

Sunday, November 6, 2022 am

CONCERNING FIRST PRINCIPLES

Can a Christian Forfeit Salvation?

A common belief today in the religious world is that it is impossible for a Christian, once saved, to forfeit their salvation. While such sounds comforting, it is not what the scriptures teach and often leads to false hope and conduct. In our lesson today, I want to remind us of what the Bible says about the need to remain faithful.

I. Is it possible to forfeit salvation?

a. Teachings of Jesus –

- i. As you study the life of Jesus, He emphasized faithfulness. A teaching abused by many of the Jewish religious leaders. But consider the following warnings.
- ii. Luke 9:62 – after excuses to delay following Him, He noted that no one having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.
- iii. Matthew 24:45-51 – He speaks of a faithful and wise servant. If he faithfully carries out his responsibilities he will be rewarded when the master returns. BUT if he is evil and abuses others and his responsibility, when the master returns he will cut him in two and cast him in the place with hypocrites.
- iv. John 15:1-6 – Jesus is the vine, we are the branches. We are IN Him, but if we fail to produce fruit, we will be cut off and cast into the fire.

b. Teachings of Paul

- i. Romans 11:16-22 – Paul explains how Israel was cut off because they rejected God. He then warns Gentiles who had been accepted that they too could be cut off if they failed to continue in His goodness. NOTICE vs. 22, “behold the goodness and severity of God.” What is the “severity” of those who fall, if not forfeiting their salvation?
- ii. 1 Corinthians 9:26-27 – even Paul realized that he must remain faithful lest he become disqualified. What can *disqualified* mean but that he forfeits his salvation?
- iii. 1 Corinthians 10:12 – warns that one must take heed lest he fall – fall from what? Several examples of Israel in the wilderness *falling* are given prior to this. In various instances they were destroyed for their rebellion and did not enter the promised land. That is the backdrop of Paul’s warning.
- iv. Galatians 5:4 – Paul warns that if one returned to the law, “You have fallen from grace”. Again, what can that possibly mean except you forfeit your hope as a result of God’s grace?
- v. 1 Timothy 4:1 – a warning that in latter times, some would “depart from the faith.”
- vi. Consider also calls to faithfulness:
 1. Colossians 1:21-23 – now reconciled to God – presented above reproach...IF indeed you continue in the faith...
 2. 1 Corinthians 15:58 – be steadfast, immovable, always abounding...
 3. Galatians 6:9 – let us not grow weary in doing good... if we do not lose heart

c. Hebrews has numerous passages that call for us to remain faithful or face consequences.

- i. Hebrews 2:1-3 – How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?
- ii. Hebrews 3:12-14 – beware lest there be... departing from the living God. Partakers, IF we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.
- iii. Hebrews 6:4-6 – speaks of the impossibility of renewing to repentance those who fall away...
- iv. Hebrews 10:26-27 – if we sin willfully, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins... worse punishment presented.

d. Other passages

- i. James 5:19-20 – one who wanders from the truth is saved from death

- ii. 2 Peter 1:5-11, a call to make your call and election sure. IF these things are yours and abound...
- iii. 2 Peter 2:20-22 – one of the most straight forward passages addressing that we can fall away and be worse than before we were saved.
- iv. Revelation 2:10 – “be faithful until death” – if OSAS, why the condition?
- v. Revelation 22:18-19 – note that God will take away his part from the “book of life”.
- e. To teach “once saved, always saved” – or “the impossibility of apostasy”
 - i. Renders all such passages as inconsequential at best, or contradictory.
 - ii. It removes personal accountability and makes every call to obedience a mere suggestion. Advocates of OSAS might deny this (though some will not), but it is the only conclusion for one who truly holds to this doctrine.
 - iii. It can also lead to will worship (cf. Colossians 2:23, KJV, i.e., “self-imposed religion” - NKJV) where YOU CHOOSE how to worship God, so it becomes about what you want to do, not about Him. Consider the mantra, “Find the church of your choice.”

II. Answering the arguments

- a. John 3:18, “He who believes in Him is not condemned, but he who does not believe is condemned already...” Sometimes advocated that once you believe you can never be condemned. **Answer.** It does not teach that. Further, the word “believes” is present tense - There is a continued obedience. This indicates that “believes” is not that one step (the plan) that leads to salvation, but the way one lives.
- b. John 10:28-29 – “eternal life”, “none shall snatch them out of My hand” – **Answer:** Note vs. 27 – “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”
- c. If one falls away, they were never saved to begin with (cf. 1 John 2:19). **Answer:** That is mere speculation. While true of some (it is possible to pretend salvation for various reasons), you cannot prove that for many. Warnings of apostasy don’t indicate that – 1 Timothy 4:1 – some will depart from the faith; Galatians 5:4 again – “You have fallen from grace” – how can you fall from that which you never had.
- d. Others advocate, building on the prior point, that those who are truly saved have been miraculously changed by God (He regenerates us, puts a new heart and spirit within us, and the Spirit will cause you to walk in obedience, etc.). **Answer:** While this needs to be developed at several levels, to a degree it takes away free will once one is “saved”, AND/OR it makes God a respecter of persons (see Acts 10:34-35, Romans 2:11), because not everyone who genuinely responds to the gospel invitation remain faithful, as many of the above passages say (1 Timothy 1:18-20 – Hymenaeus and Alexander rejected and their faith suffered shipwreck; 2 Timothy 4:10 – Demas has forsaken me..., etc.).

III. Does that mean we cannot know if we are saved?

- a. The Bible says we CAN know.
 - i. 1 John 5:13 *These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.*
 - ii. 2 Peter 1:10-11 speaks of making your call and election sure.
 - iii. 2 Timothy 1:12, Paul with confidence knew that God is able to keep what he had committed to Him.
 - iv. BUT it hinges on obedience. Consider:
 - 1. 1 John 1:7 – we need to be “walking in the light”
 - 2. 1 John 2:3-4 – we know Him if we keep His commandments
 - 3. 1 John 3:7-9 – we cannot persist in sin.
 - 4. 1 John 5:2-3 – this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.
 - 5. 1 John is about submitting to God’s will! WHEN we are obeying God and not living sinful lives (e.g. 1 John 2:15-16), we have every reason to believe

- v. For the most part, we KNOW when we sin.
- b. And we must be careful not to misjudge God –
 - i. God’s grace can forgive us when we sin. His grace is greater than our sins (cf. Romans 5:20-21), but NOTE that it is NOT license to sin (Romans 6:1-2ff, 1 John 3:7-9, etc.)
 - ii. He is not waiting for us to make one slip so that He can condemn us. He does not want us to perish – 2 Peter 3:9
 - iii. But He DOES expect us to strive to remain faithful to Him.
- c. Knowing we are saved is also about knowing His word. In His word we learn everything we need to be saved, to stay saved and to please Him. Acts 20:32 – the word of His grace is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among the sanctified.
- d. When we do sin, we need to take care of our sins.
 - i. The Bible gives us a clear path to obtaining forgiveness as believers.
 - ii. 1 John 1:9 – we confess our sins to Him.
 - iii. Acts 8:22 – we repent and pray for forgiveness
 - iv. 1 John 1:7 – we keep walking in the light.

In this lesson, we are reminded that in becoming Christians, we must realize that it is a commitment. Obeying the gospel is just the beginning. The rest of our lives belongs to Him. We must serve Him realizing that if we reject Him, He can and will cut us off. That keeps us on the “strait and narrow” path. What about you? Are you living your life for Him? Think about it!