

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Paul Gunn, Pastor

Can a Person Lose their Salvation?

John 10:22-42

September 8, 2013

The primary points of today's message:

- Don't listen to the opinions of others; listen to God's word.
- Don't isolate scriptures; know God's word.
- Salvation is by faith not works.

INTRODUCTION

Last Sunday I talked about Jesus who is the way, the truth, and the life. That was a very back-to-the-basics message; however, it's important for us as believers to never forget the basics and to get back to the fundamentals of the faith. Everything that we do as a church grows out of those basics. So, today I want to follow up from that sermon about another topic—the security of salvation.

We're going to begin with a confession about the Bible. The purpose of this confession is to help us affirm the Bible as the Word of God. The Bible as the Word of God is alive and speaking to us today. We are living in a day of relativism. Basically, relativism means people believe whatever they want whenever they want to believe it. People borrow truths from this book or that book, whether it's a book of faith or not, and they string this together and throw that out and then put it all together in an incantation of things like some type of string of pearls of beliefs that may or may not be true. But that is not what the Bible is. The Bible is God's Word to us. We must learn it. We must wrestle with it.

ILLUSTRATION

I talked to a woman one time whose Bible was just torn up, and I said, "Wow! You must really read your Bible." She said, "No, I'll be honest. I've thrown it down a few times because I was wrestling with something that was said in it." Now, I'm not encouraging any of you to throw down your Bible, but the Bible is something that we must seek to understand. Some things in the Bible are very easy to understand;

some things are very difficult to understand, but it's important that we understand that God uses the Bible to mold us and to speak to us.

There was a little girl who, during her bedtime prayers, said, “Dear God thank you for my new baby brother, but what I really prayed for was a puppy.” Very often, we pray like that. We want to use God to do our bidding. It’s easy to misuse the Bible for our own purposes; so, here's the confession. I want you to listen first. Then, if you agree and want to say it with me, you can.

“The Bible it is the word of God. Every word of God is true. If the Bible says something that disagrees with my attitudes, my beliefs, my opinions, or my traditions, I will change, with the power of the Holy Spirit.”

I have a true/false test, five questions. Don’t say the answers out loud, but keep up with them.

True or false?

- My salvation depends on me doing more good than bad.
- If I sin, I must do something good to compensate in order to not lose my salvation.
- If a saved person sins but dies before asking for forgiveness of that sin, that person dies unforgiven.
- When Jesus saved me, all my sins are forgiven past, present, and future.
- If Jesus is the sin-bearer, then there is nothing we can do to earn salvation other than simple repentance and trust in Jesus.

Let’s review the answers.

- My salvation depends on me doing more good than bad. **FALSE**
- If I sin, I must do something good to compensate in order to not lose my salvation.—**FALSE**

- If a saved person sins but dies before asking for forgiveness of that sin, that person dies unforgiven. FALSE
- When Jesus saved me, all my sins are forgiven past, present, and future. TRUE
- If Jesus is the sin-bearer, then there is nothing we can do to earn salvation other than simple repentance and trust in Jesus. TRUE

SCRIPTURE John 10:22-42

²² Then came the Festival of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³ and Jesus was in the temple courts walking in Solomon's Colonnade. ²⁴ The Jews who were there gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly."

²⁵ Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name testify about me, ²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. ²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."

³¹ Again his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him, ³² but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?"

³³ "We are not stoning you for any good work," they replied, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."

³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are "gods"?' ³⁵ If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be set aside—³⁶ what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'?' ³⁷ Do not believe me unless I do the works of my Father. ³⁸ But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." ³⁹ Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp.

40 Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. There he stayed, 41 and many people came to him. They said, "Though John never performed a sign, all that John said about this man was true." 42 And in that place many believed in Jesus.

1-DON'T LISTEN TO THE OPINIONS OF OTHERS; LISTEN TO GOD'S WORD

EXPLANATION

No one can snatch God's children from his hand. Jesus said nobody can snatch them from his hand. He said no one can snatch them from the Father's hand, and he said, "I and my father are one." So, if Jesus's security is not enough for you, we have God's security. If you wrestle with your salvation and whether you can lose it, there may be some reasons for that as we see in Scripture. The first is the danger of listening to the opinions of others instead of Scripture.

