

Sinless Perfection

"Be holy, because I am holy".

(1 Pet. 1:16)

There are two extreme beliefs regarding salvation.

1) The belief that saved people are sinlessly perfect.

2) The belief that once saved, sin is no longer an issue regarding salvation.

In this article, I would like to show that we are not expected to live a sinless life to get to heaven but we must live a holy life.

Sinless perfection

Even the Apostle John did not consider himself to be sinless and in fact he said that he would have been deceived to think that he was. In 1 John 1:8 he said, "*If we [any Christian including himself] claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us*". A few verses later, in 1 John 2:1, he said that he was writing to us so that we would not sin and said, "*But if anybody does sin, we [again including himself] have one who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One*". So, we can see that saying we must be sinless to be saved is not scriptural.

Regarding heaven, Rev. 21:27 does say that "*nothing impure will ever enter it*" but this does not mean that we have to live a perfectly sinless life to be pure. 1 John 1:9 tells us that if we confess our sins then we will be forgiven and 1 John 1:7 says, "*if we walk in the light ... the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin*". So, as we confess our sins and walk in the light the blood of Jesus makes us pure and fit for heaven.

Once Saved Always Saved

The Once Saved doctrine says that if a truly saved person enters into an unholy lifestyle and does not repent then he will still get to heaven. This can't be true as Heb. 12:14 tells us that "*without holiness no one will see the Lord*". We are only holy, righteous, as we practice righteousness. Righteousness is not something we can hold on to or save up like money in the bank. 1 John 3:7-8 (NASB) say, "*Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil ...*". John is telling us not to be deceived into thinking that we can get away with sinful living because we are only righteous if we practice righteousness; those who practice sin are of the devil. Living righteously is simply walking in the light and confessing our sins whenever the Holy Spirit convicts us.

Repentance

Many people say that if we have to do anything to be saved then we are working for our salvation and I'm sure we all agree. However, repenting of sin is not works, it is a command and the very heart of salvation. To get saved, a person must be willing to repent and no one considers that to be works. So, because it is not works to repent to get saved then it can't be works to repent after we are saved. No verse says that our future sins are forgiven so if we don't confess and repent of the sins we commit after being saved then we won't be forgiven those sins.

Struggling with sin

A point to note is that there is a very clear distinction between occasional sin and a wilfully sinful lifestyle. As shown earlier, Christians are not perfect. They may sin occasionally, perhaps out of weakness, but confession brings forgiveness. However, living in an unrepentant lifestyle of habitual sin puts a believer's salvation at stake.

Some believers struggle with sin, even for a long period. The fact that they are struggling shows God that they have a repentant heart but don't yet have the self control to stop because they don't hate the sin enough. God will strengthen them to resist when they hate their sin like He does. This struggle can't be compared with being comfortable in a sinful lifestyle and saying, "Well, that's me. I'm just human". This is denying the Divine Power of the Holy Spirit to deliver us from sin and such an attitude can have a fatal result.

Summing it up, salvation lies between the two extremes of sinless perfection and once saved always saved. Sinless perfection is not the standard for getting to heaven and refusing to repent of sin is a sure ticket to hell. To be holy and righteous in God's eyes we need to walk in the light and humbly repent whenever we sin. When we sin, we lose God's peace but when we repent, God returns His peace. Living a holy, repentant life brings God's peace and an absolute assurance of heaven.

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Mick Alexander
Email: leeandmick@gmail.com
Website: www.ChristianIssues.biz