

justification. So, assurance of salvation is not to be based on some past personal experience we have had. Secondly, glorification (future tense of salvation) is still future. We can not look into the future and see the reality of what we will be (1 John 3:2).

Yet, the Scripture commands us to examine OURSELVES as to whether we are in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5). How can we do that? We can't look to our (past) justification for evidence of salvation. We can't look to our (future) glorification for evidence of salvation. What's left? That's right; we must look at our (present) sanctification for evidence of salvation. And that is exactly what God commands in His Word. God says, and Paul writes: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ IS in you [present tense], except ye be reprobates?" You can know you have been saved (past tense) because you *are being saved* (present tense). Likewise, you can know that you will be ultimately saved (future tense) because you *are being saved* (present tense).

The Last Word

If someone asks you "Are you saved?", it is great to share your testimony of how God brought you to Himself. It is great to share with them the blessed promises of

God that all who repent and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ receive eternal salvation. However, remember, the evidence that you have truly repented... and you have truly trusted in Jesus... and you have been justified... is that you ARE being sanctified by the Spirit of God (2 Corinthians 3:18). There will be a decreasing pattern of sin in your life and an increasing pattern of righteousness. There will be an ongoing, living, and active faith in Jesus (Romans 1:17; James 2:17-18). There will be a love for Jesus (1 Corinthians 16:22) that results in obedience (John 14:15). You will yearn to live righteously and godly and you will battle against fleshly desires; you will despise sin in your life (Romans 7:15-25). In short, God will be working *present* salvation (sanctification) in you. It is upon that basis that you can Biblically respond, "Yes, I am saved."

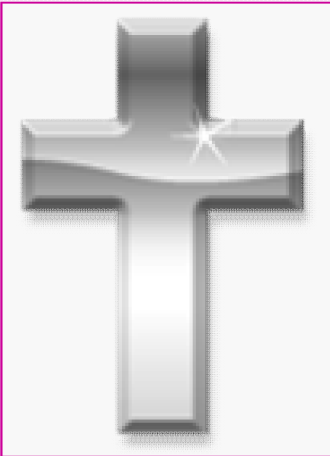


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SALVATION PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE



Considering the question:
"Are you saved?"

by Jason Butte

If you have talked to many people about receiving eternal salvation, then you have no doubt asked the question, "Are you saved?" I have personally asked this question many, many times and with very few exceptions I always receive the answer, "Yes". This is not surprising. Depending on which poll you read, about 70-80% of Americans profess to be Christians. When I ask people further questions to find why they responded in that way, I rarely receive any clear explanation for such a claim. Let me provide some Biblical insight that may help you to (1) answer that question for yourself and (2) be a more effective witness when you hear others respond to that question.

What Does It Mean?

First of all, what does it mean to be "saved"? Saved literally means "delivered". What do we need to be delivered from? *We need to be delivered from our sin.* This is why Jesus came (Matthew 1:21) and died on the cross. God is Holy and hates sin, and our sin separates us from Him. *When God delivers us from our sin, He also delivers us from the result of sin – the wrath of God* (1 Thessalonians 1:10). No one's sin goes unpunished. God is Just and will not overlook sin. The Gospel is that Jesus Christ took our punishment. That's right! God punished Jesus for our sin (Isaiah 53); He was our substitute (2 Corinthians 5:21). When we receive Jesus and the payment He made

on the cross to atone for our sin, our court case with God is settled – out of court and on the cross of Christ.

Past, Present, and Future Salvation

Second, it is important to know that the Bible speaks of salvation in three tenses: past, present, and future tense. *When we repent and receive Christ by faith, we are saved (past tense).* This is often referred to in the Scriptures as justification or being justified (i.e. Romans 3:24-28). This is a legal term in which the sinner who trusts all to Jesus is declared righteous in the sight of God. Justification delivers us from the *penalty* of sin. *The child of God then begins a process of being saved (present tense).* This is a daily process the Bible calls sanctification (i.e. 1 Thessalonians 4:3; 5:23) in which God is setting the believer apart from this world and sin and unto Himself. In sanctification, the Christian is delivered from the *power* of sin in their life (Romans 6:14). The result is a decreasing pattern of unrighteousness and an increasing pattern of holiness. *Then, there is also a time when we will be saved (future tense).* This is a future salvation (Romans 13:11; 1 Peter 1:5). This ultimate salvation will take place when the Lord returns and our bodies are redeemed (Romans 8:23; Philippians 3:21). We will finally be free from the sinful pull of our carnal flesh. The Bible refers to this as being glorified (i.e. Romans 8:30). Glorifi-

cation delivers us from the *presence* of sin. All of salvation – past, present, and future – is a work of God (Hebrews 5:9) and therefore WILL be accomplished in His children.

Considering: "Are You Saved?"

Now that we have this basic understanding of Biblical salvation, let's consider the asking and answering of the question: "Are you saved?" How can a person know if they are saved? Is it by looking back to some experience? No, the Bible never points us to a past experience for assurance. The Bible never points us to the future for assurance. The Bible directs us to base our assurance on *present* evidence of salvation (2 Corinthians 13:5).

Just think about it. First, justification (past tense of salvation) is reckoned when we repent and submit ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ in faith. This is something God does. It is a legal action where God declares us not-guilty on the basis of Christ's atoning sacrifice. We can not look back into God's ledger-book and see what He has written or blotted out. Nor are we wise to base our assurance on some feeling we had during some past experience. Feelings are very shallow and shaky. The Bible says "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). God does not promise us any "spiritual goose bumps" in connection with