

Choose This Day: The After of Salvation

For many people (paralleling many of their churches) there is little if any discussion or concern about what comes after salvation – it is like time stops after a person is saved, at least any meaningful responsibility for spiritual growth other than minimal church attendance when it is convenient, giving a little to the church and maybe telling others they are saved and that Jesus loves them.

“God loves us and Jesus Christ saved us” . . . “We are under grace not the Law” . . . *John 3:16* for many it is almost as if they are careful not to do any “good works” since they don’t want to appear legalistic or as if they are falling prey to the errors of the Galatians. Yet, in doing so, they fail to consider numerous verses that make it crystal clear that, while on the before side of salvation there are no works or Laws that are necessary or helpful to the free gift of God’s Grace, on the “after” side there are certainly necessary good works that confirm true salvation.

To those people and churches not aware of nor completing their after-salvation responsibilities:

Jesus said, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.”
Mt 22:29 & Mk 12:24

Jesus is the final judge of who is and isn’t saved, but He is the One who warned of many who profess to be “saved” and right with God while actually remaining unsaved. The history of the world, now and in the past, is that most people are religious and consider themselves “righteous” (right with God) when they are not – this is a key and consistent theme of the *Bible*, of the *New Testament* probably even more than the *Old Testament*. For example, Jesus replies to the highly religious folks (in the only use of the term “Lord, Lord” in the *Bible*):

“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.” Lk 6:46-49

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” Mt 7:21-23

Thus, we must understand the clear distinction between the Law and good works, both before and after true salvation. As said earlier, while on the before side of salvation there are no works or our keeping any Laws that are necessary or helpful to the free gift of God’s Grace, on the “after” side there are certainly necessary good works that confirm true salvation. As to the ceremonial Law, both before and after salvation we are warned:

All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” Clearly no one is justified before God by the law. Gal 3:10-11

But as with good works, God’s expectation and direction is that a sign of true faith is a respect for His moral laws.

Good works are much the same. Before salvation we are told:

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. ^{Ro 3:23}

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags. ^{Isa 64:6}

Nothing we can do in the way of good works, before salvation, is of any value in saving us! We have no hope of winning favor with, and thus being adopted by, God through impressing Him by keeping any Law (even His) or doing any good works. But when He has adopted (saved) us, like any good parent, He is serious about teaching and training us as bearers of His name. This is the growing in grace and knowledge spoken of that is the expectation, requirement and evidence of every true Christian! Any teaching separating salvation from sanctification is a false gospel we are warned about, in the *Bible*, over and over and over again:

Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever!

Amen. ^{2Pe 3:17-18}

The *Bible* also is a much clearer about “being saved” than we tend to be – Jesus said: “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again” ^{Jn 3:3} as a good analogy to the beginning of salvation that continues with our sanctification – the on-going living salvation until we die. This is God’s requirement that all must “continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.” ^{Phil 2:12-13} The dangers continue (and actually increase) after we are born again requiring on-going and growing Grace.

In the following verses, we also see our salvation continues after we are born again since “justified” (salvation) covers the period of being born again until we die and are finally and fully saved (glorification):

Those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. ^{Ro 8:29-30}

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. ^{Phil 1:3-5}

We know good works are expected of all Christians because this is specifically stated in the *Bible’s* salvation verses:

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. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. ^{Eph 2:8-10}

And more specifically, these are good works God prepared in advance precisely for each Christian (not general good works or those dictated by any church).

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms. ^{2Pe 4:10}

The Christian religion is the ultimate and true religion because it is the only religion in which God is so personal – just as we have unique fingerprints and DNA profiles we are God’s unique workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us individually and uniquely to do and for which He promises:

God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. ^{2Co 9:8}

In effect, these are God’s good works set aside for us to do so He must communicate them to us personally and give us all we need (time, money, talent . . .) to do them “richly.” And even further, there will be clear evidence that these goods deeds are done “through God” since they are, in essence, miracles.

Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God. ^{Jn 3:21}

So that we can and should periodically:

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you – unless, of course, you fail the test? ^{2Co 13:5}

Yes, there is a well-defined *Bible* after-salvation responsibility to:

Let us live up to what we have already attained. ^{Phil 3:17}

Jesus provided a parable foreseeing and correcting the current and historical error of supposed salvation without the evidence of after salvation life (sanctification leading to and necessary for glorification):

“What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work today in the vineyard.’

“‘I will not,’ he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.

“Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I will, sir,’ but he did not go.

“Which of the two did what his father wanted?”

“The first,” they answered.

Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.” ^{Mt 21:28-32}

From a practical standpoint we need to ask:

- Do we take advantage of how God most often speak to us personally in His salvation, both in being born again and sanctification? For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. ^{1Pe 1:23} Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. ^{Jn 17:17} And when He speaks to us apart from the *Bible*, we must still know Bible truth since the *Bible* is the foundation and framework of everything God says to us.
- Have we seen, in the past, God working with and through us to do good works obviously planned in advance for us?

- Are we seeing miracles (that which is clearly beyond our personal abilities to do) occurring in our lives?
- Are we growing in the Grace and knowledge of Christ? Are we eager (and increasingly so) to know what He promises us in His Word – promises of purpose, provision and protection we simply cannot live without?

Our Hope?

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints – the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit [completion of the good works of God] and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God’s grace in all its truth. You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Col 1:3-14

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world [be born again – saved] caused by evil desires.

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2Pe 1:3-11

. . . for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. 1Pe 1:9

Nothing in heaven or earth can compare to the eternal and infinite Grace of God’s salvation – as such it is not something we can afford to be in error about through failing to take advantage of what God offers us now to value, take and secure forever!