When the devil entices a person into a sinful life, God never thinks, “That's okay. I didn't want him anyway.” Every lost soul brings tears to God’s eyes and pain to His heart. He wants all to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked” (Ezekiel 33:11).

Still, some feel unworthy of God's love. Why would God want to save someone like me? they think. It is not about us and what we have done; it is about God and who He is. There are four reasons God wants to save “someone like you”:

He made you (Genesis 1:26–27; Acts 17:28–29). We do not carelessly discard something handcrafted; neither does God.

He bought you (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18–19). He has a lot invested in you. His only Son’s blood was a high price to pay, but you meant that much to Him.

He has chosen you (Mark 16:15–16). God could have chosen to do His work on earth in any number of ways; but He has chosen to work through His people. If Christians do not tell others the gospel, they will never learn. In a world of billions, He desires that each one of his children tell others of His love.

He loves you (John 3:16; Galatians 2:20). God loves the rich, the poor; the educated, the uneducated; the up-and-coming, the down-and-out. God loves all sinners, every sinner, each sinner, everywhere, all the time. Most important, He loves you!

Yet many feel hopeless regarding the prospects of their salvation. Let us directly address four reasons some feel spiritually irredeemable:

“I have sinned too much.”

Some think they committed so many sins so many times for so many years that they crossed a threshold beyond the point of return. They feel that God could never forgive so much.

It is true that sinners do not deserve forgiveness. “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23a). It is also true that no sinner is unsalvageable. Paul continues: “The gift of God is eternal life (6:23b). Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18).
God does not expect perfection. He looks for “good and faithful” servants (Matthew 25:21), not perfect ones. He knows we make mistakes.

Consider to whom Jesus said this. When Jesus taught on the unforgivable sin, the Pharisees had just seen Him work a miracle, heard Him preach salvation, saw His perfect example, and were still so hard-hearted as to accuse Him of being in league with Beelzebul, the prince of devils. This showed a callousness that put them in great spiritual danger. A person who persistently rejects the New Testament evidence for Christ’s deity today (cf. John 20:30–31), in principle, exhibits the same Pharisaic attitude. If he does not repent, he will commit the unpardonable sin.

Consider when Jesus said this. It was a time of transition from Old Testament law to New Testament gospel. At that unique time in history, it was possible to live in the latter days of God’s dispensation, continue through Christ’s life, and move into the Spirit’s dispensation.

• Thus one could reject the Old Testament—even blaspheming God—yet repent and accept Jesus’ preaching and be saved.
• The same person might reject both the Old Testament and Jesus’ teaching—even blaspheming Jesus—yet later obey the apostles’ inspired preaching on or after Pentecost and be saved.
• However, if he rejected the Old Testament, Jesus’ sermons, and the Spirit’s words, there was no other coming dispensation. To reject the New Testament was to reject God’s last lifeline.

One who blasphemes the Spirit cannot be saved in that condition; so long as he remains a blasphemer, he has no hope of grace, mercy, or salvation. If one worries that he has committed this sin, it is unlikely he has, for he shows that he still believes in God, desires salvation, and fears being lost. If this motivates him to obey the gospel, he can be saved (Mark 16:15–16).

“I have not received a sign that God saved me, so I must not be of the elect.”

If you are of the impression that God flipped a coin and you lost, rest assured that He did not. If you asked God to save you and nothing happened, do not worry that He decided to reject you for some reason. If you heard that you speak in tongues if the Spirit saved you, do not fret. This is not the case. The sky does not change color depending on how much evil happens on the ground beneath it. It is the same with God’s love.

