



Working Out Our Salvation with Fear and Trembling

I was having lunch with a friend a few days ago when the topic of assurance of our salvation came up. She asked if I was sure I am saved, and how a person could be sure. Good topic – very timely, I'd say.

I told her that these verses in Matthew had haunted me for the first decade of my walk with Christ: ²² *Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'* ²³ *And then I will declare to them, 'I*

never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.' Matthew 7:22-23

I would constantly think about what I would do if “on that day” Jesus said He “never knew me.” What would I do? How can I be sure He “knows me?” Do you ever have those thoughts?

I find it most interesting that the people I think should be the least worried about this usually are, and the opposite, the ones that probably should be, aren't. I suppose it is a good thing I am not the judge.

This one tripped me up for a while: *“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”* John 14:15

And then there's this one that comes at the end of the beatitudes: *“Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”* Matthew 5:48

You see we are instructed to “obey” and “do the will of the Father” and “keep His commandments” and “be perfect.” Those are tall orders to be sure. If we don't do these things, does it mean we aren't saved? Let's look at them a little more closely and consider a few things.

1 As with many statements in the Scriptures, viewpoint makes all the difference. Let's consider the last one first (Matthew 5:48) *“Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*

At first it seems to be a command (one that we, in the flesh, can in no way achieve). **Is God unfair?** Does He give commands that we cannot obey? Absolutely NOT! To infer that is slander. So, what if we looked at it in a few other translations to see if they shed a bit more light on it (this is always a good idea, by the way).

The one quoted above is from the NASB 1995 translation. I looked it up in a few other translations and found:

Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. New King James

Therefore you shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. New American Standard

You, therefore, will be perfect [growing into spiritual maturity both in mind and character, actively integrating godly values into your daily life], as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Amplified

There seem to be as many translations that suggest a “**command**” as those that show it to be a **future tense reality**.

Another thing to consider is the word “perfect.” In the original Greek, the word is teleioi from the word telos which means complete. **The word “perfect” is not intended to imply sinless perfection. Rather, it suggests completeness, maturity.** James 1:4 provides information about this word: *“But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be **perfect (mature) and complete, lacking nothing.**”* As you view this verse from translation to translation you will find the word *perfect* often translated as *mature*.

Does this make more sense? When we put the two thoughts together, we find that we are **expected to grow in maturity and completeness and will achieve it someday.**

2 Let’s look at the next one: *“If you love Me, **you will keep My commandments.**”* John 14:15

We find that same issue of translation – they seem to go back and forth between what seems like a command: *“If you love me, **keep my commands**”.* NIV + others and a result of something: *“If you love Me, **you will keep My commandments.**”* NASB + Others – as if to say that if you love Him, you will automatically keep His commandments.

The Apostle John maintains this theme throughout his books:

*“Whoever has **My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me.**”* John 14:15

*Jesus replied, “**If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word.** My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.”* John 14:23

*If you keep My commandments, **you will remain in My love,** just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and remain in His love.* John 15:10

*By this we can be sure that **we have come to know Him: if we keep His commandments.*** 1 John 2:3

*For this is **the love of God, that we keep His commandments.** And His commandments are not burdensome,* 1 John 5:3

***And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments.** This is the very commandment you have heard from the beginning, that you must walk in love.* 2 John 1:6

What are we to conclude from these? To keep (which means to obey) His commandments demonstrates that we “know” and love Him and keeps us in His love as well.

3 We circle back to the “I never knew you” issue. The answer to this problem is stated in the verse just before: *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but **he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.**”* Matthew 7:21

I don't know about you but just this small sample of verses seems, on the surface, pretty bleak to me. Am I doomed? Are you doomed? Praise His Holy Name – NO! You see, it is **the Holy Spirit that starts the process in the first place!** Look at the graphic (you may download it [here](#) to be better able to see it).

It is **the Holy Spirit that calls us out of the Domain of Darkness**, give us a new spirit and places the Righteousness of Christ on us. This is our starting point. We then **move through the Sanctification process**, *working out our salvation with fear and trembling* (Philippians 2:12-13) as we move toward the **day of our Glorification** (at our death or rapture). **BUT we don't (and can't) do this on our own, in our own power of our flesh.**

*"I am convinced and confident of this very thing, that **He who has begun a good work in you will [continue to] perfect and complete** it until the day of Christ Jesus [the time of His return]." Philippians 1:6 Amplified (note those words perfect and complete)*

The Holy Spirit starts the job and continues to work throughout our lifetime. It is our responsibility to submit and cooperate with Him.

Here's a few more:

*"**He will sustain you to the end, so that you will be blameless** on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 1:8*

*"...so that you may be able to test and prove what is best and **may be pure and blameless** for the day of Christ," Philippians 1:10*

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Take a look at the graphic. Where are you in the process? Are you moving forward?

We all begin in Satan's domain (the Domain of Darkness, Colossians 1:13).

Throughout our lifetime the Holy Spirit will, from time-to-time, lift the blinders from our eyes so we can see our own sinfulness and need for a Savior. It is as if we can see a light in the distance, but we are still in the darkness.

IF we respond with belief and acceptance, we are immediately rescued from the Domain of Darkness into the Kingdom of Light. This JUSTIFICATION is when we get to "wear" the righteousness of our Lord, Jesus, until we get our own.

Even though we are immediately given a new clean spirit, our body and mind are yet to be changed. So, for a while, our sinful habits and attitudes follow us. They should be apparent (and abhorrent) to us.

SANCTIFICATION is the process where, through cooperation and submission to the work with the Holy Spirit, we are progressively saved and freed from slavery to sin. We should recognize this as happening to us as we cooperate and submit. We should have less and less desire to sin and sinful thoughts and actions should decrease in our daily lives.

We are instructed (commanded actually) to work daily on this process with the Holy Spirit as our teacher and guide. We do this through prayer, asking Him to change us to be like Him, and through practice. If this is not happening to you, I'd ask yourself "why?" and seek Biblical counsel.

GLORIFICATION happens (immediately) at the end of our lives (through death or rapture). At that time we are finally totally freed from the bondage of sin. We get new fresh minds and bodies that mesh with our new spirit, never again to sin against our God. Halleluiah!

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Watch in the days ahead for a BoBlog with a fairly easy way to know if you are "growing in Christ Jesus."

Maranatha my friends!