

Message 1

*It's not all about you***THE DILEMMA**

"Is it possible for me to lose my salvation?"

It bothers so many of us. There are so many differing opinions out there – each one claiming to be an accurate interpretation of what the Bible has to say on this matter.

So, it can be a little scary. We know the stakes. And the possibility of having got it wrong, haunts so many believers.

Do we *believe* that the Blood of Christ cleanses us from sin?

Absolutely - no problem *there* - just read **1 John 1:9**.

Do we accept that no-one can snatch us *away* from God?

Of *course*, we do - the Bible says so!

No one can snatch us out of the Father's hand. (**John 10:28-29**) makes that one *quite* clear
And just read **Romans 8:31-35**!

But this is where agreement ends, and doubts begin!

We hear so many things that can make us insecure - particularly if we're really struggling to live the lives we know we should.

When do we get saved?

Is it at a *particular point* in time - or does it develop *over* time?

Is it possible to stop believing and *lose* it all?

Can we *blow it* by persisting in wilful sin?

Or does that wilful sin show that we've *already* blown it in the *first* place?

After all - the tree is known by its *fruit*!

So - to extend that principle a little - can we forfeit Eternal Life - not just by *sinning* - but by being *unfruitful* and *unproductive* in our lives? Carelessly allowing our salvation to slip through our fingers - as **Hebrews 2:3** seems to suggest?

WHAT CAN WE AGREE UPON?

But before we examine the Scriptures to find out whether these fears have any basis in reality, Let's establish, right from the start, the things on which we can (and generally do) agree. What does the Bible have to say about eternal life that's beyond dispute?"

- *Two certainties*

1. **Eternal life is a *present possession***

It's *not* something we have to wait to receive;

It's *not* something we grow into;

And it's *not* something that develops gradually.

The Bible is very clear on this important aspect of our salvation. Entering a relationship with Jesus Christ – and so receiving the gift of Eternal Life - is something that happens at a particular point in our lives!

On one Sabbath day, Jesus defended himself before the Jewish leaders with these words:

*“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me **has** eternal life and will not be judged but **has crossed over from death to life.**” (John 5:24) (italics mine)*

Paul confirms this by using the past tense in his letter to the Ephesian church:

*“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, **made** us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions---it is by grace you **have been** saved.” (Ephesians 2:4-5) (italics mine)*

And finally, we read in the Roman epistle:

*“Therefore, since we **have been** justified through faith, we **have peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom **we have gained access** by faith into this grace **in which we now stand.**” (Romans 5:1-2) (italics mine)*

So that's quite clear! Salvation isn't something we're looking forward to - it's something that occurs *at one point in time*.

Therefore, you and I are either saved *right now* or we're *not saved at all!*

Now, what's the next thing we can agree on?

2. **Eternal is something that we can *know* we possess**

It appears that we can be *sure* that we have eternal life. God intends for us to have confidence - to be able to rest quietly in the knowledge and complete assurance of salvation - no shadow of a doubt!

John encourages all believers when he writes this in his first epistle:

"I write these things 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) (*italics mine*)

And Paul gives the reason for this assurance by explaining that:

"The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." (Romans 8:16)

And in his letter to Timothy, the apostle delivers the upshot of the Spirit's work in his stirring statement that:

"I know whom I have believed and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day." (2 Timothy 1:12) (*italics mine*)

- *But Is this confidence conditional?*

Some people would - of course - say that this confidence is conditional upon us showing the fruits of salvation in our lives.

They say, in other words, that we can be sure of our salvation *as long as we have it* - but that's still no guarantee that we can't *lose* it!

The question therefore remains:

Is it possible for me to *lose* my salvation?

Is it possible to *cease* being a Christian?

Can I be saved *one* minute - but lost the *next*?

THE NATURE OF ETERNAL LIFE

- *Scrapping the terminology*

It's very difficult to arrive at what the Bible actually says if we persist in using misleading and unbiblical terminology.