Preachers influenced by Calvinism have taught many to expect a special miraculous call by the Holy Spirit (called “irresistible grace”) to save them and confirm that God elected (predestined) them to salvation. Such a miracle would violate four Bible truths:

• God’s impartiality toward man (Acts 10:34–35; Romans 2:11).
• Man’s free moral agency (Joshua 24:15).
• God’s economy of government (1 Corinthians 14:40). Economy is the most expedient and intelligent system of operation. Is it easiest to save each man differently or to put the message in a book for all to read?
• The principle and order of the great commission (Mark 16:15–16). Why
send disciples to tell every creature of salvation if they cannot respond to the preaching? In Calvinism, the written Word has no power until the Holy Spirit makes the sinner respond. Why preach, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” if one is saved by a miracle and baptized later? A subjective “better-felt-than-told-experience” is not to be trusted more than an objective understanding and complying with Scripture (Isaiah 8:20; 2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:3; Jeremiah 17:9).

The Bible teaches predestination (Ephesians 1:3–11), but not a Calvinistic version of it. This text says all blessings are “in Christ” and that we are chosen “in him.” To be in Christ is to be in His body, the church (Galatians 3:26–27; Ephesians 1:22–23; 4:4). In short, then, God predestinated that each person could be saved in the church. God voted for us; the devil voted against us; we cast the deciding vote.

“I have a sin I cannot quit.”

It is true that we must live a holy life to enjoy God’s approval and fellowship (Luke 13:3; Romans 12:1–2). God’s forgiveness is not temporary, but we can return to a sinful life and lose our salvation (2 Peter 2:20–22).

To be addicted to a sin is a serious problem, but it is by no means hopeless. God made us some promises that help in this situation. Keep in mind that God is powerful enough to do anything He wants to do and is honest enough to do everything He promised to do.

- God does not expect perfection. He looks for “good and faithful” servants (Matthew 25:21), not perfect ones. He knows we make mistakes. Solomon said, “For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Ecclesiastes 7:20; cf. Isaiah 53:6). “If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” (Psalm 130:3). John wrote, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves” (1 John 1:8).

- If we mess up and fall, we don’t have to give up; we can get up and start again as many times as we need. As His children, if we confess our sins we will be forgiven (1 John 1:9). If we are to forgive others seventy times seven times (Matthew 18:21–22), then how many times will God forgive?

- If you have tried and tried but nothing works, remember that breakthroughs can happen even after years of failure. Ponder Paul’s simple promise: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13).

- Physical addictions are overcome by spiritual strength (Ephesians 6:12–18). God gives us the spiritual tools to overcome any sin. Weapons at our disposal include fasting (1 Corinthians 7:5), praying (Ephesians 6:18), Bible reading (Psalm 119:11), meditating on Scripture (1 Timothy 4:15), and the support of other Christians (Galatians 6:2).

- When you feel you cannot win, read John’s assurance: “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4). Also read Paul’s promise: “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

- If you feel you are spinning your wheels, remember God is working on you and won’t quit. “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

- When you feel Satan is too strong, rest assured that he can be defeated: “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you” (James 4:7–8). Satan is a sore loser and will not leave us alone, but he fights a losing battle as long as we remain committed to God.

- We must never quit trying to overcome (Galatians 6:9), make excuses (Luke 14:18), or cover up our sins (Proverbs 28:13).

Someone said, “People might criticize us, condemn us, gossip about us, find fault and nitpick us, berate or belittle us, accuse us, but God just loves us.” He wants nothing more than for us to succeed and make it all the way to heaven.
Hit and Run

The hit-and-run victim was just getting to his feet when a policeman ran up to help. “My mother-in-law just tried to run me over!” the shaken man told the cop. “The car hit you from behind,” the officer said. “How could you tell it was your mother-in-law?” “I recognized the laugh!” he replied.

The Best Crop

The rugged farmer and his devoted wife sat near the back of the auditorium. Graduation exercises were in progress. When the time came for the honors to be presented, their only son was cited as the highest ranking man in the graduation class. His character, his leadership, and his service had made him far and away the first choice. Joy filled their souls, and even though their eyes were moist with tears, there was great gladness in their hearts. And again, it was an unforgettable moment when they heard their son bring the valedictory address as the highest ranking man in his class. All the effort and sacrifice they had made to see their son through four years of college now seemed so small. The good wife gripped the farmer’s arm a little tighter when he leaned over and said, “Well, Ma, I guess that’s about the best crop we ever raised!”

