CAN YOU LOSE YOUR SALVATION?

A. Introduction: In this series we are looking at who Jesus is and why He came into this world, according to the New Testament. The New Testament was written by eyewitnesses (or close associates of eyewitnesses), men who walked and talked with Jesus, saw Him die, and then saw Him alive again.

1. False ideas about Jesus abound today. It has become increasingly common to hear people say that Jesus came to bring peace to this world and to teach us to love each other. Others say that He came to improve society, bring in social justice, and show us a better way to live. None of these ideas are correct.

a. Jesus came into this world to save sinners from the penalty and power of sin, and open the way for men and women to be restored to their created purpose—to become holy, righteous sons and daughters of God through faith in Him. I Tim 1:15; Luke 19:10

b. Jesus came into this world to die as a sacrifice for sin. On the basis of His sacrifice, when a person acknowledges Jesus as Savior and Lord, that person is declared righteous—no longer guilty of sin. Heb 2:14-15; I John 4:9-10; Rom 5:1

1. Jesus' sacrifice so thoroughly cleanses us from the guilt of sin that God can deal with us as though we never sinned, and indwell us by His Spirit and life. We become actual sons and daughters of God who partake of the eternal, uncreated life in Him. John 3:16; I John 5:11-12

2. John 1:12-13—But to all who believed him and accepted him (Jesus) he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn! This is not a physical rebirth resulting from human passion or plan—this rebirth comes from God (NLT).

c. There is no salvation from the guilt and penalty of sin apart from Jesus, because His sacrifice is the only remedy for our condition. John 14:6; I Tim 2:5-6; John 8:24; etc.

1. In the last two lessons we dealt with some objections people raise against the idea that Jesus is the only way to be restored to relationship with God. We addressed several questions.

2. What about people who live in countries where the name of Jesus is not known? What about people who lived before Jesus was born? How could a loving and all-powerful God let anyone be eternally sentenced to Hell?

A. We pointed out that everyone receives enough light to respond to God in a saving way through the witness of creation and the witness of conscience. Rom 1:20; Rom 2:14-15

B. And we looked at instances where God made Himself known to men prior to the Cross. When they responded to the light they were given, the Lord was able to declare them righteous on the basis of the sacrifice of Jesus that was still to come. Rom 3:25

3. Last week we explained that Hell is an administration of justice. The fact that the wicked will be forever separated from God's family is an expression of His love. Chaos and corruption will continue in this world throughout eternity if those who refuse God, His standard of righteousness, and His transforming power are permitted to return to earth.

2. In this lesson, we're going to consider several other issues that come out of not understanding why Jesus came to earth and what He accomplished through the Cross.

a. Is it possible to get to Heaven, and even though you thought you were saved, you find out you can't stay because you've done something from which there is no coming back? What about people who asked Jesus into their heart but then live ungodly lives? Are they saved?

b. For a moment, let's forget what we think we know about these issues and look at what the New Testament writers (the eyewitnesses) wrote about the salvation from sin that Jesus died to provide.

B. Jesus began His public ministry with these words: The time is fulfilled (has come); the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel (Mark 1:15, KJV). Note two key points: repent and believe.

1. Jesus was born into first century Judaism (the nation of Israel). Based on the writings of the prophets,

first century Israel expected the Lord to establish His kingdom on earth. Dan 2:44; Dan 7:27; etc. a. They also knew that only the righteous can enter God's kingdom, and that repentance from sin is a necessary Ps 24:3-4; Ps 51:3-4; Jer 8:6; etc.). Repentance is more than sorrow or regret over sin. The Greek word that is translated repentance means to change one's mind or purpose.

b. Jesus' ministry was preceded by John the Baptist who urged people to repent and prepare for the coming of the kingdom of God through ceremonial cleansing (baptism). John told them: You must prove your repentance by a changed life (Matt 3:8, TPT).

1. First century believers knew that true repentance is expressed through a changed life. What they didn't know, until after Jesus' resurrection, was the fullness of the good news (or gospel) He came to bring.

2. Jesus was going to open the way into God's kingdom by dying as the once for all, final sacrifice for sin, and transform repentant sinners into holy, righteous sons and daughters of God.

