

Convincing the Gainsayers

Salvation by Grace
kept by Grace

*Holding fast the faithful word as he hath
been taught, that he may be able by
sound doctrine both to exhort and to
convince the gainsayers.-Titus 1:9*

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As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. - Second Peter 3:16

When someone knocks on my door and begins to talk about religion, I tell them there are only two things worth talking about: (1) who saves us and (2) how we are saved. All other topics are meaningless if these two questions are answered wrong. Further, a right understanding of these two topics usually directs a person to the right answers for other topics. Following is a dialogue that I have compiled from different conversations and Bible studies. This conversation focuses on the most frequently used versus when debating salvation by grace and not works. The dialogue will walk you through answers to questions and verses, and when an important point is made, an explanation is given. I am confident that you will find this useful in your study and preparation to convince the gainsayers.

The dialogue is a single conversation from beginning to end, however, I divided it into topics to help you find and focus on the issue being debated. The bold paragraphs are my comments. The plain text is from the gainsayers.

Works vs obedience

The Bible teaches that salvation is by grace without works. In other words, we are saved because of the grace of Jesus Christ and not because of any good works that we do.

We agree that salvation is by grace. However, if we do not obey the commands of Christ, we will not be saved.

Are you telling me that salvation is by grace and works?

No. We are saying that salvation is by grace if we are obedient to Christ.

You do not consider obedience to God a work?

No.

What is the difference between a work and obedience?

A work is something you do under the law of Moses. Obedience is doing what Jesus commands you to do.

It sounds like the same thing expressed in different words to me. Give me an example.

A work was when Jews observed sacrificing lambs. Baptism is obedience.

Are you saying that baptism is a part of causing or contributing to your salvation?

[NOTE: This is a key point that will be raised again and represents the difference between grace and works]

Yes.

Is it possible to do a work today if you are not a Jew?

Yes.

Can you give me an example?

Well, if someone keeps any of the Jewish laws.

Was it a Jewish law to pray and read God's Word?

Yes.

Is praying and reading a law today?

Praying and reading the Bible are obedience, like baptism or believing.

So why would God consider praying a work under the Jewish law and not a work today?

Because it is something that Christ has asked us to do.

So when we do anything that God asks us to do through His Son Jesus Christ, it is not a work?

That's right.

That is a funny definition of works and obedience. If you study the word *works* in the Bible, you discover that a work is anything that a lost man can do. Besides committing sins, a lost man can pray, read his Bible, tithe, be helpful to others, and be baptized. In fact, the lost can baptize as well as be baptized. The only thing that a lost man does not do is believe, otherwise, he would be saved.

Why would an unbeliever be baptized? He wouldn't. So you see, baptism is not a work anymore than believing.

But lost people are baptized all the time and do many other wonderful and good works for God. Many people believe in God and even the devils believe in the person Jesus Christ because they (the devils) have seen Him and know Him.¹ However, they are lost because they do not believe in the work and promise of Jesus Christ alone to save them. They may say they believe in Jesus, but they are including reliance and trust on their works to earn His reward for salvation. They may believe in a God and refer to the name of Jesus Christ, but as the Lord points out in Matthew 7:21-23, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." It is obvious from this passage that people can do many good and wonderful works and still be lost. So, it is not correct to say that only believers will be baptized.

But these people were not actually doing wonderful works because as verse 21 points out, only those who do the will of the Father go to heaven. This verse says you have to do God's will. This tells us that you have to do something in order to be saved.

No it does not. Doing the will of the Father is to do nothing but believe in His Son Jesus Christ for salvation. The will of the Father is not that you rely on doing good works, such as baptism, in order to be saved. Jesus says in John 6:40, "this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will

raise him up at the last day.” God’s will is that you believe in Jesus Christ and rely on Him only, in order to be saved. Relying on the good things you do while saying you believe in Jesus Christ will not save you as Jesus points out in Matthew 7:23. This is why a work, such as baptism, is something the lost can do, and why the lost can say they believe in Jesus Christ but still be lost.

Believing: is not a work vs is a work

Believing is just as much a work as baptism. It is something that you do.

It is wrong to say that believing is a work because the Bible says it is not. Galatians 2:16 states that, “... a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ....” This verse says justification is not by works, it is by believing. Likewise, Romans 4:5 also states the same thing saying, “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Instead of works, believing is the way to be saved. In other words, the Bible says that believing is not a work. To say that believing is a work is to contradict the Bible.

We are not saying that believing is a work. It is obedience, and so is baptism.

You said that believing is just as much a work as baptism. You said this because it is obvious now based on Romans 4:5 that baptism is a work. A lost person can be baptized and still be lost.

Believing vs believing plus works

But if you believe, you will obey Christ. This is what salvation is all about. God saves you by grace if you obey Him, beginning with the first step of believing in Him.

In other words, you are saying that a person who believes in Jesus Christ will obey Him, which in turn, will result in salvation?

Yes.

This will not work. You are trying to combine grace and works together in order to be saved. This contradicts the Bible which says in Romans 11:6, “And if by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if *it be* of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.” According to this verse, salvation must be all grace or all works. The two cannot be combined.