Losing your salvation is not a term used in Scripture at all!

And for *very good reason*!

Certainly, *salvation* is spoken of as a *gift* - but *not* as an *object*: a thing that can be dropped, given away or lost!

Have we sometimes lost sight of what happened when we first came to Christ as lost, ruined sinners?

We were inwardly transformed. By the terms of the new covenant, we were not only forgiven and cleansed from our sin, but we received a new heart and mind (*Jeremiah 31:33; John 12-13; 2 Corinthians 18*).

This gift is nothing less than the gift of new life - *Eternal Life*!

So, can you 'lose your Salvation'?

Well - what happens if you lose your *life*?
You *die*, of course!

Therefore, the real question should be this:

If a man is spiritually reborn (through the process of the new birth) - and consequently has *eternal life* - can he *die again*?

And that puts an entirely different complexion on things! It begs three vital questions:

1. Can a life be described as 'eternal' if it can *end* - and you can *die* again? Some people maintain that the word 'eternal' simply refers to the quality of that life (e.g., more abundant life [citing verses such as *John 10:10*]). This life is certainly abundant but the word 'eternal' (*aiōnios*) unequivocally means 'without beginning or end'; 'never to cease'; 'unending' (Strong's concordance (166)).

Christ is our life – so can *he* die again? When writing to the Galatian church, Paul made the point very clearly that it's not just the fact that Christ lives *in me*: it's the reality *that my spiritual life is actually that of Christ himself*. Imagine the flame of a candle being extinguished (that represents my natural self- dying) and then imagine that candle receiving the flame (i.e., the life of Christ) passed on from another candle (Christ himself). Separate candles but both burning with the same original flame (Christ lives in me).

But the second candle cannot fight from the first until its own original light has been extinguished: both flames cannot co-exist. In other words, Christ doesn't merely dwell in me – his life (spiritual nature) has replaced mine entirely!

Paul makes this very clear in his letter to the Galatian church:

“For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:19-20)

Now, if I were to 'lose' my salvation, that would mean that my new life in Christ would be suddenly extinguished. And what would take its place? Remember that our old self died with Christ on the Cross. Do you suppose that old nature could somehow rise again from the dead and replace the life of Christ? That you could be suddenly transformed from a child of God into a child of Adam again? What a stunning reversal of that would be!!

And the answer to both questions seems obvious. Because this eternal life (not a human life) into which the Christian has been spiritually reborn, is nothing less than the resurrected life of Christ himself. Using the same illustration we mentioned earlier, it's been transmitted to each one of us in much the same way as a flame from a candle can be passed down from one candle to another. Different candles but the same light! So, if Christ can't die again, then neither can the believer!

This is really the point that Paul makes when he explains:

*“Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*” (Romans 6:8-11) (italics mine)*

THE PURPOSE OF OUR SALVATION

Another thing clearly shows that we can't lose our salvation, is the reason for which we've been saved in the first place.

In the Garden of Eden, Satan had effectively stolen God's creation *from* him. We belonged to God - we were created differently from the animals. Mankind was His special creation - formed in His image so that He could enjoy fellowship with us forever - *loving* Him and being loved *by* Him for eternity.

Now you can't force a person to love you. The relationship for which God created us, had to be based on our willingness to fellowship with Him and to freely offer Him our love and devotion.

So in that sense - maintaining a relationship with God was man's responsibility. We were born with a self-determining free-will and this privilege and dignity is something God would never over-ride.

So, He had to risk losing us. He had to take the chance of us turning our backs on Him.

And that's *exactly* what happened!

Adam and Eve transferred their allegiance to Satan. They passed from God's control to Satan's authority.; taking the whole human race with them (see next message: 'Death in Adam')

But Satan wasn't going to win. God had a plan - a plan of Salvation - in order to regain what Satan had been allowed to steal from Him; a plan to repossess that which He had lost.