2. Once Jesus' sacrifice was complete (His death and resurrection), He sent His eyewitnesses (the apostles) out to preach this full revelation of the gospel. Paul (an eyewitnesses) gave a precise definition of the gospel—or what men and women must believe to be saved from sin's penalty and power.

a. I Cor 15:1-4—Let me remind you, dear brothers and sisters, of the Good News (gospel) I preached to you…Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day as the Scriptures said (NLT).

1. In another letter Paul wrote: For I am not ashamed of this Good News (gospel) about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—Jews first, and also Gentiles. This Good News (gospel) tells us how God makes us right in his sight (Rom 1:16-17, NLT).

2. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation because when you believe it (Jesus died for sin and rose from the dead), God can declare you righteous (no longer guilty of sin) and make you His son or daughter by indwelling you with His life and Spirit.

b. Salvation is more than something you get—it's something you become. We will discuss this in greater detail in upcoming lessons. But for now, note this point.

1. When a man or woman believes the facts of the gospel and is born of God, an inward transformation occurs. He or she receives the uncreated life of God (His Spirit) in their innermost being (their spirit) and becomes a son or daughter of God by a new or second birth.

2. This inward change is the beginning of a process of transformation that will ultimately affect every part of our being (mind, emotions, and body) until we are fully restored to all that God intended us to be before sin damaged His family. The condition of our spirit (born of God) becomes the basis of our identity.

A. I John 5:1—Everyone who believes—adheres to, trusts in and relies [on the fact]—that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, is a born-again child of God (Amp).

B. I John 3:1-2—Consider the incredible love that the Father has shown us in allowing us to be called "children of God"—and that is not just we are called, but what we are (Phillips).

3. Jesus died to deliver us from sin, change the direction of our lives, and to change and restore us. He died to turn us from something (sin) to something (living for Him as holy, righteous sons and daughters).

C. The problem today is that there are multitudes of people who say they believe in Jesus, but there's been no real change in them or their lifestyle. They profess to be saved but their behavior does not reflect it. Then there are those that start out strong and fall away. This brings up the question: What is their status?

1. These issues didn't come up in the first century in the same way that they do now. You were either in or out because, to follow Jesus, you had to make a conscious decision to come out of Temple worship and sacrifices or to come out of idol worship and all its immorality.

a. Over the centuries, the original gospel message has splintered into different ideas about what it takes

to be saved, what it means to be a Christian, and what it looks like to live a holy life. Numerous denominations have developed with conflicting views on key issues.

b. Adding to this in our day, is the sad fact that in recent years, there has been a de-emphasis on solid Bible teaching in many Christian circles, and the gospel isn't clearly presented in many churches.

1. The message has been watered down to: Let Jesus fix your problems and make you successful in this life. But that's not the gospel that the first Christians believed and preached. 2. I'm not saying that serving Jesus won't give you a better life materially (it may or may not).

But the gospel presented in the New Testament is: All people are guilty of sin before God (bad news). But Jesus died to pay for sin so that your guilt can be removed (good news). Now, repent (turn from sin) and believe the good news (acknowledge Jesus as Savior and Lord).

2. And, all too often in our day, sincere and well meaning people present the gospel as: Just ask Jesus into your heart and you'll be saved. I realize that this is the message that many of you responded to when you gave your heart to Jesus. But there are some problems with it.

a. Number one, our culture has become so debased in the last few decades as our culture has moved away from clear standards of morality (based on Judeo-Christian ethics) that many people no longer see their guilt or need for salvation from sin.

b. Number two, that's not the gospel message presented in the New Testament. In one of Peter's early sermons he said: Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out (Acts 3:19, KJV). The Greek word translated converted means to turn toward something.

1. Because the gospel isn't clearly preached, we have people who profess to be Christians, but have never been truly converted—turned from sin toward God.

2. It's common to hear it said that Jesus can be your Savior, even if you haven't yet made Him your Lord. However, there's nothing like that in the New Testament. If Jesus is not your Lord, then He's not your Savior. Rom 10:9-10

3. True conversion begins with repentance or a decision to turn from living for self (doing what you want your way) to living for the Lord (doing what He wants His way). This requires a genuine effort to turn from behaviors that the Lord considers sinful.