We are not combing the two. This verse is saying grace and works cannot be combined, and we agree. Grace and obedience is how one is saved.

[NOTE: This is an attempt to go in circles after having already established that obedience is a work.]

But according to Matthew 7:22 & 23, obedience is a work. It is still something you do. This is why you claimed that believing is as much a work as baptism. However, the Bible says believing is not a work.

Faith without works is dead

But faith without works is dead. It is not enough to have faith alone. You must have works. James 2:14 says, “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?” and James 2:17 states, “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.” I am saying what the Bible says. Faith without works is dead.

This is very interesting. You began by telling me that salvation is not by works, and now you are saying that I cannot be saved without works. Which is it?

I mean obedience.

But you are referring to a verse that uses the word *works*.

You cannot argue with the Bible. Salvation is by faith plus works.

So, you really are saying that salvation requires works?

I am saying this is what the Bible says. Well, what do you think James 2:14 & 17 are saying?

[NOTE: The obedience definition is just a concealed attempt to persuade people to accept baptism for salvation without having to deal with the objection of works for salvation. When the issue is pressed, “works” verses will be used.]

James 2: 14 & 17 are saying that if you have a living, saving faith, people will see the evidence of that faith by your works. James is saying that works are evidences of faith because you are saved not in order to be saved. He is not saying that you are saved because of your works. Works are the resulting evidences because of a saving faith, not the cause of salvation.

But James asks can a workless faith save you, and he says that faith without works is dead. Do you think a dead faith can save you?

Of course not. But we must clarify that faith produces works, works does not produce faith. James is not saying that works make faith alive. For example, the evidence of life in a blade of grass is that it is green. Life in the blade of grass results in the color green. However, being the color green does make a dried blade of green colored grass alive. Likewise, a “live” faith will save you the instant you believe without any involvement of works. Works will result after you are already saved by faith. In contrast, having works will not save you and cannot produce faith or life. This is why a lost person described in Matthew 7:22-23 can have good works and do his best but still be lost. His good works cannot produce a living faith.

But if you do not have works you cannot be saved.

This is not what James is saying. He is saying, if you have a dead faith, you cannot be saved. The way James is putting it is that a faith that does not produce works is dead, and he questions whether a workless faith can save. He is focused on faith not works because it is by faith that you are saved, not by works.

But if you are not baptized, your faith is dead and you are not saved.

No. James does not list any specific works because it is not by works of any kind that we are saved. Just as works, like baptism, cannot cause a dead faith to be alive, failure to be baptized cannot cause your live faith to become dead. The absence of works, such as lacking compassion, raises questions in the minds of people, not in God's, about whether you have a living, saving faith. Nonetheless, lacking compassion does not cause your living faith to die or cause you to lose your salvation.

Justified by works and not by faith alone

James 2:20-24 clearly states, "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."

Are you saying that this verse means that one is saved by both faith and works just like Abraham was?

Yes.

Then, you have a contradiction between James 2:24 and Romans 11:6.

No. You have a contradiction.

Tell me then, what does Romans 11:6 mean to you?

I don't know at the moment. Tell me what you think James 2:20-24 is saying.

First, Romans 11:6 clearly states to me that if salvation is by grace, it cannot include works, or it is not grace.

But James 2:24 clearly states that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.

Well, I do not believe the Bible contradicts itself. Do you?

No.

Then one of us is interpreting the verse incorrectly. You say that James 2:24 means that a person is justified in the eyes of God by faith and works?

Yes.

And to you, this means that one is saved by God because He has both works and faith?

Yes.

You also believe that this passage is saying that Abraham was saved because he was justified in the eyes of God by his works?

Yes.

[NOTE: Restate their position clearly, even repeat it, so that there is no mistake that they are saying that one is justified and saved by God because of his works and not by his faith alone.]

Can you show me where in this passage that works justifies you in the eyes of God in order to be saved?

The whole passage says that Abraham was justified by works and that by works his faith was made perfect.

Let me share with you a different understanding of this passage. James 2:24 says that we are justified, not saved, by works and faith. James 2:24 also does not specify to whom we

are justified by works and faith. However, the context clarifies the meaning of this verse by saying in James 2:18, “Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.” It is clear that James is dealing with how one man proves to another man that he has faith. This has nothing to do with being justified in the eyes of God. If you say you have faith but do not have works as evidence of such, and I say that I have faith with the evidence of works, who is more believable? Anyone can say they have faith, but the proof of having faith, to other men not to God, is works. God does not need to see our works to be convinced that we have a “live” faith that can save us. He is already looking at our hearts. Faith justifies us in the eyes of God, and works justifies us in the eyes of men. That is what James 2:24 is talking about.

I disagree. I think it is saying that we are justified in the eyes of God by works and faith.

So, you insist that James 2:24 says that a person is saved by being justified in the eyes of God by works plus faith?

That is what it says.

So, God will judge our works, just as He did with Abraham, to determine whether or not to save us?

Yes.

