

REAL QUESTIONS, BIBLICAL ANSWERS: Can Anything Change My Salvation? | Romans 8:1-11ⁱ

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning. It is good to see you this morning and it is great to be back from our mission trip to Honduras. I want to say thank you for your prayers and support. Even though we had a team of 8 on the ground in Honduras, this was a church wide effort. Because of you and your generosity, we are able to send a team and invest in what God is doing in Honduras. Last year, our team conducted VBS at two churches. This year we got to see the fruit of that effort as I had the opportunity to baptize one of 4 kids that were in attendance at that VBS. Church, that is touching eternity!!! I want to encourage you to continue to pray for Paul and Kay, missionaries there in Honduras as well as Pastors Anael, Wilmer, and Raul as they work hard for the Kingdom.

I also want to take a moment and acknowledge that today marks the 21st anniversary of the events that took place on 9/11/2001. I bring that up because today is a day that we remember the harrowing events of that day, the families that were devastated, and the heroes that sprung to action. So, I want to begin this morning by praying for those families, our nation, and for us to look to the source where hope is found. Would you bow with me this morning? [PRAY]

SERIES RECAP:

Today we are continuing in our teaching series entitled, "Real Questions, Biblical Answers." I am so very grateful for the men that stood in this pulpit and preached truth the past couple weeks. Were you not blessed by Travis Dickinson and Pastor Jeff?! Two great men and great words for us.

I want to invite you to grab your bibles this morning and turn with me to Romans chapter 8. We are going to be in verses 1 through 11 as we seek to tackle the question, "Can anything change my salvation?"

This is a question that has been the subject of debate in Christendom for centuries. There have been those that have suggested that it is possible that someone can profess Jesus as Lord and then turn from that profession in disobedience and thereby lose their position as a child of God. Others have suggested that once someone is saved then they are always saved. So, which one is correct? What does the Bible say? Perhaps you've heard the question asked differently. If someone makes a profession of faith and then gets caught

up in the wrong crowd, living a sinful life, are they still a Christian and destined for Heaven? Or is it possible for someone that is saved to down the road renounce their faith and no longer be a believer?

I think that the Bible has a lot to say about these questions. This morning I want to answer the question directly, offer 3 proofs of my position, talk about some warnings, and then explain how to know for certain that you are saved.

ILLUSTRATION: Mrs. Dornan

Now, I know that when I use the word "saved," that that might be foreign to some of you. It is a church word, and if you are new to church, you might not understand that word. I remember when I gave my life to Christ, I was in the 4th grade. I remember it like it was yesterday. I went to school the next day and told my teacher, Mrs. Dornan, that I got saved. Well, she looked at me with this deep concern in her eyes. She asked me, "Chris, what were you saved from?" To which I only added to her confusion when I said, "The devil!" Can you imagine? That was very concerning to Mrs. Dornan. Who is this devil? What had I gotten myself into? So, I tried my best to explain what that word meant. I still don't think Mrs. Dornan completely understood what I was talking about.

I say that to say that I never want to assume that everyone here understands church terms. Being saved refers to salvation. Salvation is the term that we use to describe what it means to make Jesus Lord of our lives. It is a biblical term that we come across often in the Scriptures.

The word, salvation, suggests that we needed to be rescued from something. That indeed is the case. The Bible teaches that all of humanity, each one of us have sinned, that is we have disobeyed God's law, and fallen short of the glory of God. Scripture also teaches that the penalty of our sin is extremely costly. Our sin results in eternal separation from God. The reality of this separation is an eternity in a very real place called Hell.

But we are rescued from that penalty, we are saved, when we place our faith and trust in Jesus as the Lord of our lives. Why is that the case? Well, Jesus lived a perfect life, becoming the perfect, sinless, sacrifice on the cross that paid the price of the penalty of our sin. When we place faith and trust in Jesus as Lord, we are forgiven. But much more than that. We are saved, rescued, and our relationship with God is restored. So, when we used the word saved, or salvation, this is what we are referring to.

This morning, I want you to know ahead of time that I will be giving us the opportunity to respond to Jesus as Lord and for some of you, whether you are in the room, or joining us online, you will have the chance to truly respond to Jesus for the very first time. I have been praying for today all week in anticipation that the gospel would be shared with clarity and that no one would walk away without knowing their eternal destination. That's the goal.

