

Q&A

Salvation in Proverbs

Q This week I am teaching on Proverbs 23:13-14. Of particular interest is the phrase “save his soul from Sheol” (ESV) in v14b. The NASB and NKJV translate this as “rescue his soul from Sheol” and “deliver his soul from hell”, respectively. My intuition and reading of all of Proverbs 23 tells me Solomon is writing of salvation from something like moral troubles, but I cannot be sure. I am not confident he is speaking of deliverance from hell. What do you think?

A Here is my take on Prov 23:14: I do believe that moral troubles are in the background. But in the foreground is what can follow moral troubles: physical death.
Correction is not to be withheld from a child (Prov 23:13). The result of correction via spanking is that you save his soul or life from Sheol.

Here Sheol stands for premature death, not eternal condemnation. Before Jesus’ ascension, all dead, regenerate, and unregenerate were in Sheol (see Luke 16, the rich man and Lazarus). In other words, Sheol was the place of the dead, not the place of eternal torment (even though the majority of those there were unregenerate and hence were experiencing torment).

Note that elsewhere in Proverbs we see that righteousness is the path of life and unrighteousness is the path of death (Prov 1:19; 2:19; 3:2, 18, 22; 4:10, 13, 22; 6:23; 7:23; 8:35; 11:19; 12:28; 13:14; 14:27; 15:24; 16:25; 19:23; 21:21; and 24:11). All of the bolded passages are especially relevant. For example, “*As righteousness leads to life, so he who pursues evil pursues it to his own death*” (Prov 11:19); “*In the way of righteousness is life, and in its pathway there is no death*” (Prov 12:28).

The same truth is found in the NT. See James 1:21 and 5:19-20, for example.

This is true for the regenerate or the unregenerate. Godliness enhances and extends one’s life. Wickedness diminishes and shortens one’s life.

Of course, Prov 23:14 is directed at parents and has special import in parenting. If parents do not train their children properly, then the children may well end up on a path that leads to premature death. This is not to say that all young adults who die due to their own moral failure (e.g., overdoses, alcoholism, STDs, drunk driving, etc.) are a result of parents who did not discipline and train them properly. Nor is it to say that 100% of children not properly disciplined by their parents end up in moral failure and early death. But it is to say that failure to discipline and train your children will typically lead them on a path of moral failure and premature death.

I hope this helps.

Warmly,
Bob

Homosexuality and Approval

Q Regarding your recent article on homosexuality (“Alan Chambers of Exodus International,” Sept/Oct 2012), I understand you to be teaching that it is okay to accept Christ and live a homosexual life. You’re telling gays that, because they are saved by grace, they can live a life of sin, and even reject Christ, and not fear any consequences. The Bible sure does not teach that, right?

A No, the Bible does not teach that, and I regret it if you received that impression from our magazine. If a gay person believes in Christ's promise of everlasting life (John 3:16), they will receive the gift of everlasting life just as any other sinner can, whatever their sin may be. God justifies the *ungodly* (Rom 4:5).

But that does not mean God approves of ungodly behavior, such as homosexuality. There's a difference between receiving eternal life as a free gift, and living a life that is pleasing to God.

Think of it in terms of a father's relationship with his son. That biological relationship can never be undone. The son is always a child of his father. But that does not mean the father necessarily approves of how his son lives.

In the same way, once we believe in Jesus for everlasting life, we become adopted as children of God (John 1:12, Gal 4:4-7). That relationship with God can never be undone. Everlasting life is a permanent gift.

But once we receive everlasting life, the hard part begins. All Christians are called to repent of their sins, whatever that sin is. Repentance is not a condition for receiving eternal life, but it is a condition for receiving God's approval.

Persisting in homosexual sins (as with any sin), will result in spiritual ruin, will bring on the experience of God's temporal wrath and judgment in this life, and will lead to shame in the life to come. So it's important to flee from homosexuality, just as it is important to flee from all other sins.

Some churches think that the doctrine of eternal security encourages people to live in sin, and that holiness comes from the fear of losing one's salvation.

We take the opposite view. We believe the Bible teaches that it is the assurance of everlasting life that can never be lost that inspires us to holy living. We will truly act more holy only if we fully understand how gracious, generous, merciful, and loving God is towards us by giving us eternal life freely.

Blessings,
Shawn

Got questions? Comments? We want them! Send them to: shawn@faithalone.org.