

In Opposition

“You’re either for us or against us” is a common phrase that most of us have heard. In many situations, it’s not fully true — but in the case of sovereignty, it is. For example, if you decided not to pay taxes this year because you consider yourself “neutral” toward the United States government, they would not view you as neutral. They would interpret that as opposition. As a result, you would either be forced to comply and pay taxes or stand against the government and face jail time.

In many ways, this is similar to where we stand with God. With Him there is no middle ground. If you think, *“I’m not following Him, but it’s not like I’m against Him,”* that doesn’t mean God will view you as neutral. We are all living in the kingdom of God’s universe, daily taking advantage of the infinite blessings He has given His creation. If we refuse to acknowledge Him for that, then we are in fact standing against Him.

This means that at one point, every one of us stood as perpetrators and enemies of God. We cannot give ourselves the benefit of the doubt by believing we were somehow less lost or less deserving of condemnation than the “worst” of sinners — because apart from Christ, we were no different.

Jonathan Edwards had many personal resolutions that he lived by, and one of them captures well how we ought to look upon those who are still standing in opposition to God:

Resolution 8: “Resolved, to act, in all respects, both speaking and doing, as if nobody had been so vile as I, and as if I had committed the same sins, or had the same infirmities or failings as others; and that I will let the knowledge of their failings promote nothing but shame in myself, and prove only an occasion of my confessing my own sins and misery to God.”

When we look at those around us who are lost, it’s easy to grow frustrated or upset with their choices — especially when those choices hurt themselves or others. But this should instead remind us that we are no different by nature. We once lived as slaves to the same sin that now confines them. Therefore, we ought to thank God for the enormous grace He has shown us in saving us out of darkness, and also hold out hope that Christ can save and change those around us who remain trapped in sin.

Who We Now Are

When we fail and sin, it’s easy to revert back to our former identity as “marred and tarnished sinners.” But if we are saved, that is no longer who we are. Even in failure, our identity is secure. As Paul reminds us, we are holy, blameless, and above reproach before God. We bear the name and glory of our adopted Father, Christ.

One example of this truth being challenged comes in John 9. A man born blind is healed by Jesus, who explains that his blindness was not because of sin but so that the glory of God might be revealed in him. Yet after his healing, the Pharisees tried to discredit him, saying he was “born in utter sin.”

This is how the sinful flesh lies to us (as Paul describes in Romans 7:14–25). When we sin, it whispers that our failure defines us, that we are nothing more than the sin we committed. And even when we obey God, it tries to bind us to an identity of shame, insisting that nothing can truly change us. Both are lies.

We need to fight those lies with truth. Here are a few verses to share with the students:

- **2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)** — “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”
- **2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)** — “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”
- **Romans 8:1 (ESV)** — “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”
- **Galatians 2:20 (ESV)** — “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”
- **Colossians 3:3 (ESV)** — “For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”
- **Ephesians 1:7 (ESV)** — “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.”

Can We Lose Our Salvation?

A question that may come up is whether someone can lose their salvation. With the way these truths are written, it’s a fair question. But the real issue is this: *How does one make it to the end? How does one remain steadfast in the hope of the gospel?*

The answer is a life sustained by the Holy Spirit.

Paul’s prayer in **Ephesians 3:14–21** shows the Spirit’s ongoing, strengthening work:

“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts

through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

In contrast, Scripture also shows that apart from the Spirit’s sustaining work, none of us can endure to the end:

- **Romans 3:20** — “For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.”
- **Galatians 3:10–11** — “For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.’ Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’”
- **Romans 8:3** — “For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh.”

Therefore, this is not a call to “work harder” so we can make it to the end. It is a call to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to abide in Christ.