O.K. I just wanted to make sure I understood exactly what you are saying. We have two different interpretations of this passage. One of us has been taught wrong, and I believe that Romans 4:2-6 can tell us the correct interpretation of James 2:24. It says, “For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.” For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.” This passage states that Abraham was not justified by works before God. It also says

that he was counted righteous because of his belief in God not because of works. Romans 4:4 says that works results in debt not grace, Romans 4:5 says that believing, not working, is the means whereby one is counted righteous, and Romans 4:6 quotes David saying that a man is blessed when God imputes to him righteousness without works. If Romans 4:2-6 clearly states that Abraham was not justified before God by works, then my interpretation of James 2 is correct. James 2:24 is not saying that you are saved by God because of faith and works. It is saying that you are justified as being righteous because of faith in the eyes of God, and because of works in the eyes of men. The issue of faith and works in James 2 has nothing to do with being saved by works. It is all about having works as evidence of already being saved in order to be convincing to others. By the way, Romans 4:24 concludes that everyone who follows Abraham's example of believing, without works, will be imputed with righteousness as well. Your interpretation of James 2:24 is that Abraham was justified in the eyes of God by works, but Romans 4:2 says works did not justify Abraham in God's eyes. Whoever taught you this interpretation is wrong. That interpretation contradicts both Romans 4:2-6 and Romans 11:6.

[Note: I redirect the accusation of interpretation to the teacher rather than the person I am talking to you. Direct confrontation involves ego, pride, and greater resistance to persuasion which cannot always be avoided regardless of your approach.]

Contradictions mean incorrect interpretations.

You are contradicting Scripture that say baptism is necessary for the remission of sins and other verses that say that works are needed to be saved.

Before we get into other verses, tell me what you think Romans 4:2-6 is saying?

I do not know at the moment.

Let me point out that I have interpreted Romans 4:2-6, Romans 11:6, and James 2:14-24 so that they do not contradict, and the interpretations are consistent with the passage contexts. You have not given me an explanation for Romans 4:2-6 or Romans 11:6 which both contradict your interpretation of James 2.

I have to give it more thought.

I hope you do. I have given them thought and am constrained to interpret all verses to be consistent with each other. Otherwise, I would have contradictions like you. Contradictions in verses means the interpretations of those verses are incorrect. Because my position of salvation by grace without works does not contradict Scripture, it is convincingly correct.

Baptism for remission of sins vs for gift of Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:38 says to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. Baptism is needed for salvation.

Actually, it says more than that. Acts 2:38 is Peter's answer to a question in Acts 2:37. After telling his audience about the church's experience of fulfilling of Joel's prophecy on the day of Pentecost, they asked what they must do to participate in the experience of fulfilling the prophecy as well. Peter then says, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." To be a part of the church experience, it was necessary to first be saved and second to be added to the church. Peter tells them what to do first, repent and be baptized, and then, second, he explains why, for remission of sins and to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Repentance was for remission of sins and baptism was for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

It does not say that. Peter clearly says that they must repent and be baptized for remission of sins.

You keep avoiding the gift of the Holy Ghost. He is explaining that to be a part of the church experience, they must repent for remission of sins first and then be baptized to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

But the Holy Ghost was a part of their salvation.

This gift of the Holy Ghost is described by Jesus in Acts 1:8 saying, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me....” This is what happened on the day of Pentecost, this is what the people were asking Peter about, and this is what Peter was describing. Every believer receives the Holy Ghost the moment he is saved, but there is an additional gift associated with the Holy Ghost given to believers who are baptized and added to a church.

I still think this is about salvation.

All right then, we need a verse to clarify which of our interpretations is correct. One of us is wrong. Did you ever notice in Acts 10:43 when Peter describes how to receive remission of sins only, that he mentions only believing saying, “that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” There is no mention of baptism for the remission of sins.

But he does command them to be baptized in Acts 10:48 after telling them to believe.

He does this because baptism is the first step a Christian should take. We are seeing the example of what Christians should do, not in order to be saved, but because they are already saved. This is why Peter did not mention baptism in his statement on receiving remission of sins. In Acts 16:30, the Roman jailer asked Paul, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” This is a very specific question about salvation, and the answer is very specific. “They said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” When the question or topic is specifically focused on salvation or remission of sins, only believing is mentioned. Baptism has nothing to do with it.

But the jailer was baptized afterwards.

Yes he was, and so was I, and so are many other Christians that have been saved. Baptism is important to the on-going spiritual development in our lives, but it contributes nothing to our salvation. My interpretation of Acts 2:38 is supported by Acts 10:48 and Acts 16:30. It is also consistent with Romans 4:1-6 and Romans 11:6 which you have no explanation for.

The choice to believe vs to be baptized

How then do you explain Mark 16:16 which says, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” This verse confirms my interpretation of Acts 2:38.

Mark 16:16 says more than what you quoted. It also says that, “but he that believeth not shall be damned.” The context of this passage is Christ’s commission to His church to reach the world with the Gospel. Jesus wants everyone to be saved and added to His church. We do this by believing and being baptized. However, only believing is necessary for salvation. Jesus clarifies His statement about the role of believing by saying that anyone who does not believe will be condemned. You will never find a statement in the Bible that says anyone who is not baptized will be condemned.

