

**Scriptures and Doctrine :: Are we "sinners saved by grace" or "saints who chose to sin"?****Are we "sinners saved by grace" or "saints who chose to sin"? - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2006/8/9 8:47**

I recently got into a discussion with another Christian over this. I don't mean to open a can of worms here on SI. I'm just curious to see where everyone stands. Which statement do you feel is the most biblically accurate to describe a Holy Spirit-regenerated man or woman in Christ? Are we:

1) Sinners saved by grace

or

2) Saints who can chose to sin

I'm convinced that the latter (no. 2) is a far better definition of a true Christian. I understand, however, where someone can adopt the "sinner saved by grace" stance too. We must never forget that we were once sinners, on route to hell. But in the most basic example, Paul, in all his epistles, addresses the Christian churches and holy brethren as "saints" and not as "sinners" in Christ Jesus. I pose this question to you all on SI because there is quite a disagreement as to whether a Christian nowadays has the right to call himself a "saint" in Christ Jesus. To most people, this claim sounds almost blasphemous! Alas, could this be another sad distortion of the gospel, brought on by antinomianism? Did redeemed Christians introduce themselves 150-200 years ago as sinners?

So, how do we see ourselves? And more importantly, how do we believe God sees us as a born-again and bloodwashed believers in Jesus Christ? As "saved" sinners, or "redeemed" saints?

Blessings upon you all in Christ Jesus our Lord,

Brother Paul

Re: Are we "sinners saved by grace" or "saints who chose to sin"? - posted by murdog (), on: 2006/8/9 11:11

Paul,

Good question. I think it is blasphemous to call an unregenerated man a saint. But to whom sin is no longer his master, I think saint is a fitting title.

"To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints"

Of course we are all sinners before Christ makes us clean. By his blood. By his word. By his Spirit.

Murray

Re: Are we "sinners saved by grace" or "saints who chose to sin"? - posted by beenblake (), on: 2006/8/9 12:12

When I first read this, I misunderstood you. But let me explain this statement: "I am a sinner saved by grace" in one of two ways.

I am a sinner saved by grace and always will be. Though Christ has made me into a new creation, I forever will remember the place I came from. How could Heaven be so sweet and my love for Christ so strong, if I ever forget what He saved me from?

However, after some thought, I realized a different perspective. This one is a dangerous one that I have encountered several times. "A sinner saved by grace" can imply that no change has occurred, but instead that person is still a sinner who continues in sin believing they are forgiven. This is a dangerous idea that can keep a person from being truly saved. Truly, it is an abuse of God's forgiveness.

I have seen people who wear the banner of Christ's name who go about preaching forgiveness who also sin freely statin

g they are "saved by grace." It seems to me that somehow they believe sinning is okay because God forgives. Of course, Paul addressed such an idea in the book of Romans.

If a person truly believes Jesus died for their sin, I do not know how they can go on sinning freely without feeling immense sorrow and without a deep desire to stop. Jesus died so my sin could be removed. Why would I continue to sin? How many times must Jesus die for me?

Jesus died once for all sin. So long as I repent, I am forgiven. To repent means we not only feel remorse, but we seek to change. We want to change. We want our sin removed. We want it gone.

We become born again when we realize this change can only come through Christ. When we call out to Christ to make that change, then we are transformed. Christ puts His Spirit into us. We are brand new, spiritually. By this, we are a saint. The Spirit of Christ in us is perfect.

Of course, our body is still weak. We still live in a world filled with evil. Our knowledge and understanding is extremely limited. Often, we sin because we are naive. We live in a war, where the Spirit of God is battling our flesh and against the dark forces of the world. We have not yet been perfected. Our hope is in the resurrection. (Philippians 3:9-14)

However, we are not saints who choose to sin. This is a contradiction. How can you be a saint if you choose to sin? This cannot be.

