

CAN WE LOSE OUR SALVATION?

The basic question we are looking at: is can we lose our salvation?,

I want to stress right at the start that the answer for us is NO.

If you want to be with Jesus, if you want to enjoy life to the full (rather than the damaged life we each experience before death), if you are on God's side, not satan's, then nothing can prevent you, nothing in this whole world:

Paul said it clearly: (Rom. 8 vv31,35,37-39). And so did Jesus in John 10 vv 27-30

Anything else that we read in the bible needs to be measured against verses like these. It is important to our approach is to remember that we can all find verses that seem to conflict with each other, so a good way to approach the Bible is this:

1. Know that Jesus is the centre of our faith (in him we see all we can see of God in human form), so his words have supreme authority when we are confused.
2. If you are confused in the rest of the New testament, test the passage against Jesus' teaching and actions.
3. Read the Old testament through the filter of Jesus; "You have heard it said...but I say to you..." We all know there are passages in the O.T, advocating violence, that conflict with Jesus' teaching. However do also recognise that the whole plan for our salvation is set out in the Old Testament, so never see it as less than God's word for us.

But there is much to puzzle us so let's tease out some of the underlying issues:-

WHAT ABOUT Hebrews 6 vv4-6? CAN WE REALLY BE BANISHED FROM GOD IF WE ARE LIKE THIS?

- Don't underestimate the charge in these verses – look at Heb 12 v17 (refs. to Gen 27 vv30-40 Esau cheating) – but also bear in mind that:-
- In Jewish culture there was a tendency to exaggerate to make a point (Lu.14 v26),
- Think of heroin addiction – many have said it's impossible to come off heroin. It is not true but it is desperately hard.
- For the addict the question is "do you want to stop?". For us the question is "do you want to be with Jesus etc?" In each case the answer is "it can be done" – don't forget the verses we have already looked at.

I WENT OFF THE RAILS FOR YEARS AND I AM NOW BACK WITH JESUS. HAVE I LEFT IT TOO LATE?

- Read Luke 15 vv20-24. When the son (who had effectively said 'I want you dead Dad' by asking for his inheritance) was a dot on the horizon what did his father do? Think why Jesus told this story.
- Can you doubt your welcome?

SUPPOSE I DENY JESUS UNDER TORTURE? OR WHAT IF I HAVE SINNED SO BADLY THAT I SURELY CAN'T BE FORGIVEN?

- What about Peter after Jesus' arrest? That was just about as bad as it gets - but read Jn. 21vv15-17
- We heard of the lost son returning just now. That love was there back in the Old testament where God declares his anger over Israel but still loves them; my heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. I will not carry out my fierce anger...for I am God not man...(Hosea 11 vv8-9).

- Also remember that we really are sons and daughters of our Father. Not just because of Adam & Eve but by God's deliberate choice of us: we are adopted 'as sons' (even women) and therefore we are heirs to all the family riches. Eph. 1 v5,

WHAT IS THE UNFORGIVABLE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT?

- That's in Matt. 12 v31. We cannot be sure what Jesus means but a fair stab would be to say it amounts to a total and unchanging rejection of Jesus and what he tells us about God and his love for us. Look at **verse 34** Jesus' audience were so unable to grasp even a hint of the good he was doing that they had claimed Jesus was working with the prince of demons.
- If we do persist like this it is our choice – not God's – and he will not override us: we have our own free will.
- If this worries you then it does not apply! You clearly care too much about Jesus.

Hold onto all that we have said so far - these questions don't fit neat boxes and the Bible passages we have already looked at also cover this.

MAYBE I WASN'T SAVED IN THE FIRST PLACE?

- Well, it is possible - I was not there to see - but the Bible rather works against it. Some people seem to hear the good news and respond but do not stay the course (see Matt. 13 vv20-21) but it seems as if they were not sown properly in the first place.
- Still unsure? Then simply pray right now 'Lord Jesus my life is committed to you, please forgive my past and dwell in me'. There are enough promises to guarantee that that is enough but you may well not get a special feeling, (some folk don't), but you will steadily become more secure in your faith.

WHAT ABOUT MY MUM, DAD, BEST FRIEND - HOW CAN I KNOW THEY WILL BE WITH JESUS?

- My personal touch: (photos of Tony, Jonny my three children and my mum).
- We don't know the answer and we actually do not need to know (John 21 v21). But God takes even the smallest sign of a move towards him as good enough- remember the lost son in the story.

CONCLUSION

As well as all the verses we have looked at we need to hold in mind the following verse which was central to the Reformation:-

1. At the centre of our faith is 'Justification by Faith' Romans 5 v9. **Since we have been justified by his blood how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him** (Jesus). It means that:-
2. We are declared acquitted of any guilt for our past lives and set free. We were not innocent but nothing we have done will ever be held against us – it is forgiven and forgotten. That declaration cannot be reversed.
3. There is a lot to take in from all this; do take a copy of my replies to the questions (the ones that I knew about beforehand), re-read the Bible passages and reflect on what I have said. If you are still unsure come and ask me or someone you are happy to talk to; we will help all we can.
4. We all need to continue to learn more about our faith so we are less likely to be thrown by a difficult verse (Hebrews 5 vv13-14 urges us to move off baby milk onto solid food). Do you use a help to read the Bible? – there are good aids available (ask Ruth Bird for help). Are you in a home group where you can talk about your uncertainties amongst friends? If not join one.
5. Lets listen again to **Romans 8 vv35-36a, 37-39**.