

I want to talk about doubts this morning. Do you struggle with doubt? You have some faith, but is it mixed with doubts? Having doubts about God and salvation issues is a normal part of being a Christian.

After all, we serve an invisible God. God the Father and God the Spirit are invisible. God the Son, Jesus, is visible. But He is in heaven, where we cannot see Him. Because we cannot see God, it is normal to have some doubts.

There are other reasons that contribute to doubt. We pray for things and do not receive them. We pray for people who are not healed and others who are not saved. We grieve our sins, but we continue to sin. Because of continuing sin, we doubt we are really saved. Or, we worry about losing our salvation.

Maybe you have struggled with some of these doubts. I have. When I was a young man I struggled with all of these questions. How can I be sure I am saved? How come I still struggle with sin? How can God love sinful me? Can I lose my salvation? All of these questions haunted me.

Maybe they haunt you too. If so, I have good news for you today. There is reason to push aside your doubts. The answers to your questions are in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And Southern Baptists have affirmed those answers in our summary of beliefs. This morning we are reading Article V of the Baptist Faith and Message, God's Purpose of Grace.

The Baptist Faith and Message, Article V. God's Purpose of Grace

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is a glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, bring reproach on the cause of Christ, and temporal judgments on themselves, yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Gen. 12:1-3; Ex. 19:5-8; 1 Sam. 8:4-7, 19-22; Isa. 5:1-7; Jer. 31:31ff.; Matt. 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22, 31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45, 65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6, 12, 17-18; Acts 20:32; Rom. 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7, 26-36; 1 Cor. 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephes. 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Col. 1:12-14; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; 2 Tim. 1:12; 2:10, 19; Heb. 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 1:2-5, 13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2

The verses that follow each article are those the article is based on. We're going to focus in on just a few of those verses this morning. Look with me at Romans 8.

Romans 8:28-30 (NIV) And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Let's discover some truth in these verses this morning that can calm our some of our doubts.

This is Paul the missionary who is writing. And he is writing to Christians. He writes, "we know that in all things". The we is Christians. What things is he writing about? He is writing about life things. The word "things" here means situations, problems, and experiences. These "things" are everything you are living, everything you face in your daily life. He lumps them all together, good things, bad things, victories and defeats, good hair days and bad hair days, big problems and no problems, joys, sorrows, and more.

Now what about all these things we are living and facing do we know?

1. God is good, all the time.

Paul writes that we know that God is good and works for the good in all the things we are living and facing. We detailed a lot of that good last week. In last Sunday's sermon we detailed many of the spiritual blessings we have in Jesus, blessings such as regeneration, redemption, justification, reconciliation, adoption, and more.

All of these have already occurred for each Christian. In addition, we are seeing God do the work of sanctifying us. And we look forward to Jesus' return to earth when we will be glorified with Him. All these good things God is working out in all the things we are living through.

That includes the bad things we are living through. Somehow, God is using even the bad things in His plan of doing good for us. We do not always know why He uses bad things, except that sometimes, much later, we see the good that came about out of the bad. And we may even, at that later time, be glad we went through the bad. But no one, at the time of the bad, is glad for the bad.

Paul writes confidently that God is using all things, even the bad, for our good. How can he be so confident? Because he has been through worse bad than most of us.

2 Corinthians 11:24-27 (NIV) Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.

Yet, in all of that, Paul can say with confidence that God had been working for Paul's good, and our good who benefit from his writings. God is using even the bad in our lives to work out His good for us. God is working out His good plans for us in all things that we experience.

2. God knew we would be sinners before He created us.

Paul says God foreknew us? What does that mean? I believe it means that God knows everything, past, present, and future. He is outside of time and has always known every facet of human history before He ever created the earth. And in that knowledge of the future, He could see that some would say yes to His offer of salvation in Jesus.

God is good all the time. God does good all the time. He saw every person on earth of every time before He created any of us. But specifically He saw that some would say yes to Jesus. And so He went ahead and created the earth and the people on it.

3. God planned for our salvation.

God planned for something to happen ahead of when it happened. This is predestination. **Seeing the future that could be, God chose to make it the future that would be.** God planned earth history to accomplish His saving good for us. And then God set in motion those plans. He carried out that plan all through human history. He brought everything together for the time that Jesus should come.

Galatians 4:4 (NIV) But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son...

When the right time for Jesus to come, God sent Him. God could have sent Jesus during the days of Noah, before the flood. God could have sent Jesus during the days of Moses, or Gideon, or Samuel, or Solomon. But none of those times were the best time, the right time, to bring salvation to us.

At just the right time, when everything was prepared for the birth of Jesus, the teaching ministry of Jesus, the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the spreading of the gospel message about Jesus throughout the Roman empire, THAT is when God sent His Son.

This passage in Romans speaks of the plan of God. This passage speaks of the gracious purpose of God. God planned how to graciously favor us with salvation. He planned how to bring salvation to us. And then God carried out that plan. We are the fortunate recipients of Him doing so.

Some of your doubts are dealt with in this passage. Some of you have been a Christian long enough to look back at the bad you have lived through with God. You can now see the good God has done even in the bad. God showed you He is faithful to give you strength, wisdom, peace of mind, a change in the circumstances. He changed you. Your faith grew. Your understanding increased. You are more certain that God is real. You can say with Paul, "WE KNOW that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him."

Another common doubt, in the face of our continuing sin, is whether we can stay saved. We fear we may have done something that has jeopardized our salvation. But look with me at what Jesus said.

John 3:3 (NIV) ... Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

We know this. We have been to this verse earlier in this sermon series. Now look at what Nicodemus answers.

John 3:4 (NIV) "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!"

Jesus is speaking of spiritual birth and Nicodemus is thinking of physical birth. And he is right. A person cannot reenter his mother's womb and be physically born over again. Nor can it be undone. You cannot undo a physical birth. And the same is true of spiritual birth. Once spiritual birth has taken place, it cannot be undone. Once you are born of the Spirit, you cannot become unborn of the Spirit.

To put it another way, **Once you belong to Jesus, He isn't going to let you go.** You cannot lose your salvation. Erase any doubts concerning your security in Jesus. A new sin, committed after baptism, will not endanger your salvation. Once you are saved, you will remain saved.

I want to share one more passage with you this morning. This next passage gives further evidence of possible salvation.

Philippians 2:12-13 (NLT) Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

The very fact that you are worried about your salvation may be evidence of the Holy Spirit in you. If you desire to live for God and are attempting to do so, that desire is being fed by the Holy Spirit.

And see what he says to do with that desire. "work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear."

So are you doing what he says to do? He urges his readers to obey God. Are you working at obedience to God? Do your prayers reflect this? Are you sorry for the sins you commit? Are you confessing those sins to God? Are you discovering the causes of your sinful words and actions? Are you seeking His help to not commit the same sin again? Are you affirming your belief in the death of Jesus as the sacrifice for even these continuing sins?

This is not normal human behavior. This is Christian behavior. This is living in the truth of the Gospel. This is admitting the truth of your sin and your dependence on Jesus for forgiveness.

Jesus died for ALL of our sins. You have to come back to that truth every day. You have to center your doubts on the gospel. You have to live out of the gospel. And if you are doing that, God will shrink your doubts.

If you ARE in Jesus, there is no fear of losing that place. God has the power to keep you in Jesus. And He will. Your security in Jesus does not rest on you. It rests on God. He can and will fulfill His gracious plan for your good.

If you want to be saved today, the only things preventing it are your pride and your stubbornness. God has purposely, graciously, done everything He needed to do to bring His salvation to you. Accept His call today. Receive Jesus as your Savior and Lord.