But it says, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Both are required for salvation.

So then, if a person believes and decides not to be baptized, he will not be saved?

Yes.

If that is true, then it is strange that Jesus did not warn about the failure to be baptized. He only warned about not believing.

That is because if you believe, you will be baptized.

[NOTE: This is an unwitting admission that believing alone is necessary for salvation. It is up to you to help them realize

what they are saying. You can do this by focusing on the ability of a believer to choose baptism.]

But you said that a believer can decide not to be baptized. He does not have to choose baptism.

What I said was that a person must believe and be baptized in order to be saved.

Saying that anyone who believes and is baptized is saved is similar to saying anyone who believes and rides a bike is saved, or anyone who believes and is a missionary is saved. The statements are correct. However, if you do not believe, you will not be saved. The importance of believing is stated very plainly. Unlike failing to believe, failing to be baptized does not result in being damned.

Jesus did not say anything about baptism because if you believe, you will be baptized.

Are you saying that a believer must choose to be baptized?

No, he does not have to choose to be baptized, but he will because he believes.

Then, it is possible to believe and not be baptized?

No. If person believes, he will obey Christ and will be baptized.

You are saying that he will be baptized, but he still has a choice not to?

Yes. He can choose not to believe, and then he will not be baptized. If he chooses not to be baptized, he is not believing and will not be saved. This is why Jesus speaks only of believing and not of baptism. It is unnecessary to say anything about baptism.

This would really mean, then, that believing only is the issue of salvation, not baptism or any other work because if you believe, you will do everything Christ asks you to do.

Well, baptism is a part of salvation because it must be done or you cannot be saved. Baptism leads to salvation.

But as you say, believing leads to baptism which, in turn, leads to salvation. Therefore, if you believe, you will be baptized, and if you do not believe you will not be baptized. So believing or not believing determines whether you are baptized or not and consequently whether or not you will be saved.

Yes, you can say that.

Then obedience to Christ or works really have nothing to do directly with salvation because that is a consequence of believing. Salvation hinges on believing alone. As long as you believe, you will be saved.

No. If you choose not to be baptized, you will not be saved.

[NOTE: This person is avoiding the conclusion that choosing to be baptized is really a choice to believe.]

Are you saying that a believer can choose not to be baptized?

No. As I said, if you believe, you will be baptized.

Then it really all boils down to believing just like Jesus said: if you do not believe you will be damned. This is why He does not mention baptism and why there is no verse in the Bible that warns of condemnation for failing to be baptized. The issue of salvation and condemnation is determined by belief.

[NOTE: Usually at this point they are ready to move on to another verse, but it is timely to apply the principle of believing, baptism, and salvation to obedience in general.]

Does obedience as a Christian stop with baptism?

No.

So then you would say that obedience to everything Christ has said is important to your salvation?

Yes. But if we do sin, we need to confess it and Christ forgives us.

Is it possible for a believer to choose to sin or to not obey?

Yes.

How is it possible that a believer will be baptized, but, at the same time, it is possible for a believer to not obey? Did you not say that baptism is obedience to Christ?

Perfection vs imperfection

The Bible names specific things that are required to be done in order to be saved. Baptism is one of those things.

Name a sin that you can commit and still go to heaven.

Not telling the truth in order to avoid hurting someone's feelings.

But the Bible says in Revelation 21:8 that all liars will have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone. Not telling the truth would make you a liar.

But the Lord understands the motive behind the lie.

Any kind of lie of any motivation is still a lie and makes you a liar. This is serious because James 2:10 says, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." One lie will send you to the fires of hell. In fact, one sin of any kind will send you the fires of hell.

God does not have those kind of standards for us. It would be ridiculous to expect us to be absolutely sinless. In fact, First John 1:8 says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

This is something we agree on. Everyone sins and there is none righteous. However, God does have a standard of perfection and requires perfection to get into heaven. Habbakuk 1:13 states of God, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity. God cannot look at sin. He cannot tolerate sin. He cannot be in its presence. So do you think He will allow sin or sinners into heaven just because of good intentions? Of course not. Revelations 21:27 says, "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they

which are written in the Lamb's book of life." Sin of any kind, even one sin, is an abomination to God. There is no sin in heaven. It is a perfect place. It is pure and holy. A righteous, holy God in a righteous holy dwelling will not allow even the smallest speck of sin into heaven.

That's impossible. No one is sinless.

You're right about the standard being impossible for us to achieve. In fact, Jesus said the same thing in Matthew 19:25-26, "When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." Psalm 119:1-3 affirms God's standard by saying, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways." In other words, those who are blessed of God do not sin.

You are contradicting First John 1:8 which says if you say you have no sin, you are deceived.

No. I agree with First John 1:8, and I agree with Psalm 119:1-3. Which one do you disagree with, or how do you explain Psalm 119:1-3 and Revelation 21:27?

I think that it is saying that we must do our best and not willfully sin.

So, you do not think the Bible means what it says? After all, it is saying the man blessed of God does not sin.