“I recognized the laugh!” he replied.
In the Saturday Review, Norman Cousins wrote concerning pornography:

“The trouble with this wide open pornography . . . is not that it corrupts, but that it desensitizes; not that it unleashes the passions, but that it cripples the emotions; not that it encourages a mature attitude, but that it is a reversion to infantile obsessions; not that it removes the blinders, but that it distorts the view.

Prowess is proclaimed, but love is denied.

What we have is not liberation, but dehumanization.”

I especially like the points that he makes about desensitizing and dehumanizing.

Paul described some who had their conscience seared with a hot iron (1 Timothy 4:2). These individuals had lost their sensitivity to sin. They had lost their ability to blush (Jeremiah 6:15).

Furthermore, they began to see other people as objects. Their eyes were “full of adultery” (2 Peter 2:14). When they saw a woman, they viewed her through lustful eyes. Of course, our world is guilty of the same. The words of Jesus must ever be before our eyes: “But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:28).

To ask a Bible question or view previously answered questions, go to www.HouseToHouse.com.

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**The “Lost” Parables**

**Directions:** Find your answers in Luke 15.

1. To whom did Jesus tell the parables of Luke 15?
2. In Jesus’ parable, how many of his 100 sheep did the shepherd lose?
3. When the shepherd found the lost sheep, what did he do with it?
4. In the parable of the lost coin, how many coins were not lost?
5. “Joy shall be in ______ over one ______ that repenteth.”
6. Of what kind of metal was the woman’s lost coin made?
7. How many sons did the father of the prodigal son have?
8. Which son asked his father for his portion of goods?
9. What did the son decide to do after he received his inheritance?
10. In the new country, what did he do with his money?
11. What happened in the country where the prodigal son went?
12. After the prodigal son wasted all of the money, what job did he get?
13. What food did the poor son desire to eat?
14. “When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had ________, and ran, and fell on his neck.”
15. “Father, I have __________ against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy _______.
16. He planned to ask his father to make him a hired __________________ .
17. What four things did the father give the returning son?
18. “My son was dead, and is _______ again; he was ________, and is found.”
19. Who was jealous of the prodigal son?
20. Where was the prodigal’s brother when the prodigal returned?
21. What was his brother’s response to the celebration?
It is said that when the famous missionary, Dr. David Livingstone, started his trek across Africa, he had 73 books in three packs, weighing 180 pounds. After the party had gone 300 miles, Livingstone was obliged to throw away some of the books because of the fatigue of those carrying his baggage. As he continued on his journey his library grew less and less, until he had but one book left—his Bible. Truly, the Bible is the one book humanity cannot do without.

One writer said about the Bible, “This Book is the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable.

‘Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you.

“It is the traveler’s map, the pilgrim’s staff, the pilot’s compass, the soldier’s sword, and the Christian’s character.”

“I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.”

PSALM 119:16

The first book taken, the last book left . . .

I want to learn more about the Bible!

Name: ____________________________
Address: __________________________
City/State: _________________________
Phone: ____________________________
Email: _____________________________
Prayer requests or comments: __________________________

I would like:

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☑ A DVD Bible Study
☑ An In-Home Bible Study

More subjects:

☑ Offering Community to Our Community
☑ But I Don’t Believe the Bible
☑ Don’t Give Up, Don’t Ever Give Up
☑ I Have this Nagging Fear I Am Not Saved

☑ Where the Omnipresent God Isn’t
☑ If I Don’t Preach on Hell
☑ Practical Suggestions for Learning the Bible
☑ Jesus’ Mother

☑ Don’t Quit: Passing God’s Faith Tests
☑ What Would it Take to Get Us Back on Sunday Night?
☑ Can I Change?
☑ Scared of the Dark

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The Light Network is a network of podcasts (online radio shows) dedicated to encouraging, enlightening, and empowering you in your service to God. With programming for men, women, new Christians, and much more, there’s sure to be something you will enjoy! New content is added daily! To check it out, go to www.thelightnetwork.tv.

