, given based on his mercy, we should not expect for Him to take it back.

¹ Pastor Mark Rylander, Friendship Bible Church, Kerrville, Texas.

What Does Jesus Have To Say?

John 6:35-40,

*And Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. He who **comes to Me** shall **never** hunger, and he who **believes in Me** shall **never** thirst. 36 But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. **All** that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one **who comes to Me** I will **by no means** cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of **all** He has given Me, I should **lose nothing**, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that **everyone** who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and **I will** raise him up at the last day.*

Jesus tells us that all who come to Him and believe will never be cast out, but that He will raise them up on the last day. It is the will of the Father that He should lose none of the ones given to Him. He also tells us John 3:16 that, *God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever believes in Him should not perish**, but **have** everlasting life.* Jesus doesn't keep us guessing or hoping that we might pass the test, He says that anyone who signs up to take the test receives a passing grade.

Salvation Guaranteed

Now that we have both defined salvation through biblical context, and received the words of Jesus Himself, let us dive deeper into the guarantee of our great salvation. Ephesians 1:13-14 says, *In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, **having believed**, you were **sealed** with the Holy Spirit of **promise**, 14 who is the **guarantee** of our **inheritance until the redemption** of the **purchased possession**, to the praise of His glory.* In the receiving of salvation, the accompanying gift, the Holy Spirit, is given to dwell within us, guide us, and convict us. But as we see in Ephesians 1:13-14, the Holy Spirit also acts as a seal of our guaranteed inheritance into the Kingdom of God; Our inheritance is guaranteed to us as a purchased possession through the acceptance of Christ's payment on the cross, and is redeemed when we leave this earthly realm. Words like **gift, guarantee, any, all, none, and promise**, are all bold and pointed words meant to paint specific and unquestionable conclusions from the attached context. Such certain language used about our salvation is no mistake, for *all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.* (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Let us also look at our entrance to the Eternal Kingdom. Paul address the issue of our works and obedience, and how it affects our entrance into the Kingdom of God, in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 which states,

*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.*

What then is the incentive for obedience and for following God's will? The word of God commands obedience from us and promises rewards both here and in the eternal Kingdom. As we obey the word of God, we build up reward in Heaven and also conform more to the image of Christ allowing us to be more blessed and to be more useful in the Kingdom. Being disobedient and walking in darkness on the other hand, results in the judgement of our flesh and loss of our earthly blessing (1 Corinthians 5, 1 Corinthians 11:27-32). The real issue addressed in the Bible concerning salvation (James 2:18-26 and Matthew 7:21-23 for example) is not one of losing salvation, rather one of claiming salvation, yet never having received it.

Personal Testimony

I am not shy when it comes to the salvation of others. Those who aren't saved, I give the gospel; those who bear Christ in Spirit and in word, I receive; those who claim Christ void of proof, I question. I am not afraid to ask a question, especially when it is the most important question to ever be asked. "Who is Jesus to you?" To no surprise, I often get great answers like, "He's our savior," or "He's the Son of God," yet when I follow their responses with, "why," or, "what does that actually mean to you," I often get blank stares and no response. About half of the people that I have seen come to Christ, my wife included, claimed to be a Christian when our conversation began. Yet, I took them through a series of question which always ended with, "Have you ever actually asked Him to forgive you of your sins and committed yourself to Him as your king," their response was, "No." They knew all the right answers; they had the head knowledge, the lingo and the lifestyle, but they lacked the relationship and the true **gift** of salvation.

Conclusion

The word of God can be tough, but it can never contradict itself. Any perceived contradictions are simple misunderstandings, or lack of a full view of scripture. Salvation, true salvation, once received, is a gift received from God through us having put our faith in Him, and the work of His Son Jesus on the cross. Sin will still be judged, and Christians are still charged with living a life worthy of the Gospel. Those who do not walk in obedience will receive earthly judgment (Acts 5, 1 Corinthians 5, Hebrews 6:4-8, 1 John 5:16) and lose part of their eternal reward. However, they themselves will be saved (1 Corinthians 3:15). God, in His infinite love and mercy, has offered Himself as sacrifice, not so that we could find acceptance for a moment, or with uncertainty, but that by His work, by His gift, we may receive an eternal security. 1 John 2:1-2, *My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*