But common sense tells you that everyone sins, so that cannot be what it means.

But common sense is misleading because it only sees the physical explanation. God's Word tells us how to understand His plan without contradiction. Because God is righteous and holy, heaven is righteous and holy. There is no sin in heaven. First John 3:9 explains the born again experience that occurs in us when we are saved saying, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Because God is Spirit,

we are born again spiritually not physically. The body of flesh stays the same with the same old sinful nature. However, spiritually, we are changed and made righteous just like Abraham was (Romans 4:1-5; 4:24). This means that a saved person has two natures. In the flesh, he is sinful, but in the spirit, he is sinless. This is why Paul says in Romans 7: 22, “For I delight in the law of God after the inward man,” and in verse 7:18, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.” The unrighteous nature in the flesh wars against the righteous nature in the spirit. So then, as saved people, we are sinful in the flesh, but we are sinless in the spirit. Because the spirit is born again and righteous, it keeps the whole law regardless what our flesh does. Thus, when we die, the flesh stays in the ground, and the spirit goes to heaven. A sinful body is unfit to enter a sinless heaven. Jesus gives us a new, righteous body for heavenly living. So you see, God’s standard of sinlessness in heaven is real and uncompromised.

Saved now vs saved later

We are not made righteous until after we die when we receive the new glorified body.

According to First John 3:14, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” Knowing that we have passed from death unto life indicates that we know right now that we are saved. We are not waiting to pass from death into life. A person is saved the moment he believes. There is no waiting period. In John 3:18, Jesus says, “He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already.” This statement shows that as soon as one believes, he is no longer condemned. Also, in John 5:24, Jesus says, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” Believers have eternal life now, will never be condemned later, and are immediately passed into life from death.

Once saved always saved vs loss of salvation

Are you saying once saved, always saved?

Yes.

That is a dangerous doctrine because a person who thinks that way can get saved and live anyway he wants.

Not really. Christians are responsible for the way they live even though they will not lose their salvation. First Corinthians 3:11-15 describes the judgment of Christians. Verse eleven indicates that this passage is referring to saved people because they have a foundation built by Jesus Christ. Verses 12-15 describe how the works of these Christians will be judged. Verse fifteen says that a Christian will suffer loss for his carnal works, nonetheless, he will still be saved. The reason he is still saved, regardless of his carnal works, is because his life as a Christian rests on the foundation that Jesus Christ built which cannot be burned up. So you see, carnal Christians are not getting away with anything. They will be accountable for the way they live and suffer loss.

Do you think that a person can be saved and then murder someone and still go to heaven.

First of all, I would question whether the person was really saved. You are presenting a hypothetical situation. However, First Corinthians states very clearly that if his life is on the foundation of Jesus Christ, he will still be saved.

That does not make any sense. Someone could just get saved and then sin as much as he wants to.

The problem with this scenario is that you are describing a person who has no intentions of living for Christ. If he is just thinking about salvation as a way to gain fire insurance so he can sin without condemnation, he is not repented and therefore not saved. In contrast, when a person gives his life to Christ, he repents of his way of life and experiences a change spiritually. He gains new desires from the new born spirit within. He still has carnal desires in the flesh even as Paul described of himself in Romans 7:18-21, but when a person truly gives his life over

to Christ, he wants to live for Christ. He does not want to go out and murder people.

Sins of the flesh vs righteousness of the spirit

But Galatians 5:19-21 says that anyone who commits sins like fornication, murder, or drunkenness will not inherit the kingdom of God. Anyone who does these sins cannot go to heaven.

[NOTE: This is a good opportunity to show the standard of God under the law and how no one can go to heaven by trying to avoid sin in their lives under the law.]

I agree. As I said, God will not allow any sin of any kind in heaven. In fact, Galatians 5:20-21 lists other sins such as hatred, variance which is debating, emulations which is jealousy, and envyings. Jesus, in fact, went so far as saying in Matthew 5:22 that if you call someone a fool, you are in danger of hell fire. Also, in Matthew 5: 28-29, Jesus says that you are guilty of adultery if you just look at a woman with lust in your heart. Have you ever lusted, been angry, or jealous?

Everyone has at some point.

Jesus' advice, for those who want to live by works and obedience based on the law in order to go to heaven, is to pluck out their eyes rather than to be tempted to lust after a woman and go to hell.

But we can ask God to forgive us when we sin.

Even if you commit murder?

If you really mean it.

So then you are telling me that a person can commit murder and do whatever he wants as long as he asks God to forgive him?

[NOTE: This is their argument against “once saved always

saved.” Their doctrine does not protect them from this erroneous argument. The real issue here is being able to sin without responsibility.]

Murder is a really bad sin. It is unlikely that a murderer will repent.

According to Galatians 5:19-21, murder is not the only sin that will keep you out of heaven.

OK, so you are agreeing with me that committing these sins will keep you out of heaven?

Yes I am. But also remember that I explained that regardless of the sins in the body, the born again spirit does not sin. The born again, righteous spirit goes to heaven, but our physical bodies stay behind.

