

Two Sides of Salvation and the Christian Life

There have always been two scriptural concepts that may seem to be at odds, but of course are not, because God will never contradict himself. These are divine sovereignty and human responsibility. This lesson will show seven ways in which we see God's working and our response, working together for his glory and our eternal good.

1. **God has given us eternal life through Christ, and that salvation is totally secure, yet we have a responsibility to endure.**

Jn. 10:28-29 – “And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.”

Mt. 24:12-3 – “And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end shall be saved.”

Sadly, many will not endure to the end, and thus show that they were never God's elect.

2. **God will complete what he has started in us, but we need to “work out our own salvation”.**

Phl. 1:6 – “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

What a comfort to our souls! He doesn't just save us and allow us to remain the same. He wants us to grow in Christ, and so the Holy Spirit does a continuing work to bring us into conformity with Christ, to be like him. Yet this change is not automatic. Our part is to yield to him and allow ourselves to be changed, but to realize that it is not really us changing ourselves. It is God motivating and directing us in this “metamorphosis”.

Rom. 12:1-2 says we are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, not being conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. It is our place to surrender to him, and it is his place to actually change us.

Phl. 2:12-13 – “...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

These two places in Philippians show two sides of our salvation, which are commonly known as preservation and perseverance. To some people they appear contradictory but really are not. Preservation refers to the fact that God is preserving and keeping us from falling. Perseverance speaks of our responsibility to stay in the faith and maintain our confession and pursuit of God and a holy life. Believing that God is preserving us and will eventually receive us to glory, while we make no effort to live the Christian life, is to deceive ourselves. Conversely, concentrating on our own perseverance through self-determination and religious discipline, apart from God's upholding, is a form of “works religion”, whereby we are trying to earn God's acceptance. It ends in failure and discouragement. We cannot persevere without God's preservation.

3. **We must “keep ourselves in the love of God”, but it is God that keeps us from falling.**

Another place in scripture that presents preservation and perseverance, not in opposition, but complementary, is at the end of Jude.

Jude 20-21 – “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

Here we see that it is our responsibility to “keep ourselves in the love of God” through faith and prayer, and yet immediately afterwards it says that it is really God that keeps us from falling, and does a cleansing and consecrating work in our hearts.

Jude 24-25 – “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen.”

One way he keeps us from falling is by not allowing us to be tempted overmuch.

1 Cor. 10:13 – “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”

This does not mean overcoming is easy or inevitable, but that we can never use the excuse that the temptation was too great, that it was impossible for us to resist, or “the devil made me do it”. We must look for that way of escape, and then take it.

4. Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith, and yet we must run our race without giving up.

Heb. 12:1-3 – “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”

5. Jesus invites us to his rest, but we must labor to enter into it.

Mt. 11:28-30 – “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

There is a yoke, but it is not grievous and difficult, like so many religious obligations. In fact, even as the people of God there is still a rest that we can experience, and we are warned not to come short of it, but to labor to enter into it.

Heb. 4:9-11 – “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.”

6. We must labor for the meat which endures unto everlasting life, but it is Jesus who gives it to us.

It may seem odd that we must labor for something that is a gift. We labor, and God gives us the real sustenance, the bread of life, and the living water that springs up into everlasting life.

Jn. 6:27 – “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.”

7. We are begotten and kept by God to an eternal inheritance that will never fade away, but in the meantime we must endure a great trial of faith.

1 P. 1:3-5 – “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

But then it continues to show how the road to that inheritance often involves suffering and endurance.

1 P. 1:6-9 – “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”

Phl. 3:13-14 – “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” **We must do all we can to press into the kingdom, in the faith and comfort that God is enabling, guiding, and preserving us to that end.**