



Salvation Security And Apostacy

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Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 3 |
| Need for Salvation | 3 |
| God and His Commands..... | 3 |
| Man's sin | 3 |
| God's Justice | 4 |
| God's Love, Mercy and Grace | 4 |
| Salvation..... | 5 |
| Continuing in the Faith..... | 8 |
| Assurance of Salvation | 8 |
| Persevering | 8 |
| Apostacy..... | 9 |
| Theological Discussion on Apostacy | 10 |

Introduction

In looking at the topic of Salvation, the assurance of Salvation and Apostasy we need to start by looking at why salvation is even needed and what it is. Additionally, we find that the Scriptures look at the topic from many different angles and perspectives. To get a proper understanding, we need to look at these different perspectives and not get stuck in one viewpoint and miss the teaching of other Scriptures.

Need for Salvation

God and His Commands

While in Athens, Paul, as he was proclaiming the gospel, started by laying the foundation.

“The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; (Acts 17:24 LSB)

Since God made everything and since He is Lord, He is the only one that has the authority and power to proclaim truth, righteousness, justice and laws. In Genesis 1:28-29, Adam is given the instructions for his life. In Genesis 2:16-17, Adam is given a specific command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The consequence of disobedience is death. Death is twofold. First there is a physical death of the body. While Adam did not die immediately, he was now destined to die. Revelation gives us a better understanding of the second death, which is the spiritual death.

“But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and sexually immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part *will be* in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” (Rev. 21:8 LSB)

It must also be noted at this point that the second death in the lake of fire is not a cessation of the person's spirit or soul.

“And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (Matt. 25:46 LSB)

The second death is a separation from God and eternal punishment in the lake of fire.

Man's sin

The first sin of mankind is recorded in Genesis 3:1-7. Paul writes this on the topic:

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned — (Rom. 5:12 NAS95)

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Rom. 3:23 NAS95)

James also weighs in on the subject

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all. (James 2:10 NAS95)

“For the OT as a whole, then, sin is a legal and theological term for what is against the norm”.¹

This norm is the standard that God has established and He has stated the consequences of deviating from it.

God's Justice

Since God gave a command and stated the consequence of disobedience, His justice demands that the transgression must be punished. If God did not punish the disobedience, He would not be just. Since mankind has been condemned to death because of sin, he cannot redeem himself.

And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment, (Heb. 9:27 LSB)

(Gen. 18:26; Deut. 10:18; 32:4; Psa. 37:28; 89:14; 97:2; 111:7; Prov. 29:26; Is. 9:7; 30:18; 33:5; 51:4; Jer. 2:5; Zeph. 3:5; Rom. 3:26; 9:14, Gal. 2:16; 3:11).

God's Love, Mercy and Grace

Since God is so loving, He chose to pay the penalty for mankind's sin Himself.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16 LSB)

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 6:23 NAS95)

“In this way, it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish. (Matt. 18:14 LSB)

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. (2 Pet. 3:9 NAS95)

He made from one man every nation of mankind to inhabit all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; (Acts 17:26–27 LSB)

¹Bromiley, Geoffrey W., ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Abridged in One Volume*. Accordance electronic ed., version 2.1. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985.

Salvation

As we have just seen, since everyone has transgressed the law of God, the resultant judgement would be eternal punishment and separation from God. Salvation then is being saved from the judgement that we deserve.

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. (Rom. 5:9 NAS95)

Peter states in Acts:

“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12 LSB)

Now that we have looked at why we need salvation, we turn to “how do we obtain it”. While there are numerous verses on the subject, we will look at a few.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16 LSB)

“For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.” (John 6:40 LSB)

And Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38 LSB)

He saved us, not by works which we did in righteousness, but according to His mercy, through the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, (Titus 3:5 LSB)

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who draws near to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. (Heb. 11:6 LSB)

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9 LSB)

As we look at these verses, we can see that there are several aspects to salvation. While not all of them are mentioned in every verse, they are assumed. For example, when Jesus or Peter is speaking to the Jews, they do not have to establish who God is and what sin is, since their audience already knows this. When Paul is in Athens, he has to establish who God is before he continues on. Another important aspect is the definition of some words. For example, when it comes to the words “believe” or “faith”, we typically just think of mental assent. The Biblical usage is more involved. Believing that God exists, for example, does not get you anywhere.

