

University Heights Church
of Christ
445 Columbia Ave.,
Lexington, KY 40508
(859) 255-6257
www.uheightschurch.com

WORSHIP SERVICES

Sunday

Bible Study: 9:45 AM

Worship: 10:45 AM; 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Study: 7:30 PM (This is
immediately followed by a
short worship period)

First Friday of Each Month

Singing: 7:30 PM

LEADERSHIP

Elders

Garry Banks, David Collins,
John Thompson

Evangelist

Adam Litmer

Deacons

Troy Antle, Richard Brundige,
Matt Thompson, Adam
Litmer, Bill Morelan, Jim
Parsons, Pat Seabolt, Adam
Daniels, Jamie Powell

Adam's Office Hours

Tuesday-Friday (8:30-4:00)

The remainder of the question has been discussed previously. A fallen Christian can be forgiven by repenting and asking for God's forgiveness (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9). God not only *can* forgive; He *wants* to forgive. Some have called this the "second law of pardon."

All of Mr. Martin's problems would be cleared up by a serious and unbiased reading of Scripture. Indeed, all who desire to please God need only search through His word to learn how. Love God, keep His commandments, and know that you are saved. It truly is that simple. Praise God!

IN NEED OF PRAYERS

David Seabolt, Jeff Howerton, Rhonda Boyd, Louis Harrod, Paul Atkisson, Barbara Matheny, David Morrow, Debbie Parker, John Bennett, Robert Brundige, Donald Dawson, Gail Stein, Sandy Childress, Susie Burton, Jacob Profit, Valerie and Barry Boyd, Janett's mother and stepfather, Sandy Driver, Erlene Young (had another fall and broke her wrist), Doris Baker, Burnice Richardson, Ruth Poynter, Larry Sells, Christian Shadburne, Mattie Johnson (hip replacement), Evelyn Damron, Tony Tirey, Rose Curtis, Andrew Westphal, Jennifer Dunbar, Jean Gartland, Joe Cable, James Ratliff, Betty Clevinger, Glenda Brock

University Heights Messenger

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Responding to a Baptist Pastor 5

Adam Litmer

Question *"If salvation is not by works of righteousness which we have done, and baptism is a work of righteousness, then how can water baptism be a part of salvation (Titus 3:5; Matthew 3:16)? In the Bible, we are SAVED BY GRACE, and grace does not involve human effort or merit—grace is grace and work is work! (Just read Ephesians 2:8, 9 and Romans 11:6)"*

Let's talk about Titus 3:5, the verse upon which Mr. Martin is basing his argument. Paul says, beginning in verse 4, *But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.* Paul was concerned that some would minimize the love and mercy by which we are saved and so hastened to point out that our salvation is not based upon our own merit.

Unfortunately, many join Mr. Martin in his erroneous conclusion that Paul is saying no conditions or works are attached to salvation. Paul's point is not that salvation is without any works or conditions, but that it is without works of merit. One cannot be saved by works of merit and grace at the same time. In Romans 4:4 Paul declared, *Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due.* Paul's use of the word "due" identifies the works under consideration—those by which one earns what he gets (works of merit). If one were to live a sinless life salvation would not be a gracious gift, but what he was owed on his own merit. However, no one reading this has lived a sinless life which means no one reading this *can* earn their salvation. All saved people reading this are saved because they received God's gracious gift (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

Yet interestingly enough, Titus 3:5 itself makes it clear that salvation is conditional. The verse concludes with, *by the washing of regeneration and the*

renewal of the Holy Spirit. This washing of regeneration refers to none other than water baptism on our part (John 3:3-5; Ephesians 5:26; Hebrews 10:22). Mr. Martin claims that water baptism is a work or merit when in fact it is a work of *faith*. It is just here we distinguish one of the great problems in the religious world today-the failure to distinguish between works of merit and works of faith.

Works of faith do not keep a gift from being a gift or grace from being grace. Would Mr. Martin deny that the falling of the walls of Jericho was a gift of God to Israel? Surely not. Yet God did not permit them to simply stand there and wait for it to happen. They were commanded to march around the city (Joshua 6:25). No works of merit were involved, only faith acting in obedience (Hebrews 11:30). It must be understood that the verses that teach salvation by works (James 2:21-24; Acts 10:35; etc.) have reference to works of faith, while those verses that teach salvation without works (Romans 3:28; 4:4; etc.) have reference to works of merit.

Thus, Mr. Martin's statement that "grace does not involve human effort or merit" is only partially correct. Our salvation *does not* involve meritorious works at all, yet Scripture is equally clear that it does require effort on our part (1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Philippians 2:12). After all, belief itself is said to be a work (John 6:29). I'm still awaiting Mr. Martin's explanation of that verse.

Responding To A Baptist Pastor 6

Adam Litmer

Question "*If as a Christian I can fall and 'lose my salvation,' is it possible to regain it? If so, how? If God 'takes away' my salvation, doesn't that make Him an 'Indian giver'? How could I ever know for sure that I was saved or lost?*"

Let's begin by reading the words of Deuteronomy 30:15-18. The children of Israel were approaching entrance to the Promised Land. This is what God said to them through His prophet, Moses. *See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commands of the Lord your God that I command you today, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in His ways, and by keeping His commandments and His statutes and His rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess.*

God had promised to give Israel the wonderful land of Canaan. He did precisely that and eventually Israel possessed every foot of land He had promised to them (1 Kings 4:21). Later, because of their unfaithfulness and unbelief, God took back what He had given them and drove them from the land (2 Kings 17:22-23; 25:21). This was the very thing He had warned them against and finally did it after years of patiently seeking to correct their course.

Now I suppose in Mr. Martin's view this makes God an "Indian giver." I'm a bit embarrassed for Mr. Martin that he would choose to use that phrase. It is obvious in the way he uses it that he considers the thought of giving and then taking back unfair. However, in this particular context Mr. Martin and those of similar mind forget or never noticed a very important point: God's promises have always been conditioned upon the continued belief and obedience of His people. Perhaps Mr. Martin would admit this as it relates to the Old Testament, yet his words clearly indicate that he does not accept such to be the case under the New Covenant, at least as far as salvation is concerned.

Is it possible to fall away from God after initial salvation? The Hebrew writer certainly thought so. Indeed, he used those very words in 3:12. *Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.* It would be interesting to hear Mr. Martin's explanation for why this verse does not mean what it says. Some argue that the Hebrew writer merely speaks of a hypothetical situation that could not actually occur. If that were the case the admonition to "take care" would be entirely meaningless for what is described is not possible. It should be noted that the Holy Spirit uses Hebrews 3, beginning in verse 5 and running through the remainder of the chapter, to illustrate the punishment for unbelieving, disobedient Israel as a warning to the Hebrew Christians that the same thing could happen to them if they were not careful. Was the Holy Spirit mistaken?

Perhaps Mr. Martin would claim that if any *did* fall it was because they were "never really converted in the first place." In other words, they were never *really* Christians. This popular explanation does not hold up to an examination of the language used by the Hebrew writer. He warns that they might "*fall away from the living God.*" How does one go about falling away from the living God if they were never with the living God to begin with? No, the words mean exactly what they say and an unprejudiced, honest heart will be glad to accept God at His Word.