In verse 26 we see that the Jews had all kinds of opinions, but Jesus said, "You're not my sheep. You don't believe because you're not my sheep, and you're not my sheep because you don't believe." These were people who knew the scripture and had lots of opinions about this Savior, but they didn't believe him. I've learned that God speaks through his word, and God speaks through people who are in his word.

ILLUSTRATION

Have you ever noticed how people get advice from the wrong crowd? Have you ever noticed how many celebrities give out relationship advice? People who have been married seven or eight times give relationship advice. I've observed how people who have financial problems tend to dish out financial advice. Obviously, we all can learn from our mistakes. We may take our mistakes and turn them into something good and encourage other people not to go down the same route that we've been down; however, wouldn't it be great to get advice from true subject matter experts. Wouldn't you rather have surgery by someone who's been successful at surgery than someone who has failed at surgery?

People talk about faith at work. People talk about faith at family gatherings. People talk about faith at the restaurant table. So, the topic of whether people can lose their salvation inevitably will come up at some time or other.

I've had numerous people in my office talking with me about this through the years. I've been at the bedside of people in the hospital who wanted to talk about this, and they always talk about someone else who has an opinion on the matter. Well, big deal. Did that friend who has this opinion that you can lose your salvation, did that friend die for your sins? Did that friend offer you eternal life and a home waiting for you after you die? It's important when you get advice on this topic and other topics, to get it from people who are who are in the word not just people spouting off opinions. We also have the danger of isolated scriptures.

2-DON'T ISOLATE SCRIPTURES; KNOW GOD'S WORD

EXPLANATION

In verse 33 the opponents of Jesus wanted to stone Jesus because they only knew isolated Scriptures, or they only wanted to bring out isolated scriptures. Jesus claimed to be God; they called that blasphemy. They just wanted to take a little bit and turn it to their advantage. It's very important that we not go with isolated scriptures but that we look at scripture as a whole. Here's an example of people who take a partial scripture on this subject.

Galatians 5:4 says, "You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace."

That scripture by itself makes it sound as if a person has lost their salvation, but what Paul is talking about here is when a person goes back to keeping the law in order to earn their salvation. They have fallen away from the place of grace and started following laws in order to try to earn their salvation. This is what the rest of the passage is talking about.

Why do people teach that you can lose your salvation? I think I have some answers. One is just ignorance. We are living in a day of biblical ignorance. Also, guilt sells. If I can get you to believe that your salvation is dependent on you doing something, then I can give you some suggestions on what those things are--like church

attendance, volunteering, or giving your money. Works-based salvation can make people do just about anything.

For example, there's this the “seed faith heresy.” TV evangelists talk about planting your seed faith. If you send money to that organization, then God's going to reward you, and they come up with scriptures. People listen to this heresy, and they believe it, and they send in their next paycheck or savings expecting God to reward them according to what that preacher is preaching on TV. When they find themselves still in poverty, many of them question their faith.

People also teach that you can lose your salvation because we want to believe that we can do something to make up for our wrongdoing. It makes us feel good about ourselves. If we do something wrong to someone, sometimes we go out of our way to try to make up for it by doing something good.

ILLUSTRATION

When I was a kid, on long, hot, boring Sunday afternoons I used to ride my bicycle to a place called Rocky Mound. There was a store in Rocky Mound that was closed on Sunday, but there was a vending machine outside of that store that had ice-cold sodas. Back then, they were 60 cents. So, I would make sure I had 60 cents before I got on my bicycle. I would ride to the store, and I would get my ice-cold grape soda. I would drink the grape soda, but then there was no trashcan, and I did not want to carry the can with me while I was on my bicycle. So, I would throw it in the ditch, and then when I got home, I would look for two cans to pick up somewhere else to make up for throwing away that can. We do little tricks like that all the time.

3-SALVATION IS BY FAITH NOT WORKS

EXPLANATION

You can spend your whole life trying to earn your salvation by works, but guess what? You will have wasted all of your money, all of your time, and your energy on nothing. We've got the encompassing nature of salvation right here. There are several words of finality, and, really, there's no questions about these words. Jesus said them with authority and finality. He said, “No one can take you from my hand or God's hand.” All of the lame attempts to do something to earn our salvation or to pay God back for it illustrates the pathetic nature of humans who think that we can

do something for ourselves in the spiritual realm. We can't. It's Jesus and nothing else.