3. I realize that this gets a little tricky because none of us are yet fully transformed in every part of our being. None of us live perfect lives yet, and what we do doesn't always match what we profess.

a. There is a growth process that takes place once we are converted, as we learn how to express outwardly the inward commitment and changes we've. Our minds must be renewed to what godly, acceptable behavior looks like for a follower of Jesus. And that takes time and effort. Rom 12:1-2 b. We're all at different stages of growth and development as we grow from brand new believers to full maturity in Christ. Some of us are climbing out of deeper holes than others. Everyone's rate of progress is different. God sees hearts. Is it your desire to obey and glorify God no matter what?

1. We don't have time tonight for a full discussion of this issue. The point for now is that need to be sure that we understand what the gospel is, and what it means to be a follower of Jesus, so that we don't inadvertently mislead people when we have opportunities to talk about Jesus.

2. And, we need to make sure that, as much as is possible, our behavior matches what we profess. Paul wrote this to a group that had a number of people engaged in unacceptable behaviors:

Examine yourselves to see if your faith is really genuine. Test yourselves. If you cannot tell that Jesus Christ is among you (in you), it means you have failed the test (II Cor 13:5, NLT).

D. On the other hand, many sincere Christians live with insecurity about their relationship with the Lord because they're painfully aware of their flaws and shortcomings. And others worry that when they die, they'll be rejected by the Lord because they've committed an unpardonable sin.

1. Much of this fear comes from Bible verses that are taken out of context. Let's examine several of them.

a. Matt 7:21-23—Jesus said that there will be those who come to Him claiming to have done

wonderful works in His name. But He will send them away because He never knew them. Jesus wasn't talking to or about committed Christians who sometimes struggle with sin.

1. In this teaching (the Sermon on the Mount), one of Jesus' primary goals was to expose the false righteousness preached and practiced by the religious leaders of that day—the Pharisees, scribes, and Sadducees who rejected Him and turned Him over to the Romans to be crucified.
2. Those men will one day face Jesus and claim to have done the works of God. He will say to them: Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness (Matt 7:23—NASB).

b. Heb 6:4-6; Heb10:26-27—Paul wrote about a willful sin for which there is no more sacrifice, and no repentance. He was writing to Jewish believers who were being pressured to return to Temple worship under the Law of Moses. To do so, they had to repudiate Christ and His blood sacrifice.

1. Paul wrote this epistle to encourage and exhort them to stay faithful to Jesus no matter what. In the context of the letter, the sin he urged them not to commit was rejecting Jesus.
2. This is the sin for which there is no repentance because, if you reject Jesus and His sacrifice, you have rejected the only means through which salvation from sin is possible.

2. People talk about losing your salvation. You can't lose your salvation, like money that falls out of your pocket and you don't know it's gone. Losing your salvation is not New Testament language. Instead the New Testament speaks of continuing in the faith and holding fast to what you believe.

a. When Paul reminded people of the gospel he preached he said, "By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain" (I Cor 15:2, NIV).

1. This message (Jesus died for your sins and rose again) saves you if you remain faithful to Him and continue to believe. He stays faithful to you if you stay faithful to Him.
2. Faith can be in vain (without reason or effect) if you believed something that was not true in the first place (a different gospel), or if you didn't truly repent, believe, and be converted.

b. Paul wrote: God has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus (Col 1:19-20)—As a result, (Jesus) has brought you into the very presence of God, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault. But you must continue to believe this truth and stand firmly in it. Don't drift away from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News (Col 1:22-23, NLT).

E. Conclusion: I can't address every issue that this topic brings up because we all know people whose lives don't reflect what they say (or said) they believe, and people who started in the faith, but have not continued. Each has their own circumstance and story. As I said earlier, God sees hearts and knows things that I don't.

1. My purpose in this lesson is to help you understand what the Bible says about salvation, and encourage you to read the New Testament for yourself (regularly and systematically) so that you know what it says.
2. Jesus died to deliver us from sin, change the direction of our lives, and to change and restore us. He died to turn us from something (sin) to something (living for Him).

a. II Cor 5:15—He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live to please themselves. Instead, they will live to please Christ, who died and was raised for them (NLT).

b. Titus 2:11—(Jesus) gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us his very own people, totally committed to doing what is right (NLT).

3. If your heart is set on serving Jesus, here is His promise to you: And now, all glory to God, who is able to keep you from stumbling, and who will bring you into his glorious presence innocent of sin and with great joy (Jude 24). Much more next week!