Luke 19:10: For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.

- *According to the purpose of His will*

But the Bible tells us that God “..works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will...” (*Ephesians 1:11*). Satan wasn't going to win. God had a plan - a plan of Salvation - in order to regain what Satan had been allowed to steal from Him. And that was the purpose for Christ's advent to this earth. God came to recover what was formerly belonged to Him. As Jesus said in the gospel of Luke:

“..the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.” (*Luke 19:10*)

And because man had been a willing accomplice in the theft, a genuine regaining of this possession would have to involve – not just a crushing of the adversary – but a regaining of man's trust and faith in God. Therefore, our return to Him would have to be an exercise of our free will - a reversal of what caused our rejection of God in the first place.

How did God recover His lost possession? Well, that's what *redemption* is all about!

- *The meaning of redemption*

In the Old Testament, the word translated "redeem" is *pādâh* and it means: 'to ransom', 'rescue', or 'deliver'. In the New testament, the usual word for 'redeem' is *lutrôō* (e.g., **1 Peter 1:17**) and it means 'to release on receipt of a ransom'; 'to liberate by the payment of a price' (*Strong's 3084*).

Another word translated 'redeem' is *exagorazō*. In the Roman world, the marketplace was called the *agora*. *Exagorazō* therefore literally means "out of the marketplace.", and It was typically used in reference to purchasing the freedom of a slave. According to Strong's Concordance, it means: 'To recover from the power of another', 'to ransom by paying a price'. *Exagorazō* is used only four times in the New Testament and is typically used twice to describe the releasing of Israel from the demands of the Law (**Galatians 3:13, 4:5**) and of the believer buying up every opportunity to witness for Christ (**Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 4:5**)

So, we are redeemed! Of course, being *recovered* or *ransomed* implies that we formerly belonged to someone else – who lost us and then paid a price to get us back.

(Even our English word 'redeem' conveys much the same meaning as it's derived from two Latin words (*re* ('again') + *emo* ('buy')); i.e., 'to buy again' or 'to buy back'.

Therefore, if I 'redeem' something, I'm paying a ransom price to recover something that belonged to me in the first place.

God did that. He once *owned* us because He *created* us. He then lost us when we sinned - so He set out to recover that which was lost to Him - to 'ransom' us; to 'buy us back' - to 'redeem' us.

And Peter in his first epistle, tells us that the currency God used to pay this ransom price for you and me was nothing less than the blood of Christ:

"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." (1 Peter 1:18-19)

We were redeemed from the slave-market of sin and are now twice-owned!

There's a story of a young boy who loved boats, ships and so on. So what his father did was to make him a beautiful model sailing ship with beautifully painted lines and wonderful silken sails. And it could float on the water. The little boy was delighted! Every

day he would go down to the river with his treasure clutched in his arms. There he would sit on the bank, place his little boat on the water and *watch* it float.

Then one day, everything changed. A sudden gust of wind whipped over the water and filled the little sails. The boy watched in horror as his little craft was snatched out of reach and scudded down the stream. Crying out, he tried to chase it down, but it was no use! His pride and joy was gone - lost and out of sight. He returned home - broken-hearted.

Several weeks later, the same little boy and his father were walking down the Main Street of their little town.

Suddenly the lad cried out, grabbed hold of his father's sleeve and pulled him towards a store window.

"Daddy" he cried, "Look! There's my boat".

Sure enough, in the store window was the very same little boat, proudly displaying what seemed to be a quite expensive price- tag. Someone had obviously recovered the little craft somewhere down the stream and placed it in the shop window for sale.

The little boy was beside himself.

"Daddy," he cried. "It's my boat. Can I have my boat back?"

His father didn't hesitate. He entered the shop, took out his wallet, and immediately paid the full asking-price for the boat and handed it to his son.

He had *redeemed* the boat. *Recovered* what was his and now the boat was twice owned. It was his because he made it - and became his again because he paid for it!

