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“So you think that you can just ask Jesus into your heart and say He is your Lord and Savior and you will go to Heaven no matter how you live your life from that point on.”

Some professing Christians would say “the comment” above accurately describes how they believe, while other professing Christians would not. Let’s take a look at the implication of “the comment” above in the light of God’s Word (implication - that you can ask Jesus into your heart, say He is your Lord and Savior and you will go to Heaven no matter how sinful and selfish your life is from that point on).

In the Bible, God’s Word, He let us know how we can be saved. Let’s take a look at the following verses:

“He then brought them out and asked, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ They replied, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved --you and your household.’ ” “The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God--he and his whole family.” (Acts 16:30-31,34).

“he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.” (Romans 3:26)

“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.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

“What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about--but not before God. What does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God,

and it was credited to him as righteousness.’ Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.” (Romans 4:1-5)

“know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ...because by observing the law no one will be justified.” “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.’ ” “You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.” (Galatians 2:16; 3:10; 5:4)

“But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference,” “For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.” (Romans 3:21-22,28)

As we can see, if anyone believes that their obedience to God’s Law will gain, or assist in gaining, God’s forgiveness, then they will be under God’s curse when they stand before Him because they have not continued to do **EVERYTHING** “written in the Book of the Law”. So, it would appear from these verses that the implication of “the comment” above is correct (i.e., it doesn’t matter how sinful and selfish your life is because we are saved by grace through faith, not by what we do).

In the Bible, we also read:

“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Galatians 5:19-21)

“For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person--such a man is an idolater--has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.” (Ephesians 5:5-6)

“Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.” (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)

“Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.” (1 John 3:15)

As we can see, if you “live like this” you “will not inherit the kingdom of God.” So, it appears from these verses that the implication of “the comment” is false (i.e., it does matter how sinful and selfish your life is).

It appears that the Bible contradicts itself. Now, before any of you who might be atheists or Bible debunkers gets too excited, we aren't done yet. We need to look further into God's Word to see if we can find other Scripture that might help us make sense of this apparent contradiction. And, as you might have guessed, God has provided us the verses (with our emphasis to draw your attention to certain very important words):

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the **old has gone**, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17)*

*“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? **Can such faith save him?**” “In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” (James 2:14,17)*

*“**At one time** we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in*

*malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.”
(Titus 3:3)*

*“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which **you used to live** when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also **lived among them at one time**, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.”
(Ephesians 2:1-3)*

*“But thanks be to God that, though **you used to be slaves to sin**, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. **You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.**” “But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the **benefit you reap leads to holiness**, and the result is eternal life.” “You, however, are **controlled not by the sinful nature** but by the Spirit, **if the Spirit of God lives in you**. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.” “For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because **those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.**” (Romans 6:17-18,22; 8:9,13-14)*

Contrast the following verses with Galatians 5:19-21 in the previous paragraph:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. **Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.** Since **we live by the Spirit**, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:22-25)

So, we have the answer to our dilemma! If one comes sincerely to the foot of the cross to receive by grace through faith the most precious gift ever offered, he or she has repented of their sinful

ways, is forgiven of their sins, and made a new creation with new desires. Their sinful nature is crucified and they begin to live by the leading of the Holy Spirit. **Does this mean that true Christians are now perfect and never sin?** God has called us to be perfect (Matthew 5:48). Although we have been made perfect in God's sight (Hebrews 10:14) because of our faith in Christ, we are not actually perfect (last part of Romans 4:17). So, just like Paul, we declare,

“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.” (Philippians 3:12)

True Christians crave and pursue holiness/righteousness – not to appease the wrath of an angry God (Jesus' suffering and death has already accomplished that for them), but because God has given them **new desires** and they wish to express their love for the One who set them free from the power and penalty of sin. It is interesting to note that Paul addressed the same and similar issues as those associated with “the comment” above:

“Someone might argue, ‘If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?’ Why not say--as we are being slanderously reported as saying and as some claim that we say—‘Let us do evil that good may result’? Their condemnation is deserved.” “Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.” “What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?” (Romans 3:7-8,31; 6:1-2)

So, what does this mean for you and us? Why did we share this? Are you an individual who responded to an “altar call”, prayed a “sinner's prayer”, “asked Jesus into your heart”, got baptized, or had some other religious experience within Christianity or any other religion? If so, have you since “walked away from God”? Do you attend church every Sunday (or every day) but still desire and pursue the things of this world? Do you continue to live in a sinful lifestyle? Do you worship God like crazy on certain days of

the week, but gratify your flesh (in action or in thought) the rest of the time? Do you think it is “no big deal” when you lie, steal, look lustfully at someone, use profanity, get drunk, or take God’s name in vain? Are you a slave to sin, with no desire or no ability to break free from the pattern of that sin?

Before I was saved, I was a professing Christian. When the opportunity to sin presented itself, I took advantage of it and enjoyed my sin at that moment. However, what followed was condemnation from my conscience. At the moment of “condemnation” I felt horrible, wishing that I had not committed the sin(s) and that I could somehow stop myself from committing the sin(s). Does this describe you? (If so, the good news is your conscience is alive and well.) If you are a professing Christian and answered yes to any of these questions, please read the following:

“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?” (2 Corinthians 13:5)

It would be a horrible thing for you if the following occurred when you stood before God on that great and fateful day:

“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!’ ” (Matthew 7:22-23)

Are you someone who does not profess to be a Christian? Do you justify your sinful life by saying, “I’m not that bad, and besides most Christians are just a bunch of hypocrites anyway”? The hypocrites you see are {probably*} not Christians at all. They will be in the same position as you when you stand before God and have to account for the times you’ve coveted, lied, stolen, lusted, hated, dishonored your parents, put your desires before God’s, taken God’s name in vain, been greedy or bowed down before statues, worshiped false gods. Please, repent and put your faith in the Savior, Jesus Christ, so that you will not have to suffer God’s wrath on the day of judgment.

Are you a born again believer who has crucified your sinful nature, been made new, and been set free from the power and penalty of sin?

Do you have a friend or relative that has made a profession of faith but still lives like the unregenerated? Please don't console them (or yourself) with the fact that they have made a profession. We have seen what God's Word has to say (and there's more just like it that we didn't look at). Like Paul, tell them to examine themselves. This is eternity we are talking about! Why would God set you free from the control of your sinful nature but allow them to remain slaves to sin? Is it because you are a more "spiritual" Christian than your friend/relative? Of course not. It is because of God's great mercy that His Spirit has set you free. God's Word declares that anyone who has received His Spirit has been set free from the control of their sinful nature and is now a slave to righteousness. When I (Steve) was born again in 1997, God by His Spirit set me free from the sins that "haunted" me. I was not some special Christian.

We know that this is a deep subject, and we obviously did not list all the Scripture that deals with this subject. We encourage you...no we challenge you to go humbly before your Creator and ask him to show you with His Word what the truth is about salvation and the results of salvation. You must be willing to accept the truth no matter what it costs you. Do you trust Him? Do you think He will not do it? We can tell you from experience, He will do it! And, know that God's Word cannot and does not contradict itself. "...Let God be true, and every man a liar..." (Romans 3:4)

* Sometimes when we are newly saved, we have not **yet** matured in our walk with the Lord. Many areas of our life have **NOT YET** been turned over to our Lord and Savior to change and we can sometimes resemble the old person. Christianity is not a religion!!! It is the embracing of such a radical way of life that our total lifestyle changes! (SB)

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