

Uncommon things commonly believed among us

On the first Sunday of each month we have been exploring some of the things we commonly believe in the Churches of Christ that many in the religious world around us do not commonly believe. When such differences exist, I believe we have a responsibility to offer a reasoned, biblical explanation for our different belief. This morning we will consider our belief that a Christian can lose their salvation and we invite you to examine our reasons for this uncommon belief.

We believe that a Christian can fall from grace (Ephesians 5:19)

Beginning Considerations

- We believe faithful Christians can have confidence in their salvation (*I John 1:7; 5:13; Romans 8:31-39; John 10:27-28; I Corinthians 10:13*).
- We also believe the Bible teaches a faithful Christian can become unfaithful and therefore lose that confidence (*Hebrews 10:26-31*).
- We do not however believe that the works a Christian performs provide the *basis* of his or her salvation.
 - Our works only save in the *secondary* sense, never in the *primary* sense.
 - In the *primary* sense, which accounts for salvation, we cannot be saved by works (*Romans 4:1-8*).
 - We cannot be saved primarily through our works because we all have sinned (*Romans 3:23; 6:23*).
 - Our works can therefore only relate to our salvation in the *secondary* sense, the sense of accessing God's gift of salvation (*James 2:14-26; Romans 6:23*).
 - In the sense of merit, our works have nothing to do with our initial or continued salvation.
 - In the sense of faith in God, our works are a necessary expression of true faith.

Looking to the Bible

- The Bible teaches that a Christian can fall from God's grace.
 - Those who trust in law keeping can fall from grace (*Galatians 5:4*).
 - Those who become partakers of the Holy Spirit can fall from grace (*Hebrews 6:4-6*).
 - Those who escape the defilement's of the world can fall from grace (*II Peter 2:20-22*).

- Those who find sanctification through Christ's blood can fall from grace (*Hebrews 10:28-29*).
 - One of the greatest arguments for the possibility of losing our salvation lies in the Bible's overwhelming emphasis upon personal accountability.
 - Throughout the Bible, God ties people's spiritual condition to the way they live their lives (cf. *Deuteronomy 28:1-68; Joshua 23:1-16; I Kings 9:2-9; 11:26-38; Ezekiel 18:20; Matthew 7:21-27; Romans 1:5; 16:26; 14:10-12; I Corinthians 4:6; 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19-24; James 5:19-20*).
 - We must ask ourselves, "If we cannot lose our salvation, why would God spend so much time writing about the way we choose to live our lives, even tying it to salvation in many passages?"
 - God's grace is therefore conditional.
 - The Bible teaches that grace is unearned, yet conditioned on responsive faith.
 - Acts 2:36-38 shows that conditions must be met before salvation can be received.
 - Colossians 1:22-23 demonstrates that there are conditions to be met to remain in salvation.
 - If there were no conditions to grace, everyone would be saved.
 - Jesus believed that everyone would not be saved (*Matthew 7:13-14, 21-23*).
 - Jesus also believed that people needed to respond in a certain way to his teachings in order to be saved (*Matthew 5:20; 7:21-27; 18:23-35; Mark 8:34-35*).
 - Paul adds that our faithful response to Jesus' teachings in no way merits or earns our salvation (*Romans 3:21-27*).
 - But what about Ephesians 2:8-9, where Paul writes that we are saved by grace and not works?
 - We are saved through faith, but not a dead, inactive faith (*James 2:14-26*), which is why Jesus called belief a work (*John 6:28-29*).
 - While our works are the natural expression of our love for God (*John 14:15*), they in no way earn our salvation (*Romans 4:1-8*).
 - Thus, God gives us salvation as a free gift of His grace (*Romans 6:23*), even though we must respond to grace (*Romans 6:1-14*).
 - But because God asks that we respond to His free gift in a certain way (*Matthew 28:20; I Corinthians 4:6*), responding in a different way does not give us access to His grace (*I John 1:5-9*).
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God's mercifully offers to us His grace, which we in no way deserve and can never earn. But God asks that we demonstrate our appreciation for His priceless gift by humbly submitting to the conditions He places on it. Have you meet those conditions? Are you living the life God asks His people to live today?