You and I are twice owned.

God created us - lost us and bought us back.

We are now His treasured possession - He purchased us. A transaction has taken place and the highest possible price was paid: the full asking price demanded by the law to free us from sin - the blood of Jesus Christ, God's only Son.

So, in writing to the Corinthian church, Paul says this"

"You are not your own; you were bought at a price." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

That's redemption!
Do we really appreciate t that?

We no longer belong to ourselves.

God paid the highest possible price to get us back.
We are now *His property!*

Wring to Titus, his young brother in the faith, Paul says that Christ:
gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. (Titus 2:14) (italics mine)

It's not all about us. It's not purely for our benefit.
We are now *His inheritance!*

This is how Paul describes us in this epistle to the Ephesian church:

"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people..."
(Ephesians 1:18)

As Israel was continually referred to as God's inheritance, we are now *His* spiritual people - *His* glorious inheritance - *His* new creation.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: Old things have gone, new things are here! 2 Corinthians 5:17:

We've already seen that in the first creation, *man* was responsible for maintaining fellowship with God and he failed.

But do you think that God will allow Satan to once again usurp Him successfully? To once again frustrate His purposes and steal away His possession? One that He paid for with the death of His Son?

And *that* would happen if just one believer were to lose his Salvation - because effectively Christ would have died again. Grace wouldn't be reigning through righteousness - sin would once again be reigning through death - at least in that one life)! (A death, by the way, which has been destroyed by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ).

Not a chance! Things are different now. In the new creation, the responsibility of maintaining our relationship with God is now *His* responsibility - not *ours*. And why? Because He bought us and we are *His* possession.

Remember1

You are *not your own*; you were bought at a price. *Corinthians 6:19b-20*

This involves ownership. We actually don't have the right to give ourselves away again - in any way shape or form. We're *God's* property!

A DIVINE TRANSACTION

As I said, our salvation consisted of God taking back what belonged to Him. And did so by paying the price for our freedom.

Now let's consider what actually happened at the *moment* of our salvation.

A transaction took place;
A deposit was paid on us;
 We were set aside as *His property*.

- *A divine transaction*

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- *The role of the Spirit: a deposit*

Paul, writing to the church in Ephesus, describes the Holy Spirit as:

"...a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession---to the praise of his glory." (Ephesians 1:14)

There's the guarantee. It's because a deposit has been paid - and this deposit is the Holy Spirit.

The word *deposit* here is the word: *arrhaboŏn*. It's a word of Hebrew origin and means: *a pledge* - that is, part of the purchase money or property *given in advance as security for the rest*. It's the money which, when a *purchase* takes place, is given as a *down payment* - in effect, a pledge that the full amount will subsequently be paid! Interestingly, the same word is used today to denote an engagement ring.

When you were saved - did you receive the Holy Spirit??

Of course, you did!

And if you *did* - then God's already paid a *deposit* on you.

The Holy Spirit *is* the *down payment*!

- *The role of the Spirit: a seal*

The Holy Spirit is also a *seal* on God's property!

In ancient times, when property was purchased, it was sealed by the new owner with his own distinctive mark - just like cattle was branded in the old West. This was to protect the goods and to ensure that nobody else could claim them or interfere with them.

In our case, we were also *branded* or *sealed*, just to make sure that we belonged to God - that no-one else could claim us.

When writing to the church in Ephesus, Paul said this:

“When you believed, (lit. ‘having believed’) you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.” (Ephesians 1:13) (brackets mine)

The words, *“marked with a seal”* are a translation of the Greek verb *‘sphragizō’* (‘to mark with a seal’; ‘set a seal upon’ [*Strong’s concordance*]) and this word is used thirteen times in the Bible. It means: *to stamp for security or preservation* – usually with a signet or private mark.

That happened *when you believed*!

It's not a *hope*; it's not a *promise*; It's a *done deal*!

It doesn't say: 'if you *continue* to believe'.

