

"Once Saved, Always Saved" and "Faith Alone": Twin Lies

Perhaps you've noticed that those who preach "once saved, always saved" often preach "faith alone" as well. I'll explain why. But first, though, let's look at "once saved, always saved" and its premise: that we have been "saved" - done deal - in this mortal life.

The apostles looked at salvation differently. Paul told the Thessalonians that in this mortal life we have the hope of salvation, and are appointed to obtain salvation. He did not tell them they were already saved:

"But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 5:8,9).

Peter, speaking to the brethren about salvation for both Israelites and Gentiles, made a similar statement:

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

Did Peter tell them they had been saved? No. Peter spoke of salvation in the future for both themselves and for Gentiles.

So, what is the salvation they were talking about? Well, unless we receive the gift of eternal life we will perish in death, losing everything. Bottom line, salvation is about receiving the gift of eternal life. Paul and Peter both understood that we will receive that gift in the future, when Jesus returns. Paul described the receipt of eternal life at Jesus' return in 1 Corinthians 15:42-54 and in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17.

Peter wrote that we must remain in hope of the grace - the gift of eternal life - to be brought to us at Jesus' return or revelation:

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;" (1 Peter 1:13)

John wrote that we in this mortal life have the promise of eternal life. We will receive eternal life at Jesus' return; we're not saved yet:

"And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life" (1 John 2:25)

Now I want you to notice something Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans. Paul wrote that in this mortal life - now - we may be justified to God but are not yet saved. Justification and salvation are two different things, at different times:

"Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." (Paul, in Romans 5:9)

There it is again: shall be saved, in the future. But now in this mortal life, we can be justified, or in justification. So, what is justification? How can we be justified, or made right, or reconciled with God? Is justification permanent? Can it be lost? Every professing Christian should understand these things.

So, how do we enter justification? Well, our sins have separated us from God [Isaiah 59:1,2] and have also earned the "wages" of sin: death:

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

We've all sinned. We all need God's mercy. We are promised - promised - mercy. Here's how we can receive God's mercy:

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." (Proverbs 28:13; also see Isaiah 55:7)

Confessing and forsaking sin, turning from a life lived apart from God. That's repentance. Admitting you are a sinner is one thing, but it's "all talk, no action" without forsaking sin. Some people freely admit they are sinners but do not care about changing their behavior. That is anything but repentance.

So, how do we experience God's mercy? We experience God's mercy and His grace in several ways. First, if we'll come to repentance, our past sins will be erased. Our "slate" will be wiped clean. We will be "purged" from our "old sins" (2 Peter 1:9). We'll have "remission of sins that are past" (Romans 3:25). Our past sins will be "blotted out":

"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19, NKJV).

Note that our sins remain - not blotted out - until we come to repentance. Apparently - in spite of what many preachers today will tell you - our sins were NOT blotted out or paid for when Jesus died on the cross. You heard me right: our sins were not blotted out when Jesus died on the cross. Re-read Acts 3:19 if you are in doubt about that:

"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19, NKJV).

IF we'll come to repentance we'll receive God's mercy and grace in another way. We'll have redemption: redemption from the death penalty we've earned as the "wages" of our past sin. With His death on the cross, Jesus made a payment of our death penalty available for us. He made His own death available as a ransom payment, available to redeem us from the death penalty already earned for past sin. We can have that

redemption - by grace - if we'll come to repentance, turning from sin that earns the death penalty in the first place. Jesus' death didn't pay for mankind's sins: it made a payment available for mankind's sins. Huge - and important - difference.

Redemption is now available to all. Those who are repentant will receive redemption, by grace.

Outside of repentance, we receive no mercy and no grace and no redemption. We'll pay for our sins ourselves - by perishing in death as the "[wages](#)" of our own sin. That's why Jesus warned, "[except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish](#)":

["Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."](#) (Luke 13:4,5)

Now let's go back to Acts 3:19 one more time:

["Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord"](#) (Acts 3:19, NKJV).