MESSAGE:

So, the question, "Is it possible for someone to lose their salvation? The answer to that question is no. There is nothing that can cause someone to lose their salvation. Romans chapter 8, verse 1. *"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* There you have it. Let's pack up and head home. See you next Sunday.

Listen, the Bible clearly presents for us what is called the doctrine of eternal security. In other words, the Bible teaches, once someone is genuinely saved, they are forever saved. I want to give you 3 proofs that this indeed is the case.ⁱⁱ

1) Salvation belongs to God.

Scripture teaches that we cannot lose our salvation because it is not ours to gain. God initiates salvation, Jesus purchased salvation on the cross, and the Holy Spirit reveals our need to be saved. Because of these truths, salvation belongs to God. What do I mean by that?

Well, we are not saved by our own doing. There is nothing we do to become worthy of being saved. We cannot be good enough, do enough or give enough to purchase our own salvation. There is nothing good in us that would even lead us to understand our need for salvation outside of the Holy Spirit revealing that to us. It is God's love and grace that affords the opportunity to be saved.

As a display of God's love and His grace, Jesus died in our place. And by faith, we receive the gift of Salvation. But understand that salvation belongs to God. Romans 6:23 says, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the **free gift** [notice whose gift it is] **of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**"* By faith, in the person and work of Jesus Christ, we receive God's free gift of salvation.

Why is understanding that Salvation belongs to God important to the discussion about whether or not we can lose our salvation? Well, since it is not something that you and I earn, it is, therefore, not something that we can un-earn. It is not

something we gain, so it cannot be something we lose. Salvation belongs to God. Secondly,

2) God keeps His promises.

God is true to His Word. It is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, it is impossible for God to go back on His promises. This is a powerful truth as we examine eternal security because of what God's Word promises. Let me give you a few examples.

John 10:27-29. *²⁷My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and **no one will snatch them out of my hand.** ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and **no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.***

John 6:39-40. *³⁹And this is the will of him who sent me, **that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.** ⁴⁰For this is the will of my Father, that **everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.**"*

Back to Romans 8:38-39. *³⁸For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, **will be able to separate us** from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

In these passages we learn that God has given believers to Jesus. And Jesus, himself, has promised that on the last day, when he returns in all His glory, those in Christ **will be** raised up to eternal life. Listen, nothing can stop Jesus from fulfilling that promise.ⁱⁱⁱ Again, this has everything to do with God's ability to keep His promises, not my ability to make it happen. And because God is a guarantee, our salvation cannot be lost.

Salvation belongs to God and God keeps His promises. Thirdly, ...

3) God finishes what He begins.

Philippians 1:6 says, *⁶And I am sure of this, that **he** [being God] *who began a good work* [that work being salvation] *in you **will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.***"*

You know, the amount of dysfunction in the churches in which Paul wrote that verse to was immense. The Corinthians were getting drunk at the Lord's Supper, The Galatians were about to abandon the gospel, and two women were getting in fist fights in the church at Philippi!^{iv} Even with all that, Paul said that God would finish His good work that He began in them.

Isn't that comforting? Can you imagine the turmoil that children live in that wonder whether or not their fathers are going to accept them each night? There is such peace that comes with the knowledge that left up to us, we wouldn't make it. But praise be to God that it isn't up to us. Our eternity is secure because salvation is God's work, He promises to raise us up on the last day, and He will finish what He began in us.

We have examined strong biblical evidence that clearly teaches that our salvation is permanent. If you are in Christ, you are eternally secure. That means there is nothing you can do, say, or distance you can run to lose salvation. Case and point, The Prodigal Son in Luke 15. Remember he left his father, demanding his inheritance, only to waste it on wild living. But what happened when he came to his senses? He went back home. And the beautiful thing about that story is that his position as a child of his father never changed. Regardless of what he did, he was still his father's son.

Now, this teaching does raise other questions. For example, if you can't do anything to change your salvation, doesn't that give a believer a license to sin? In other words, if we can lose our salvation, then can't we live life any way we want to? Well, the answer to that question is a resounding, "no!"

When we place faith in Jesus, we surrender to Him as the Lord of our lives. That means, when we have given our lives to Jesus, we align our lives to Him and His Word, the Bible. I think our text this morning, Romans 8, speaks to this. Let's walk through it, verse by verse, together. I want to talk about...

Warning Signs

ILLUSTRATION: Dash Lights

On our vehicles, these days, there are lights that will light up to let us know that something is wrong, something needs attention. If you ignore those warning signs, or try to cover them up, it usually leads to costly repairs. But if you heed those warning signs, you can avoid disaster down the road. Romans 8 is our gauge. Let's look at it.