Are you saying that a person can commit murder and his spirit is not guilty.

Exactly.

That sounds crazy.

No. It is Bible. Remember Paul saying in Romans 7:22 that he delights in the law of God after the inward man? That born again spirit serves the law of God perfectly and flawlessly. The body, on the other hand, sins even when we do right (Romans 7:20-21). The body will die, but the spirit lives forever. That is why when the Bible says sinners will not enter into heaven, it is referring to anyone and anything that has not been born again. First John 3:9 says that whoever is born of God cannot sin.

But Romans 2:6 says God will render to every man according to his deeds, and Romans 2:13 says, “For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.” If you do not do the law and obey Christ, you will not be saved.

I agree. But this is why we must believe in Christ and rely on His work alone to save us. Only through Him are we born again and made righteous spiritually in our inward man. Only because He makes us righteous inwardly can our spirits do the whole law and qualify to go to heaven. The body is hopelessly doomed to death.

[NOTE: For this reason we have eternal security in our salvation. Having a righteous spirit means that it cannot sin. If it cannot sin, it cannot die. The wages of sin is death. The wages of righteousness is life. Once saved, always saved.]

Other verses that are used by some to argue that works are needed for salvation.

There are some verses that are commonly used by people who argue for salvation by works. As already pointed out, the argument for salvation by grace without works and the change that results in permanent salvation has already been demonstrated. To be consistent with the Bible, interpretations must not contradict the Bible. The explanations are categorized to show how verses can be explained using the same approach.

Verses of caution and exhortation to save yourself

First Timothy 4:16, Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

The word *saved* means to be delivered from something. A friend can save you from losing a game, from a bear attack, from financial ruin, or from a temptation to sin. In this case, Paul is telling Timothy to be careful and to guard the truth of his doctrines so that he and others he teaches will be saved from the deceit of seducing spirits and doctrine of devils which has caused some to depart from the faith (1 Timothy 4:1). If Timothy does this, he will be doing the work of being a good minister (First Timothy 4:6). This has nothing to do with their souls being saved from the fires of hell.

Verses on keeping God's commandments and not sinning to enter heaven

Revelation 22:14, Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.†

Hebrews 12:14, Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man

shall see the Lord:

Ephesians 5:5, For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Revelation 21:8, But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

John 3:15, Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

The qualification to enter into heaven is to be sinless and righteous. In such a condition, one fulfills the whole law and keeps all the commands of God. Because there is no sin in heaven, nothing less than perfection is tolerated. Of course this is an impossible standard for anyone to do, so God makes it possible to be imputed with His righteousness through the miracle of being born again by faith in His Son Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 3:21; 1 John 3:9). There is nothing we can do for ourselves or to gain reward from God for our efforts. We do not have the nature to please God. Righteousness to fulfill the law is a miracle that comes only by the grace of God and His work alone. For more explanation, refer to the previous explanations regarding “Perfection vs imperfection” and “Sins of the flesh vs righteousness of the spirit.”

Verses on overcoming and enduring unto the end

Revelation 2:11, He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

Revelation 3:12, Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

Revelation 21:7, He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

The explanation for these verses is found in First John 5:4-5. First John 5:4 defines who is an overcomer saying, “...whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that over- cometh

the world, even our faith.” And First John 5:5 explains how one becomes an overcomer saying, “Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” Believers overcome sin and death because of the work Jesus Christ does to make us righteous after the inward man. Once you are imputed with the righteousness of God (Romans 4:5-6; 23-24), your inward man serves the law of God perfectly and completely to the end. For more explanation, refer to the previous explanations regarding “Perfection vs imperfection” and “Sins of the flesh vs righteousness of the spirit.”

Matthew 24:13, But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. î

Mark 13:13, And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. î

Though some use these verses to imply that those who do not endure to the end will not be saved, it does not have that meaning. Jesus is promising to those who endure the hardships of the last days, during the reign of antichrist, that they will be saved. This is a true statement and an encouragement to be faithful and endure all the persecution that will come knowing that they possess salvation no matter what happens to them.

Verses of loss and punishment: salvation vs reward and privilege

Second Peter 2:20-22, For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

This refers to the life and judgment of carnal Christians. Instead of improving life in Christ and gaining heavenly rewards, a wayward Christian will be chastised of the Lord (Hebrews 12:5-8) and will suffer loss of reward (1 Corinthians 3:11-15). Under these conditions, a Christian is better off at the beginning of his Christian life before being chastised than after returning to his old ways under the chastisement of the Lord. Likewise, a Christian's initial gain of inheritance is better than the loss he will suffer for returning to a sinful life. Obviously, the loss is bad, but First Corinthians 3:15 reassures that the loss will not include one's salvation.

First John 5:16-17, If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death.

There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.

In this passage, we are encouraged to pray for brethren that are in danger of losing their physical lives as the consequence of sin. However, some sins, such as murder, are worthy of death. It is not right to pray for life if it is against fulfilling justice.