New Tracts!

All materials are completely FREE of charge (including shipping in the U.S. or Canada).
The Greatest Gift of All

A long time ago in Persia, a benevolent ruler named Shah Abbis reigned. To get to know his people better, he wore disguises to mingle among them. One day, he went as a poor man to the public baths, and sat by the fireman tending the furnace. At mealtime, he shared his food, and talked to the poor man as to a friend. Again and again, he visited the fireman until the man grew to love him. Finally, the emperor revealed his identity to the fireman. The emperor expected the fireman to request a gift of him. However, the fireman requested nothing. With love and wonder, the fireman declared, “You left your palace and your glory to sit with me in this dark place, to partake of my coarse fare, and to care whether my heart was glad or sad. On others you may bestow rich presents, but to me you have given yourself.” Of course, we know a ruler far more benevolent than this Persian monarch. We know a ruler who left the ivory palaces of heaven to come and to live among us (Psalm 45:8). We know a ruler who was clothed with flesh and took upon himself the form of a servant (Philippians 2:5–8). We know a ruler who became poor that we might be made rich (2 Corinthians 8:9). We know a ruler who was such a friend to us that He gave His life for us (John 15:12–13). Of course, the King is Jesus Christ.

One of the reasons we know we can trust the Bible is that it contains verifiable history, places, and people. Sometimes the people mentioned are minor players on the historical stage and sometimes they had quite an impact. Here are a few mentioned in the Bible, who have been verified through archaeology.

**HAZAEI** - 841–798 B.C.
Aramean king over part of Syria and Palestine. Found on the inscription of Shalmaneser III, the Stele of Zakkur, inscribed briddles, and inscribed ivories.

**TIRHAKAH** - 730–715 B.C.
King of Ethiopia. Mentioned in Assyrian inscriptions, and the Babylonian Chronicles, and many Egyptian hieroglyphic inscriptions.

**HEZEKIAH** - 726–627 B.C.
King of Judah. Found on the Rassam Cylinder of Sennacherib, an inscription over a tomb of his secretary, Shebna (2 Kings 18:18), the Siloam inscription, and the Lachish relief.

**JOSEPH CAIAPHAS** - a.d. 10–36
High priest. Found on the Caiaphas Ossuary.

**PONTIUS PILATE** - a.d. 26–36
Prefect of Judea. Found on three coins of Pontius Pilate and the Pilate Stone.

**LYSANIAS** - a.d. 27–28
Tetrarch of Abilene. Mentioned in inscription in the dedication of a temple.

**THEATRE OF EPHESUS**
The theater of Ephesus has been excavated, and an inscription from a.d. 103–104 in Greek and Latin tells how a Roman official presented a silver image of the Greek goddess Diana to be set on a pedestal in the theatre. This reminds of the account in Acts 19:24 and following.

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Christians sometimes sell the grace of God short. While we intellectually know that grace is undeserved, we sometimes tend to limit God’s grace to the more “deserving sinner.” You know, the guy who is trying to do right but makes “ordinary” mistakes. But that’s our problem. There’s no such thing as a deserving sinner.

The guy who walks too close to the mudhole and gets a little mud on the sides of his shoes is just as defiled and unfit for heaven as the guy who wallowed in the mudhole. Yet we sometimes seem to forget this truth. Friends, God’s grace isn’t for those who have most things under control but just need a little extra help. Rather His grace is for the helpless, and that includes all men whether they have just a little mud on their shoes or are covered from head to toe.

Maybe we need to be reminded of what we sing,

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd’st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, and waiting not,
To rid my soul of one dark blot;
To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Instead of limiting God’s grace, let’s lift our voices and give thanks that God’s grace reaches even me!

—Steve Higginbotham, MercEmail