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## Questions of Faith

### How do I know I am saved?

Christians hold that Christ is the One who saves—in no measure does the individual save himself. One cannot “choose” to follow Jesus because one cannot and will not do any such thing (Romans 9:16: “*So then it [salvation] depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.*”). Instead, it is God who breaks in and pulls the person to Himself.

Similarly, God’s demand “*you be perfect as your Father is perfect*” is an impossibility for us to fulfill. As a means of salvation, “right living” is doomed before we begin because by committing the single smallest sin one commits all sins for all time.

The hope of the Christian lies in standing before the throne of God clothed in Christ’s own righteousness. This means that Christ’s righteousness is credited or imputed to the believer. Thus, to the enormous question “how do you know you are saved?” the response is not “because I lived a good life”, “because I did many good things for others” or “because I have great faith”. The answer is “I know I am saved because God Himself said so and He cannot lie.”

Christians do stress becoming more like Christ and doing acts of love in His Name. But this comes under the subject of “sanctification” which is held to be totally apart from “justification”. As important as it is to perform charitable acts and become more like Christ, these things are not a means of salvation. Salvation is solely the work of God.

Thus, the life of the Christian consists of continually hearing God’s Word and being reminded of His saving work again and again. Because the desire to save ourselves on our own terms never goes away, we must be confronted with the Gospel often and every day. The Christian lives his whole life finding out what all this means. Yet whether one is the simplest child or the wisest sage, a moral exemplar or “the worst of sinners”, one’s hope and certainty is Christ Jesus.

To put it more fully, Christians believe that all people, since the fall, are dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1-3). Just as a dead person cannot do or even “decide” to do anything, so a spiritually dead person cannot “decide” to become a Christian by the power of his or her own will. As Jesus says in John 15:16: “*You did not choose me; but I chose you....*” Conversion is solely the work of the Holy Spirit: “*No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit*” (I Corinthians 12:3). What may appear to be a “decision” from a human perspective is actually the result of the work of the Holy Spirit through the power of the Gospel.

We teach that conversion is people, having learned from the Law of God they are lost and condemned sinners, are brought to faith in the Gospel, which offers forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation for the sake of Christ’s vicarious satisfaction (Acts 11:21; Luke 24:46, 47; Acts 26:18).

All, since the Fall, are dead in sins (Ephesians 2:1-3) and inclined only to evil (Genesis 6:5; 8:21; Romans 8:7). For this reason and because pagans regard the Gospel of Christ as foolishness (I Corinthians 2:14), faith in the Gospel—conversion—is neither wholly nor in the least part the work of man, but the work of God’s grace and almighty power alone (Philippians 1:29; Ephesians 2:8; 1:19; Jeremiah 31:18). Therefore, Scripture calls faith a raising from the dead (Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 2:12), a being born of God (John 1:12, 13), a new birth by the Gospel (I Peter, 1:23-25), a work of God like the creation of light at the

creation of the world (II Corinthians 4:6). We are converted while still in rebellion (Ezekiel 36:26; Philippians 2:13).

God desires all to be saved and it is His work that gives faith, but not all men are converted and saved. The “why” is in the nature of God that we cannot fathom and He has not revealed to us. From Scripture we know only that conversion and salvation are not due to any lesser guilt or better conduct on the part of the believer, but solely to the grace of God. But non-conversion is the sole fault of the unconverted alone; it is the result of his obstinate resistance against the converting operation of the Holy Spirit (Hosea 13:9; Acts 7:51; Matthew 23:37; Acts 13:46). It is not for us to know why at this time (Romans 9:20; I Corinthians 13:12).