Revelation 22:19, And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

The key to understanding the book of life is in Revelation 3:5 which says, “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.” As previously explained, First John 5:4-5 defines an overcomer as one who is born of God by believing in Jesus Christ. Overcomers will not have their names blotted out of the book of life. So then, John’s solemn warning about altering the words of his inspired prophecy is to the lost who would try to change its message to their advantage. Of course, antichrist has, is, and will, nonetheless, make a futile attempt to alter the message and change the outcome. Psalm 69:28 shows that the unrighteous (those who have not trusted God for salvation) are blotted out the book of life saying, “Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.” In application to Christians (born again and made righteous), this warning would only refer to their loss described in First Corinthians 3:15.

Exodus 32:33 And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.

Paul describes in Romans 7:9 how he died spiritually by saying, “For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.” Up until the time of moral accountability to God, a child is alive, and, therefore, his name is written in the book of life. However, at the age of moral awareness, he becomes morally accountable to the law and dies by reason of committing sin. Consequently, his name is blotted out of the book of life until and if he turns to God for salvation. This is a good contrast between the results of works versus grace. Trying to live by works and obedience under the law to gain eternal life will only result in death and in being blotted out of the book of life. Salvation must come only by the grace of God which results in the born again experience and the eternal life that can never end (1John 5:4-5). For more explanation, refer to the “Verses on keeping God’s commandments and not sinning to enter heaven.”

Hebrews 12:16-17, Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

This verse is an exhortation to be strong in the Lord and to have a testimony that will minister to people. Failure to do so may result in others not coming to Christ. There may a potential Esau to influence who will turn to Christ before it is too late. Esau and Jacob were a contrast of law and grace. Esau, being the first born, was by law the rightful heir to the birthright of the promise land. However, he considered it a light thing and sold his interest in the birthright to his younger brother Jacob. After Jacob received the blessing, Esau cried for the blessing to be given to him, but it was too late. Likewise, the opportunity to be saved is before you die. Once you die, it is too late to escape the penalty of the law of sin and death. Our ministry to others must occur now before the lost die.

Hebrews 10:26-29, For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

Paul is comparing the responsibilities of members in the church with those who were a part of Israel. Israel was a nation whose relationship with God was governed by law. Their role in history and as a testimony to others was to show that a relationship with God based on law will fail. There is no way to please God by the feeble attempts of man to keep the law. Thus, as the old covenant spells out, they were cursed when they failed to obey the law which happened repeatedly and predictably throughout their history. The church, on the other hand, has the responsibility to be a testimony of what it means to have a relationship with God governed by grace. This is why the church does not have death penalties, stonings, and harsh penalties for sins, and this is why Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 that even the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Also, through faith in Christ, a Christian is born again. When Christ saves us, we are made righteous, and inwardly we cannot sin. But the only way for the world to know about this change is to see

how we live. The responsibility of a church member then is to show what it means to be saved, to show the perfect, enduring work of Jesus Christ in our lives. His work is perfect, and it will never change. Thus, Paul challenges us with the idea that if a sinner under the law in Israel was worthy of death which was expected, how more and greater punishment is a Christian worthy of who fails to maintain the testimony of the perfect, permanent work of Christ. Of course, we do sin, and no one has a perfect testimony in the flesh, so Christ exhorts us to practice church discipline with the goal of always being ready to forgive and to receive disciplined members back into fellowship (the testimony of grace and mercy). Nonetheless, Christians will indeed be judged by God with fire (1Corinthians 3:11-15), though their souls will still be saved. Why? Because the work of salvation is the perfect, unailing, permanent work of Jesus Christ.

Galatians 5:4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Paul is challenging the Galatians about accepting the false teaching that one must be saved by works of the law rather than by grace through faith. As he points out, if a person seeks to be justified by the works of the law, he is obligated to do the whole law (Galatians 5:3). But this is impossible to do and is a wrong way of thinking as he states in Galatians 2:16 saying, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Paul's statement on falling from grace refers to the change in their doctrinal position on justification from grace to works under the law, not their loss of salvation.

Matthew 12:31, Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

Mark 3:28-30, Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

These versus do not deal with losing salvation but rather with being saved in the first place. Blasphemy of the Holy Ghost is saying that Jesus Christ is of the Devil or that He is an unclean spirit. In order

to be saved, one must believe in Christ as the holy one of God, who is God, and the Savior. Apart from Him and acknowledging that He is holy and true, there is no forgiveness and no salvation (Acts 4:12).

Revelation 14:11-12, And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

Revelation 20:4, 4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Will there be Christians during the last days under the reign of the antichrist who will receive the mark of the beast? No. Revelation 13:8 says, “And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” Those who have their names written in the book of life will not take the beast’s mark.

Baptism: water vs conscience

First Peter 3:18-21, For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

This passage is easily understood by asking the question, was Noah bodily saved by the water or from the water? The watery flood was a means of destroying the lost and clearing the earth of the ungodly. Noah and his family were saved from the water by being inside the ark. The ark, not the water, is the typology of Jesus Christ.

