

Can You Lose Your Salvation?

by Sebastian R Fama

Martin Luther suffered from a condition known as scrupulosity. According to Stephanie Woodrow, an expert in treating OCD, "Scrupulosity is an OCD theme in which a person is overly concerned with the fear that they are doing something that goes against their religious beliefs or is immoral." Martin Luther was tortured by his imperfections. He was finally able to ease his anxiety by concluding that, once a person accepted God's free gift of salvation, it could never be lost. Sin, he reasoned, no matter how grievous, would have no effect on it.

To be sure this is an appealing doctrine. But it is a false one. We know that because the Bible teaches us as much. The apostle Paul clearly believed that salvation, once achieved, could be lost. He affirms this when writing to the church at Corinth: "But you yourselves wrong and defraud, and that even your own brethren. **Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor the idolaters, nor the adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God**" (1 Corinthians 6:8-10).

It is important to note that Paul was talking to a group of Christians. In other words, He was talking to people who Martin Luther would say were saved. And yet Paul is warning them about losing their salvation. Jesus Himself made the same point when He addressed the Church at Ephesus: "Realize how far you have fallen. **Repent, and do the works you did at first. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your lamp stand from its place**" (Revelation 2:5).

The lamp stand is symbolic of Christ's presence. To have your lamp stand removed is to be separated from Christ. That they had a lamp stand to remove indicates that they were at one point, "in Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Jesus' command to repent is a warning that they must once again abide in Him. And as we are told in John 15:4-6, we must abide in Him or be cast forth like a branch and be burned.

Martin Luther's novel teaching is flawed not only scripturally, but logically as well. What if for health reasons, your doctor told you to lose weight. He said you should cut back on pasta and cheesecake (your two favorite foods). But then he said: "But if you don't, it won't make any difference." Human nature being what it is, you know this doesn't end well. Likewise, telling a Christian his sins will not affect his salvation, gives him the incentive to sin. Rather than tolerate sin, God gives grace in time of need (Hebrews 4:16). So, there is no need to sin.

God hates sin, (Proverbs 6:16-19) but He loves us. Thus, He offers us a forgiveness that cleanses (1 John 1:9). He does not merely cover our sins; He eliminates them as nothing unclean can enter heaven (Revelation 21:27). Consequently, repentance (Romans 2:4) and confession (John 20:23) are necessary to receive that forgiveness. Martin Luther's novel teaching is a dangerous one. A teaching which will lead countless souls to the gates of hell.