*There is therefore now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus.* Notice that there's a period there. End of the story; settled. Don't put a comma where God put a period.^v If you are in Christ Jesus, that is, you have placed your faith in Him as the Lord of your life, you are not and you will not be condemned. In other words, you are eternally secure. That is the point of the entire chapter of Romans 8. I want you to spend time this week reading through that in your time with The Lord. Let's keep reading.

*²For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³For **God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do.** In other words, the law of God highlighted the fact that no human can live up to the perfection of the holiness of God. In our flesh, our sinful and broken flesh, we cannot keep all of God's laws. So how did God do what the law couldn't do? Next phrase.*

*By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he **condemned sin in the flesh.** Stop right there for just a moment. God did what the flesh could not do by taking on flesh, that's Jesus, and nailed sin to the cross once and forever. Look what that resulted in. Verse 4.*

⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us. When we trust in Jesus, a great exchange takes place. God takes the perfection and righteousness of Christ and imputes it to us, that is He gives it to us. How is that possible? Well, Jesus, on the cross, became our sin so that we can have His perfection. Praise God. Keep reading.

*⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, **who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.** ⁵For those who live according to the flesh **set their minds** [that phrase is important. Underline that.] *on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit **set their minds** on the things of the Spirit. ⁶For to **set the mind** on the flesh is death, but to **set the mind** on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷For **the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God,** for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, **if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.** *Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead***

dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

How can you tell if you are a genuine believer? According to Scripture here, if the Spirit of God dwells in you. When you and I place faith in Jesus, something incredible happens. God gives us the Holy Spirit! And the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is proof of your salvation. More than that, it is a guarantee of your salvation! Ephesians teaches that the Holy Spirit seals us. That guarantee cannot be revoked. But pay attention here. Paul compares life in the Spirit versus life in the flesh. In so doing, he answers the question for us that a true believer in Jesus does not have a license to sin.

Here's the deal. Listen to me. You and I, even after our conversion to Christ, still struggle with sin. But, as a believer, our approach to sin changes, you see. Paul says that a true believer, quote, "set[s] their minds," on the things of the Spirit. In other words, a true believer seeks to live a life of holiness. Though they often fall, they do not accept sin, but seek to do away with sin in their life.

The unbeliever is different. Paul says that the unbeliever, quote, "set[s] their minds," on the things of the flesh, the passions and desires of the flesh. There is not a desire to put sin to death in their life. So, they say things like, "Oh well, I'm just human." Or "I can't help it; I just struggle with this." That, to me, reveals a mind set on the flesh which Paul reminds is a of mindset hostile to God.

ILLUSTRATION: Jack Box

We recently bought a game on our Apple TV at our house. How many of you have ever played the game, Jack Box? Jack Box is an app where everyone in the room gets on their device and logs into a website. The screen then prompts you to answer questions and you get points. It's a fun group game that our family plays fairly often. Well, one of the games is called "Fakin' It." In this game, one person is given a different question than everyone else. They are the faker. Their job is to blend in so that no one else spots them as the faker. Everyone gets to vote on who they think is the faker.

What Paul is doing in Romans 8:1-11 is exposing true, genuine believers, differentiating them from unbelievers acting like believers. Hear me clearly, please. Does a genuine believer struggle with sin? Yes. I do. But a genuine believer is broken over their sin, not accepting of it. Someone that is not a believer is not broken over their sin. Do you see the difference?

So, when it comes to the question, "What about someone that was once a believer but has now denied the faith, are they still a Christian?" I think the answer to that is another question. Were they ever a genuine Christian to begin with? Certainly, we have seasons where we struggle with doubts. But I think it is a fair question if someone abandons the faith completely. 1 John 2:19.

¹⁹They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

The same is true for the person that professes Christ and falls into the wrong crowd. Are they truly broken over their sin? Were they genuinely a believer to begin with? And here's the deal with that. The answer to those questions is not in our purview. That is between them and The Lord. But we can use this passage as a measuring stick for our own standing.

Now, the last thing I want to do here today is to create fear where fear is not necessary. Nor do I ever want to manipulate someone into trusting Jesus, that's not a true conversion. So, with the short amount of time remaining, I want to talk about how to know you are saved. This is known as the...

Assurance of Salvation

There is a difference between eternal security and assurance of salvation. Eternal security is a position in Christ whereas assurance of salvation is being certain you are eternally secure.