Being in Christ saves us from the judgment of God. We enter into the safety of Christ by an answer of a good conscience not by the putting away of the filth of the flesh by water baptism. A study on *baptism* reveals that the doctrine of baptisms (Hebrews 6:2) includes several kinds of baptisms including baptism into water, baptism unto Moses in the cloud, baptism into Jesus Christ, baptism into fire, baptism in the Spirit, etc. Thus, we can conclude from Peter's clarification in First Peter 3:21 that the answer of a good conscience results in being baptized into Christ.

Parables: Doctrine vs illustration

Sometimes parables and stories are used to argue for the loss of salvation. However, parables are useful for illustrating doctrine not for proving doctrine. For example, in the story of the prodigal son, Luke 15:11-24, it is said by some that the prodigal son represents a child of God who loses his salvation. The same story is used by others to point out that the son squandered his inheritance on a carnal life-style, but his status as "son" never changed. His father received him back for that reason though the son lost his inheritance just as Christians do who choose to live a carnal life.

Verses showing salvation is not by works or law

Ephesians 2:8-9, For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Romans 11:6, And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

Second Timothy 1:9, Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

Titus 3:5, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to

his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

Romans 3:27, Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

Romans 3:28, Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

Galatians 2:16, Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Galatians 3:10, For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

Galatians 2:21, I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

Galatians 3:11, But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

Romans 6:14, For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Verses showing salvation is freely given by grace and mercy to those who believe

Romans 3:24, Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

Romans 3:26, To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Ephesians 2:5, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

Acts 15:11, But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

Luke 8:12, Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and

be saved.

Acts 16:31, And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

Romans 10:9, That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

John 3:15, That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

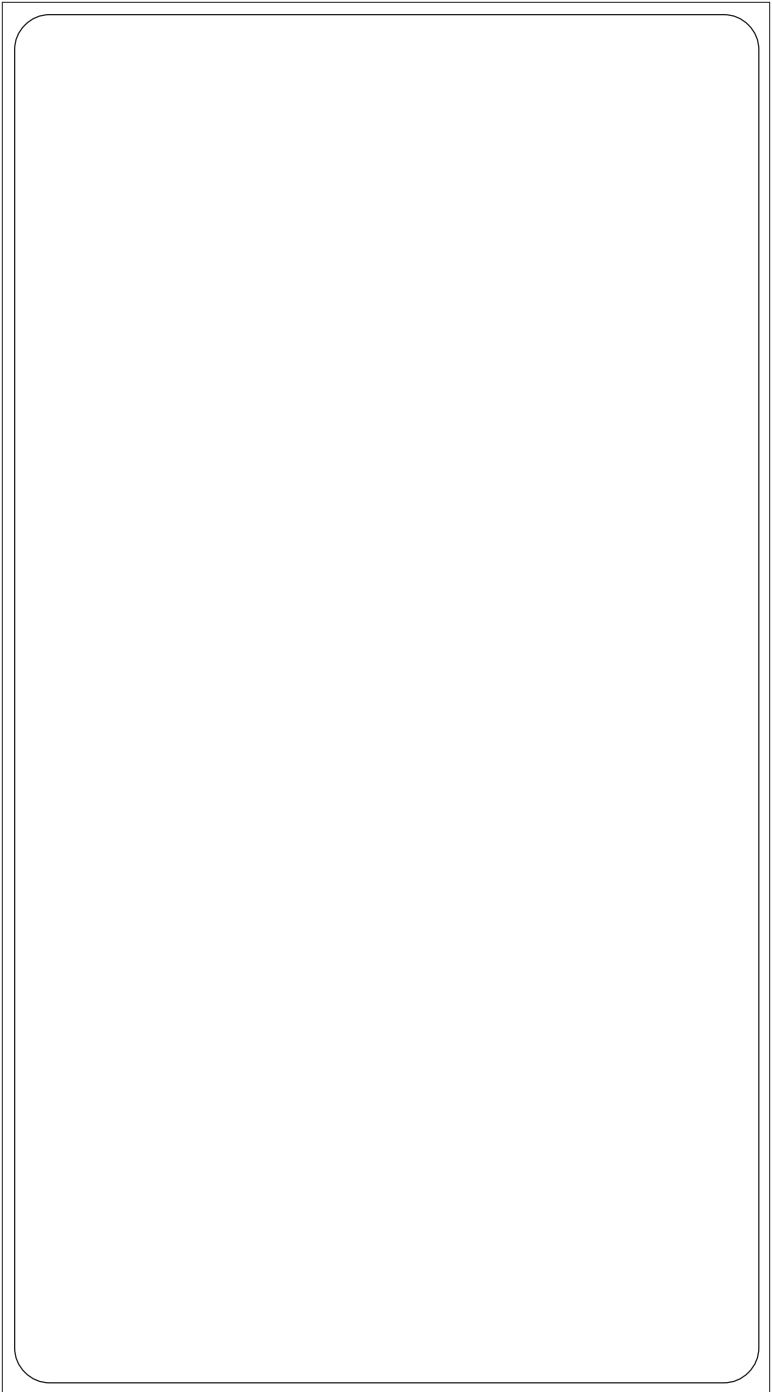
John 3:16, For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 3:17, For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

John 3:18, He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Notes

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