Having believed - the verb here is in what is called the *aorist* tense. It's a *one-time* process that's already been completed in your life if you've come to Christ!

You and I have been *sealed*. The seal signifies that the goods belong to the owner of the seal.

Remember - it's not all about you!
You're *His* property now.

And the *seal* (the Holy Spirit in our case) - is a guarantee that the goods will reach their destination in the same condition as they left! Nobody can get at you except by breaking the seal!

- *More than conquerors*

Is there something out there that is greater than the love of God? More effective than the blood of Christ? More powerful than the indwelling Holy Spirit? In his first epistle, the apostle John discusses the presence of the spirit of Antichrist in the world. There he concludes that the believer has overcome him. And why?

“...because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.” (1 John 4:3)

The Holy Spirit can't be overcome. He can't be ejected from the believer. In other words - the seal can't be broken. It's *His* seal - we are *His* property!

In fact, *His* seal is an absolute guarantee!! The Scripture is very clear about this!

“Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, *guaranteeing what is to come.*” (2 Corinthians 1:21-22) (*italics mine*)

How could our salvation be guaranteed if it was up to us in any way whatsoever? Adam and Eve were created perfect, in idyllic surroundings and in personal contact and communion with God every day. Yet they still blew it!

But God has purchased (redeemed) us and put His personal seal within us.

Make no mistake about this. If *one* sealed soul were to be lost, then the seal will have been broken! The promise and guarantee of God will have been made void!

And God is very serious about keeping His word. It abides forever. He warns us about making oaths because in doing so, we're undertaking something that only God Himself can do - absolutely guarantee the fulfilment of an oath.

- *Saved by Grace, through Faith*

In fact, God made certain that we couldn't blow it again - either as a new race or as individuals. In the next two messages, we'll see how we're protected as a race. For now - let's look at how He's further protected us as individuals - further *guaranteed* that we'll never die again!

It's found in Paul's letter to the Romans where the apostle writes these wonderful words:

"Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring-not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all." (Romans 4:16)

This verse is all about God ensuring that we *cannot* lose our salvation!

Notice what God has done! In order that our Salvation might be *guaranteed*, He made its acquisition dependent on faith alone (simply by us believing and accepting). By doing so, He ensured that Adam's sin could *never be repeated* – because *this time*, the responsibility for our salvation would be *taken out of our hands altogether*. In other words, He alone (in Christ) would be responsible for the maintenance of our relationship and so eternal life would now be available on the basis of grace alone (i.e., as a free gift).

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-not by works, so that no-one can boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

You think you might be able to lose your lose salvation by sinning?

Then think again. It only took one sin to sink the whole human race. So, if sin can possibly imperil your salvation, then you're too late! *You've already lost it* - with the first sin you committed after you got saved!

This is not playing with words! The only thing good enough for God is absolute and total perfection - or nothing at all!! We're either born anew with Christ's perfect righteousness attributed to us by faith – or we aren't. There's simply no 'in-between'.

And *He* guaranteed that - by imparting to us the perfect, victorious risen life of Christ by way of the new birth!

- *It's wages or it's a gift*

So, we can't sit on the fence with this one. And we need to decide under which system we're going to operate. The Bible only speaks of justification in two ways – by works or by faith. Under the system of reward (a wage paid) or a gift given. It can't be both!

“Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.” (*Romans 4:4-5*) (*italics mine*)

- *If God be for us*

And if one saved soul were to be lost:

- Satan would have won again!
- The deposit would have been lost!
- Good faith in purchase would be destroyed!
- And no power in universe can do that! God has His own plans for His possession.

Nothing and nobody are going to steal us away *again*. No power in the universe is going to thwart and frustrate *His* purposes!

Examine what is known as the Golden chain in Paul's letter to the Romans:

“. those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.” (*Romans 8:30*)

And so, Paul adds at the end of that chapter:

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (*Romans 8:38-39*)