If we'll come to repentance, the sins that had separated us from God will be "blotted out." And we'll no longer be under condemnation, having been redeemed from the death penalty earned for past sin. No longer separated from God by sin, and no longer under condemnation, we are now justified or reconciled or made right, with God. No longer separated from God, we can now begin "[times of refreshing](#)" that will come from "[the presence of the Lord](#)."

So how, exactly, would we be in "[the presence of the Lord](#)"? Through the gift of the holy spirit. The holy spirit is not received by "faith alone." The holy spirit is given to those who obey God's command to repent. Let's connect a few dots:

["And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent"](#) (Paul, in Acts 17:30)

["And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him."](#) (Peter, in Acts 5:32)

["Then Peter said unto them, 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."](#) (Acts 2:38)

Speaking of faith, what role does faith play in all this? In Ephesians 2:8 we read:

["For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God"](#) (Ephesians 2:8).

Unfortunately this verse is often misunderstood to mean that we receive saving grace if we simply have faith. But that's not what the verse says. We receive saving grace - including redemption, the holy spirit, then everlasting life - through faith, not just because we have faith.

It is through faith that we can "see" or realize that we have a real choice to make: to either come to God on His terms, or, to just continue with our old life. Faith that God exists and rewards is necessary for us to see or accept the choice is real, but it's the choice to come to God that matters. Even with faith we could choose not to come to God, preferring the distractions and comfort zones the world has to offer. That's dead faith. There IS such a thing as dead faith. Without faith we would not even see that the choice is real, and would never choose to come to God. Hebrews 11:6 explains:

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Hebrews 11:6)

It's coming to God, turning from a life lived apart from God, that matters. If we'll choose come to God on His terms our past sins will be erased. We'll have redemption - by grace - and we'll receive the gift of the holy spirit - by grace. And by grace we'll receive the promised gift of eternal life.

On the cross Jesus finished making a ransom available. But Jesus' work is not finished.

Through the holy spirit Jesus leads and guides us out of slavery to sin, overcoming slavery to sin. Jesus says:

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." (Jesus, in Revelation 3:19)

A relationship with Him ". . . yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Hebrews 12:11). This is how we are sanctified, made ready to receive the gift of eternal life. He is the potter, we are the clay. God wants family - sons and daughters - to live with Him forever. Those sons and daughters are being created, right now, through Jesus. Jesus says:

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

We do have free will, and we can choose to return to a life of sin, no longer abiding in Jesus, no longer being led through the holy spirit and no longer in repentance. Are we still justified anyway? No. If we return to a life of un-repentance and sin, we are once again separated from God by sin and are once again under the death penalty, just as we were before. We have left the "**narrow way**" that leads to eternal life.

Justification is not something that is done once and then remains in place perpetually and unconditionally. Justification is a present-active standing with God. We

must be in justification in order to receive the promised gift of eternal life and so be saved. The New Testament is full of warnings not to "fall away" from justification and not to "fail of the grace of God." Here are a few of those warnings.

Jesus warned what would happen if we do not abide in Him:

"If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."
(Jesus, in John 15:6)

Jesus did not say "once a branch, always a branch."

"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:" (2 Timothy 2:12)

In this mortal life we can enter justification with God, and have the hope and promise of salvation. But it is entirely possible for us - even after receiving the holy spirit - to return to sin and un-repentance and "fall away" from justification:

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,
If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." (Hebrews 6:4-6)

Peter wrote that if, after overcoming sin through knowing Jesus, a person then returns to sin, "the latter end is worse with them than the beginning":

"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.

For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." (2 Peter 2:20-22)

Hebrews 10:26,27 delivers the same warning about turning away from repentance and returning to a life of sin, no longer in justification to God:

"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." (Hebrews 10:26,27)

Jesus gave an example of what happens to a person who returns to a life of sin after entering a relationship with Him:

"But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;

The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers." (Luke 12:45,46)

"Once saved, always saved"? Apparently not. That servant had returned to sin and unrepentance, had "fallen away" from justification, and was going to perish without redemption. Were that servant's sins all paid for, - past present and future - when Jesus died on the cross? No. That servant was going to pay for his own sins.