We often look for assurance of salvation in all the wrong places. We tend to turn to the good deeds that we do, or even our own morality. And while those things can be evidence of salvation, that is not what we need to base the assurance of our salvation on. Non-believers do good deeds, right? So, it is important to seek objective truth, and we find that in God's Word.

1 John 5:11-13. *¹¹And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²**Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.** ¹³I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, **that you may know that you have eternal life.***

It is very simple. Do you have the Son? Because if you do, you have eternal life! Have you surrendered your life to Jesus? Have you realized that you are a sinner? Do you believe, not just a mental belief, but a life-changing belief, that

Jesus died on the cross for your sin, was buried, and was raised from the dead? Have you given your life to Jesus? If so, then you have life, eternal life. And you can know that you have this eternal life. God actually wants you to know that, to be secure in that. That's why, 1 John 5:13 says, that you may know that you have eternal life.

CONCLUSION:

As we conclude this morning, I want to give you an opportunity to respond to Jesus. If you are here today and you have not given your life to Jesus, then you come this morning. I beg you to come this morning, and simply say three words. I need Jesus. Our elders will be here at the front excited to receive you and visit with you about what it means to have eternal life in Christ.

Perhaps you're here this morning and you have questions as to whether or not you are saved. It is God's desire that you know that you have eternal life. Here is a little test to help you determine if you are in Christ. Remember, we all struggle with sin. Would you say that your life is marked by obedience with seasons of disobedience to God? Or would you say your life is marked by disobedience with seasons of obedience to God?

Life in Christ is much like this saw. You see that there are valleys amidst the peaks, but the general direction is moving upward. This would be a life that is marked by obedience with seasons of disobedience. But if you turn it around, this is a life marked more by disobedience with seasons of obedience.

If you are here this morning and you would say that your life is marked more like this, you come this morning and surrender your life to Jesus. If it is more like this, be assured, know that you have eternal life.

I'm going to pray, we're going to stand, and let's respond to what The Lord is stirring in our hearts. [PRAY]

ENDNOTES:

- ⁱ Works consulted in preparation of this message: John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans*, InterVarsity Press: 1994; John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Romans 1-8*, Moody Press: Chicago, 1991; Douglas J Moo, *The NIV Application Commentary: Romans*, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2000; Stephen Altrogge, *Can You Lose Your Salvation? The DEFINITIVE Answer From Scripture*, article published by The Blazing Center, April 23, 2018, accessed online: <https://theblazingcenter.com/2018/04/lose-salvation.html>; Dr. Roger Barrier, *What it Means to Backslide and How to Recover*, published by crosswalk.com, November 12, 2020, accessed online: <https://www.crosswalk.com/church/pastors-or-leadership/ask-roger/how-to-recover-from-a-spiritual-backslide.html>; Compelling Truth, *What Does the Bible say about Backsliding Christians? Are they still saved?*, accessed online: <https://www.compellingtruth.org/backsliding-Christian.html>; Skip Heitzig, *Heart & Soul: Safe and Secure – Romans 8:1-11*, taught Sunday, September 29, 2019, Calvary Church Albuquerque; Got Questions.org, various articles, accessed online: <https://gotquestions.org>; Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Chapter Ten: The Eternal Security of the Believer, Part 1*, accessed online: https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/chafer_lewis_sperry/salvation/salv10.cfm; John MacArthur, various sermons, published by Grace To You, accessed online: <https://gty.org>; Dr. Michael Youssef, *Can Someone Lose Their Salvation*, published by Leading the Way, accessed online: <https://www.ltw.org/watch/features/ask-dr-youssef/can-someone-lose-their-salvation>; Adrian Rogers, *Eternal Security: A Scriptural Defense*, published by Love Worth Finding, September 21, 2021, accessed online: <https://www.lwf.org/sermons/audio/eternal-security-a-scriptural-defense-1729>.
- ⁱⁱ Proofs inspired by the article written by Stephen Altrogge, *Can You Lose Your Salvation? The DEFINITIVE Answer From Scripture*, article published by The Blazing Center, April 23, 2018, accessed online: <https://theblazingcenter.com/2018/04/lose-salvation.html>.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.
- ^{iv} Stephen Altrogge pointed out this dysfunction in the churches in Corinth, Galatia, and Philippi.
- ^v Skip Heitzig points out the grammatical impact of Romans 8:1.