Jesus has come into our heart. He has cleansed our heart and our will. We want to follow Jesus. We love our Lord and seek Him. Our choice has been made. We want to be with Jesus.

However, we still sin, and this occurs because of several reasons. We are limited in our knowledge. Often times our intentions are good, but our actions are poor. Other times, we are deceived by the Devil. Other times, we fall weak unto temptation. And even still, other times, the Lord allows us to fall into sin so that we may learn a lesson. Like the father who allowed his son to run off with the inheritance, the Lord also gives us freedom so that we may learn to appreciate His love.

So are we a sinner or a saint?

The important thing to realize in this is our complete dependence upon Jesus Christ for all things. If we say we are a sinner, we must realize the need of Christ to change us. And if we are a saint, we must acknowledge that we are so by the power of Christ in us. At no time am "I" righteous when "I" is apart from Christ. So long as I am united with Christ, then "I" am a saint. However, any moment where "I" act apart from Christ, "I" am a sinner.

And so, the proper view is not whether "I" am a saint, or "I" am a sinner. The correct view is what we are in Christ. Together, united as one with Christ, I am His.

I am His. Whatever He is, I am, for He lives in me. Though I stumble and fall, I have given up all responsibility of myself to Christ. Everything I am and everything I have are His. If I sin, it is His. I have given my sins to Jesus so that He may change them in me.

In Christ,

Blake

Re: - posted by PreachParsly (), on: 2006/8/9 12:29

Wouldn't it be more correct to say, "I was a sinner, now I'm saved by grace?"

I have always thought sinners went to hell. Saints go to heaven. The Greek word for saint is "hagios." The Greek word in most scriptures for holy is "hagios." The word for holy in Hebrews 12:14 is "hagiasmos." Look similar? :-)

Without hagiasmos no man shall see the Lord.

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Are we "sinners saved by grace" or "saints who chose to sin"?

Re: Are we "sinners saved by grace" or "saints who chose to sin"? - posted by todd, on: 2006/8/9 12:46

I have also recently been confronted with this idea, and have concluded that I am a saint. I was a sinner before I got right with God. When I believed and got right I was saved.

But I suppose there is still a sense in which it's true that I am still "saved" by grace. But I think that would be in terms of my circumstances in this Age, whereas when I believed and got right with God an eternal transaction took place.

Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2006/8/9 12:56

Quote:

-----And so, the proper view is not whether "I" am a saint, or "I" am a sinner. The correct view is what we are in Christ.

So, brother, are you saying there is neither sinner nor saint in Christ? We are just "His"? That sounds pretty ambiguous to me. I've known people that say they are "His" and they live like devils.

Are we sinners going to heaven (which, to me, is usually what the "I'm a sinner saved by grace" statement implies), or are we redeemed by the Blood of Christ and made royal priests and saints by virtue of our Lord? How does God see us, is what I'm trying to ask...

Blessings!

Brother Paul

Re: - posted by JoeA (), on: 2006/8/9 13:10

Quote:

-----Are we sinners going to heaven (which, to me, is usually what the "I'm a sinner saved by grace" statement implies), or are we redeemed by the Blood of Christ and made royal priests and saints by virtue of our Lord? How does God see us, is what I'm trying to ask...

Sinners going to heaven? Something about that leaves a bad taste in my mouth. Sinners redeemed by the Blood of Christ made royal priests and saints by virtue of our Lord sounds much better. How does God see us? I think Ephesians 1 says that we are "accepted in the Beloved". The Beloved being Christ.

If we have taken hold of Christ by faith, God looks at us and sees the Blood of Christ ("when I see the Blood I will pass over you"). God sees us through our Advocate. We don't stand for or by ourselves. If we are in Christ, God sees us as Christ ("As He is, so are we in this world").

"If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father: Jesus Christ **the righteous**". I was pondering this last night, and it occurred to me that if Jesus Christ the righteous was going to plead the cause of someone (as an advocate does), that someone would need to be righteous. "If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of Him."

Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2006/8/9 13:16

Quote:

-----"If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father: Jesus Christ the righteous". I was pondering this last night, and it occurred to me that if Jesus Christ the righteous was going to plead the cause of someone (as an advocate does), that someone would need to be righteous. "If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of Him."

Very well put, brother Joe. Amen!

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Are we "sinners saved by grace" or "saints who chose to sin"?

Re: - posted by beenblake (), on: 2006/8/9 13:54

Quote:
-----I've known people that say they are "His" and they live like devils.

Indeed, so have I. The point I was trying to make is that our union with Christ is essential. It does not matter what we see of ourselves, but what God sees. Which leads to the next question...

Quote:
----- How does God see us, is what I'm trying to ask...

God sees His perfect work, though we have not yet been perfected. His work will be complete when we are changed in the twinkling of an eye.

In Christ,
Blake

Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2006/8/9 15:00

Quote:
-----God sees His perfect work, though we have not yet been perfected.

Amen. We have not yet attained perfection (Phil. 3:12). Our "inner nature" is being renewed day by day (2 Cor. 4:16). But are we still professional sinners in God's eye? This is what I'm getting at. If not, to shake someone's hand and say "Hi, I'm Paul...and I'm a SINNER saved by grace," seems wrong. If I've truly been redeemed by the blood of Christ, I'm not a sinner; I'm a saint who has the OPTION to sin. I'm made righteous through Him. Why then are we clinging to the "old man", when it's the life of the "new man" that needs to be introduced to people? Why not tell it like it is? Just about EVERY BODY I know says that they're a sinner saved by grace - so much that it's become cliché. It's the automated response when we mess up before the godless. Another beauty is "I'm not perfect, only forgiven." Keith Green says this one takes the blame off you, and puts it on God. This is like saying, "Ma'am, you can't trust my son with your daughter; he's not perfect, only forgiven." It's rotten theology I say. People hear it in church, pastors say it, bumperstickers, T-shirts, buttons, you name it. But it's not the true walk! In my estimate, it's nothing more than a lame excuse for unbroken carnality. A justification for unmortified flesh. There's zero brokenness when you say, "Ooops, sorry...I'm just a sinner saved by grace!" Why not be a man or woman and just tell the truth (without trying to overspiritualize the situation), and admit that you gave into temptation...and not even allude to the fact that it might be partly God's fault for not working on you fast enough (for God DID give you a way out).

I hope I'm being understood properly. I'm in no way advocating instant perfection, or that it's impossible for me to sin. I have sinned many times since my conversion, but the blood of Jesus has cleansed me on each occasion. Contrary to what many teach, we do not have to "sin" every day, and introduce ourselves as criminals still committing crimes, yet exonerated from the penalty because we "personally know the judge".

I do, however, understand the humility aspect of it all, by introducing yourself as a "sinner saved by grace" to a heathen. I would use extreme discretion in calling myself what I really am so as to not unduly repel a person I'm trying to win to God. To blatantly tell an unregenerate person that you're a "Saint" can be disastrous to your testimony! But when I'm in the fellowship of SAINTS, we tell it like it is.

This whole post came about when a well-meaning guy tried to convince me that we as Christians have no right to claim

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Are we "sinners saved by grace" or "saints who chose to sin"?

sainthood; we are all just "saved sinners" until glorification occurs. I told him that, if this is so, Paul was very misleading in his salutations to the churches; you never read "...to the SINNERS which are at Ephesus..."

Re: - posted by JoeA (), on: 2006/8/9 15:45

Quote:

-----But are we still professional sinners in God's eye? This is what I'm getting at.

1 Corinthians 6:9 "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

10 "Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

11 "And such **were** some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

What are we? We are no longer sinners. On the contrary we are *washed, sanctified, and justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God*. I think that would be a fair testimony to give to an unsaved person. No self-exaltation, but rather all glory given to Christ and His merits.