The apostle Paul clearly understood that he could return to sin and become a "castaway" even after preaching to others:

"But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." (1 Corinthians 9:27)

The apostle Paul warned that we, even after being "grafted" into the "vine," could be "cut off" the vine, just as the "natural branches" - the Israelites - had been broken off:

"For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.

Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." (Romans 11:21,22).

Justification is not unconditional. It's about continuing in God's goodness.

Here's another example of "if" with conditions:

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:10,11)

Here is another "if" with conditions:

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be

hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;" (Hebrews 3:12-14)

Hebrews 4:1 provides this advice:

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." (Hebrews 4:1)

That sure sounds different from "eternal security" and "once saved, always saved," doesn't it?

Now you may be wondering, "what about all those verses that say we just have to believe?" Like John 3:16, where Jesus said:

"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 3:16)

Sure seems like we just have to have faith or trust, right? But on the other hand Jesus said "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:5). At first glance the verses appear to contradict each other, one saying just believe, but the other saying you'll perish unless you repent. Here's where it's important to understand that faith and believing are not the same. Faith is trust that this or that is true. Believing goes beyond faith: believing is acting on your faith.

Abraham's example illustrates the difference. Abraham acted on his faith. He obeyed and left for the promised land (Hebrews 11:8), and later offered Isaac. For his obedience through faith he was deemed to be a believer and was justified to God. His obedience was his works. The apostle James wrote:

"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."
(James 2:20-24)

Faith without works is dead. True believers are those who, through faith, choose to obey and come to God, obeying His command to repent. Then they receive - as promised - His mercy and grace. Their old sins are blotted out, they are redeemed from the death penalty earned for past sins and they receive the gift of the holy spirit. They have entered justification and are on the narrow way that leads to salvation: the gift of eternal life. By

understanding true believing, we have reconciled John 3:16 and Luke 13:5. We'll be saved from perishing by grace, received - as promised - by believers: those who through faith choose to obey and come to God on His terms, in repentance.

The "once saved, always saved" "faith alone" dogma is founded on the false premise that all our sins - "past, present and future" - were paid for and blotted out when Jesus died on the cross. Therefore, the reasoning goes, sin is no longer a salvation issue. Repentance is nice, they say, but not necessary because - after all - our sins have already been "paid for." All that's required now, they say, is to simply trust - "faith alone" - that that is true, and you'll be "saved," instantly. You'll always stay "saved" because your sin can never separate you from God; your sins have all been paid for. So "faith alone" has conveniently replaced repentance. And repentance even gets redefined to mean "change your mind" and just trust Jesus . . . instead of change your mind about continuing in sin.

What they are preaching is a different, perverted gospel which deceitfully replaces repentance with "faith alone." It denies all the scriptures warning about falling away and failing of the grace of God. It denies any need to "[give diligence to make our calling and election sure](#)" because you're already saved anyway, so there's no need to fear. Jesus "did it all for you on the cross," so sanctification is optional. Jesus overcame sin for you, so you no longer have to. Compare that to these verses from Jesus:

["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." \(Revelation 3:5\)](#)

["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." \(Revelation 2:11\)](#)

["He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." \(Revelation 21:7\)](#)

["To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." \(Revelation 3:21\)](#)

After His resurrection Jesus spoke to His disciples many times. He did not tell them to preach "faith alone" or "faith + nothing = salvation" or "just trust Jesus." He told them to preach repentance and remission of sins:

["Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,
And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:](#)

And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Luke 24:45-47)

The apostle Peter made it clear: we either come to repentance, or we perish:

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

No doubt many will be upset and offended by what I've said here. It's certainly not my intention to offend anyone. But it would be irresponsible - and unloving - for me to just sit back and say nothing. I stand by what I've said with a clear conscience. Spiritual warfare is raging around us. I hope what I've said will help others find their way out of the overgrown jungle of false doctrines surrounding us today.