SCRIPTURE Ephesians 2:8 9

God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹ Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

This scripture indicates past salvation. God saved you by His grace when you believed. The scriptures also talk about salvation in the present.

SCRIPTURE 1Corinthians 1:18

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

This verse says the message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction but we who are being saved know that it is the very power of God. And the scripture also talks about future salvation.

SCRIPTURE Hebrews 1:14

Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

EXPLANATION

Salvation is for the past, the present, and the future. When you were saved your sins from the past, your sins from the present, and your sins from the future were all forgiven. I was saved. I am saved. I will be saved. We are secure in Christ. When we confess our sins, the scripture tells us he's faithful and just to forgive us of our sins. He's already forgiven us of our sins. We continue to confess our sins to show humility and gratitude for the unconditional gift of salvation.

ILLUSTRATION

Imagine a person says everything's fine; I've earned my salvation. You're thinking, "I'm going to heaven. I'm going to heaven. I'm going to heaven. Oops, I did something I shouldn't have done. Now, I'm headed to hell. Now, I'm headed to hell. I prayed and asked for forgiveness. Now, I'm headed to heaven." This could drive someone insane.

Sometimes churches will define terms such as "erring" but not "sinning." They'll have lists of errings and list of sins, but I've got a question for you. Is this man's list, or is it God's list? Last time I checked, all imperfection is sin.

In Hebrews chapter 6, the Apostle Paul sets up a hypothetical situation. He says that if people could lose their salvation, then they would never be able to get it back because that would mean the work on the cross was not good enough and that Jesus would have to be crucified all over again.

Romans chapter 8 tells us that nothing can ever separate us from Christ's love—not hunger, not calamity, not persecution. Nothing can endanger it. Can death? No. Nothing can separate us from the love of God. We have an unconditional relationship.

SCRIPTURE 1 Peter 1:3-5

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

ILLUSTRATION

Inheritances are given. They are not earned. Before my dad died, he and I had a conversation on this topic. This was really one of his last conversations with me. He talked about a man who had an ungrateful son. The son lived a rebellious life, but when the father died, he still inherited everything. Why? Because of his birth. He

also talked about how people inherit other things they don't work for. Again, all because of birth. You see a person can be out of fellowship with the Lord, but a person can never be out of sonship. When you come into the family of God, you become his child, and since you are a child, you become his heir and a joint heir with Christ. Likewise, when we are God's children, we are his children.

Last night I called my youngest son into the bedroom. I wanted to talk to him. I said, "Matt, I want you to know that I love you, and you don't have to do anything to earn my love. I want you to do good things. I want you to be a good young man, but you don't have to do anything to earn my love." It had been a while since I told him that.

APPLICATION

This a group of people got a survey, and they were asked different questions. Within the survey were some questions about a person's earthly father. Later on in the survey, there were questions intermingled in the survey about a person's view of the heavenly father. The surveyors discovered that people tend to think of God in the same way they think of their earthly father. So, if the earthly father is strict and unloving, it makes children believe that they have to earn his love, and those children grow up to be people who think that of God. But if they had a warm, compassionate, loving, caring father who loves them unconditionally, they tend to think the same way of God.

If you struggle with assurance, it could be because you have a view of the heavenly Father that's not healthy because of the way you were raised in your home. If you struggle with assurance, however, it could be because you're not really saved. Here is a simple test that I have for you. Do you love Jesus perfectly? No, because none of us are perfect. Do you obey him 100% of the time? No, because humans struggle.

Do you have some affection for Jesus? Do you think of him as more than just a babe in a manger? Do you think about him, his work on the cross, and how you are so undeserving? If you have no affection for Jesus, if you have no thoughts about his saving work, then I seriously doubt if there has been any salvation at all. Assurance gives us confidence; I am his, and he is mine.

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Thanks to Jennifer Anderson for her editing assistance.

Sincerely, Paul Gunn
Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Nashville, Tennessee
USA