You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. (James 2:19 LSB)

If you believe and have faith, your actions will show this. People will at times say that the teaching of Paul and James are at odds with each other.

for the demonstration of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. (Rom. 3:26–28 LSB)

What use is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? (James 2:14 LSB)

Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead by itself. (James 2:17 LSB)

But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? (James 2:20-21 LSB)

The reality of the situation is that if you have faith, the works will be the result of the faith. Works cannot save a person, since everyone is condemned because of sin. John explains:

By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; (1 John 2:3–4 NAS95)

Paul, in Romans 6:1-23 discusses how you are either a slave to sin or a slave to righteousness. Jesus said that you cannot serve two masters. You either serve God or wealth. (Matt 6:24)

Other verses also put repentance as part of the equation. Jesus was preaching repentance (Matt 4:17). Jesus told His disciples that:

“Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. (Luke 24:46–47 NAS95)

“Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. “So then, you will know them by their fruits. (Matt. 7:19–20 LSB)

Paul writes the following:

“Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent, (Acts 17:30 NAS95)

People cannot come to God on their own account:

“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. (John 6:44 LSB)

“For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.” (John 6:65 NAS95)

“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.” (John 12:32 NAS95)

He saved us, not by works which we did in righteousness, but according to His mercy, through the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, (Titus 3:5 LSB)

The writer of Hebrews in chapter 11 goes through a list of people that had faith and acted on that faith through which they were saved. He gives examples of:

- Abel offered a better sacrifice
- Enoch was taken up because of his faith
- Noah prepared the ark
- Abraham left his home and went to a place that God showed him
- Moses' parents hid him for three months
- The Israelites went through the Red Sea
- The walls of Jericho fell
- Rahab hid the spies
- Various judges and prophets all acted out of faith

Paul writes:

if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. (Rom. 10:9–10 NAS95)

Salvation then consists of the following:

- Acknowledging the true God that created the heavens and the earth
- Acknowledging our own sin and depravity
- Acknowledging that God's justice requires that the penalty for our sin must be paid
- Acknowledging that Jesus is the true son of God and that He died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins.
- Believing that Jesus was raised from the dead
- Accepting the payment and forgiveness that Jesus provided
- Repenting of our sins and striving to keep from sinning
- All of this is done by faith
- The regeneration or being “born anew” is done by God through His Spirit

Continuing in the Faith

Assurance of Salvation

There are several verses that assure us of our salvation and that nothing can separate us from God.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16 LSB)

and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish—ever; and no one will 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 the Father’s hand. (John 10:28–29 LSB)

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:38–39 LSB)

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:13 LSB)

For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day. (2 Tim. 1:12 NAS95)

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, (Eph. 1:13 NAS95)

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Eph. 4:30 LSB)

(John 3:36; 5:24; 6:47; 10:27–29; 11:25–26; Rom. 8:28–39; 2 Pet. 1:10; 1 John 2:23–25; 5:13)

Persevering

We are also reminded to persevere in the faith.

Now everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified. (1 Cor. 9:25–27 LSB)

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; (Phil. 2:12 NAS95)

to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; (Rom. 2:7 NAS95)

No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. (2 Tim. 2:4 LSB)

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, (Heb. 12:1 NAS95)

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; (2 Pet. 1:5–10 NAS95)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Gal. 5:22–23 NAS95)

In the book of Revelation, we have several references to enduring or overcoming to the end. (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:7)

Jesus gives a warning:

‘He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. (Rev. 3:5 NAS95)

Apostasy

This is a much-debated subject among theologians. As we look at this subject, there is a practical aspect and a theological aspect. The debate centers on whether or not someone can “lose” their salvation. It is frequently tied to assurance of salvation and “eternal security”. From a practical aspect, consider the following:

- The references for the assurance of salvation provided above guarantee that nothing can take our salvation away or separate us from God.

- Those that are afraid that they have “lost” their salvation, most likely have not, simply because their concern shows that the Spirit of God is still working in their lives and they are desiring to serve God.
- Those that are not concerned about their salvation have either, never been saved or, have rejected their salvation. So, practically speaking, it does not really matter if you say that the person was never saved or if they rejected their salvation because either way, they do not have eternal life.
- It may also be good to distinguish between “losing” your salvation and “rejecting” your salvation. Losing seems to refer more to an accidental “oops, I lost it”, whereas rejecting refers to a very conscious, calculated decision.
- Hebrews 6:6 makes it quite clear that there is no being saved, falling away and then coming back to faith. You can only be saved once.
- If we strive to follow Jesus and His commandments, then we are not in danger.

Just as there were false prophets in the Old Testament and religious leaders in the time of Jesus who were not teaching the truth or walking according to the truth, so there will be false teachers in the churches. There are many warnings given regarding false teachers. There are people in the churches who claim to be Christians but really are not.

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*. “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ (Matt. 7:21–22 NAS95)

(Deut. 13:1–3; Is. 9:15–16; Jer. 14:14–16; 28:15–17; Mic. 3:5–7; Matt. 7:15; 24:5, 24; Mark 12:38–40; 13:22; Acts 20:29; Rom. 16:17–18; 2 Cor. 11:13–15; Gal. 2:4; Phil. 3:2; Col. 2:8; 1 Tim. 4:1–3; 5:15; 6:21; 2 Tim. 2:17–18; 3:5–9, 13; 4:10; 2 Pet. 2:1–3; 3:17; 1 John 4:1; Jude 1:4)

Theological Discussion on Apostasy

As we have just seen, there are a number of passages that speak about our assurance of salvation and the sealing by the Holy Spirit. There are also a number of verses that seem to be quite clear that a believer can reject the faith. Hebrews 6:4–6 describes a believer that has “fallen away” and the impossibility for them to be brought back to repentance. Hebrews 10:26 affirms this. 2 Peter 2:20–21 speaks in a similar manner. Even Ezekiel 18:24 refers to a righteous man turning away and receiving death as judgement. Jesus in Matthew 10: 22, 24:10–13 also speaks about those that fall away and that those that endure to the end will be saved. In 1 Corinthians 9:27 Paul talks about not wanting to be disqualified. Paul in 1st and 2nd Timothy speaks several times about falling away or those who have “shipwrecked” their faith. Numbers 15:28–31 also addresses someone who is defiant and is therefore to be cut off and that his guilt will be on him. In rev 3:5, Jesus says that He will not erase the name of those that overcome from the book of life. This is actually a theme in the letters to the seven churches.

At the same time, we also need to look at some other passages. For example, Peter when he denied Jesus three times was not an apostate. Note that Jesus did say that He prayed that Peter's faith would not fail. We can also look at examples such as king David when he committed adultery and murder. He repented and was forgiven. Paul in Romans 7:15-25 discusses how from the spiritual perspective he wants to do good, yet because of sin, he is doing the things that he does not want to do and not doing the things that he does want to do. Paul in 1st Corinthians 3:13-15 discusses those who have the foundation of Christ. Some will not have works that will stand the test, but will themselves be saved, but have no reward. Those that build with works that will stand the test will receive their reward. This seems to be a parallel to the sower and the seed. The seed in the thorns would be like those building with works that will not stand.

As we look at all of these passages and the others that relate to eternal security and salvation, we can see that this is a somewhat complex issue. There are both promises of eternal security and warnings against falling away. We should therefore heed the warnings and press on toward the goal and not be complacent.

Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and choosing sure; for in doing these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.
(2 Pet. 1:10–11 LSB)

(Num. 15:27–31; Ezek. 18:24; Matt. 24:10–13; Luke 22:32; 1 Cor. 3:13–15; 1 Cor. 9:24–10:6; 1 Tim. 1:19; 4:1; 5:8; 6:10, 20–21; 2 Tim. 2:16–18; 4:10; Heb. 3:12; 6:4–6; 2 Pet. 2:20–21; 3:17; 1 John 2:18–19; Rev. 3:5; John 3:36; 5:24; 6:47; 10:27–29; 11:25–26; Rom. 8:28–39; 2 Pet. 1:10; 1 John 2:23–25; 5:13)