

**Can I lose
my
salvation?**

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Contents

Introduction

Chapter:

- 1 What do we mean by 'salvation?'
- 2 What is 'saved?'
- 3 What is guaranteed?
- 4 What is a human being?
- 5 What is not guaranteed?
- 6 Working out salvation with fear and trembling.
- 7 A) Ourselves
- 8 B) The world
- 9 C) The devil
- 10 Conclusion
- 11 What about objections?
- 12 Can I opt out of salvation?

Introduction

Many say- Yes.

Many say - No

The rest say- Don't know

The question divides Christians. Opinions are often very strongly held. Discussion can be fraught with difficulty and with tension.

The answer is - unless we understand what is meant by salvation, we cannot come to a biblical conclusion!

The word of truth is very precise and the only safe path.

Chapter 1

What do we mean by 'salvation?'

Let's go Greek

'*Soteria*' is translated 'salvation.' The word means deliverance from danger, salvation, preservation.

Only when we understand that salvation is 'deliverance from danger,' can we begin to answer our question.

Once we define it correctly we can begin to apply it to our human frame.

In addition, unless we understand that the human frame is made up of three parts, we will not be able to correctly answer our question.

Paul writing to the Thessalonians gives this benediction - '*Now may the God of peace, Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*' 1 Thessalonians 5:23

Chapter 2

What is 'saved?'

Now we come to the most important part of the gospel message. Jesus addressed Nicodemus with the words - *'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.'* (John 3)

And - 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.'

And – 'that which is born of flesh is flesh and that which is born of Spirit is spirit.'

This is utterly fundamental.

- 1) The very clear gospel message is 'You must be born again.'
- 2) That which is born of Spirit is spirit – it is the human spirit that needs to be, and is, born again when we believe in Jesus. (By 'believe' we mean trusting, for my own benefit, in the work of Jesus at Calvary, Him taking the penalty of my sin and giving me the free gift of righteousness.)

You believe Jesus is the Son of God.

You believe Jesus is divine - that is He is God and man.

You believe He died to take away your sin and you place your trust in that - then you are born again.

But what does it mean to be born again?

Nicodemus challenged Jesus with the statement, *'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?'*

Being born again has nothing to do with the flesh – in biblical terms flesh means the physical body, and the mind will and emotions (soul) of man.

It is the human spirit that is born again.

Jesus made it clear – being born again is Spirit to spirit.

Being born again is a fundamental change in the status of the human spirit – transferred from death to life. In Adam all died, and now in Jesus we are made alive. (Romans 5)

Chapter 3

What is guaranteed?

There are wonderful promises regarding the work the Holy Spirit has performed in each born again believer.

'In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom you also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.' Ephesians 1:13-14

Sealed - the seal is the emblem of ownership and security - the one sealed being secured from destruction. Sealed - made fast with the emblem of ownership.

Guarantee - the Greek *arrabon* is translated guarantee - it means divine pledge. It is the down payment deposited by the purchaser – and we, the born again believers, are now the purchased possession of the Lord spoken of in verse 14.

'Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us in God who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.' 1 Corinthians 1:21-22

The Holy Spirit now lives within our hearts where He guarantees our deliverance from danger, our salvation.

How is this guarantee possible as humans continue to sin?

Firstly, we have been given the free gift of righteousness.

'For he made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be the righteousness of God in Him.' 2 Corinthians 5:21

'Much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.' Romans 5:17

By believing in Jesus and being born again we have received the gift of righteousness - that is being put in right standing with God.

Secondly, that part of us that is born again cannot sin -

Your born again human spirit cannot sin

This is very clearly stated by John in his first letter:

'Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.'

1 John 3:9

We know that it is the Holy Spirit who has been sown as a seed within us from Jesus statement, *'the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.'* - the future aspect fulfilled when Jesus breathed on them and said *'Receive the Holy Spirit.'* (John 14:17 and 20:22)

We have learned a vital truth - our born again human spirit, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, cannot sin. Thus the salvation, the deliverance from danger, of our human spirit is not in any doubt

– it is guaranteed by God, Himself. You cannot lose this element of your salvation.

Chapter 4

What is a human being?

Here we come to consider the tripartite nature of man

Every human being is made up of three basic parts –

The human spirit - which dwells in the realm of death until born again – ‘*And you, He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.*’ Ephesians 2:1 and Colossians 2:13 The human spirit ‘transferred’ from the realm of death to life.

The physical body – touch it, feel it, - it’s obvious!

The human soul - that is the mind, the will and the emotions – the personality.

Paul writing to the Thessalonians gives this benediction - ‘*Now may the God of peace, Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*’ 1 Thessalonians 5:23

Rather, similar to the way that we consider God to be, at the same time, One and Three – we can consider ourselves to be one with three parts that make up the complete person.

Chapter 5

What is not guaranteed?

Having established that our human spirit is now eternally secure, what part of us is not guaranteed deliverance from danger - 'salvation.'

'Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.' Philippians 2:12

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

Paul is obviously not referring to the deliverance from danger, salvation, of the human spirit – we have already seen that is the unique work of God, Himself, over which we have no influence whatsoever. Once born again we are born again – *He will never leave us nor forsake us.* (Hebrews 13:5) *Even if we become faithless He remains faithful as He cannot deny Himself.* (2 Timothy 2:13) *The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.* (Romans 11:29)

That leaves us with the deliverance from danger of the physical body and the soul. Now we do have to work out the deliverance from danger of these two parts of our tripartite being.

Chapter 6

Work out salvation with fear and trembling

Fear – Paul writing to the Philippians, quoted above, is writing in the context of the magnificent work of Jesus on the cross; and of urging us to be like minded, of one accord, esteeming others better than ourselves. So we are talking of reverential fear of the Lord and His ways, rather than terror – God is a loving God. Only unbelievers need fear God in the sense of being terrified.

Trembling - is the physical manifestation of being fearful – as with the woman who suffered a flow of blood and reached out to touch the hem of His garment. (Luke 8:47) We tremble before God because of His awesome holiness.

The tripartite enemy of our wellbeing

There are three distinct things which will seek to work against us – thus, causing our bodies and souls to be in danger:

Ourselves – we are a big problem! Our own flesh (physical body and soul) fights against the spirit. Galatians 5:17

Other people – ‘the world’ and its ways. *‘Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.* Colossians 2:8

The devil and his hordes. *'Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion.'* 1 Peter 5:8

Each of these work against us, trying to keep us away from the leading of the Spirit of God, trying to draw us into sin, trying to make us unfruitful in the Kingdom.

Jesus won the battle and provides the answer

Jesus was tempted (tested) in the same way as we are, and yet without sin.

'For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weakness, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.'

Hebrews 4:15-16

So Jesus has risen victoriously above the challenges we all face and in so doing has provided the way of victory for us - come to the throne of grace for mercy and grace in a time of need.

Human complexities.

One of the complexities of being human is that we often find it very difficult to accept grace. Somehow we need to justify ourselves instead of relying on the justification Jesus has accomplished for us. 'Good works' is a big enemy. Thinking we need to do something to justify our salvation or 'watch out you will lose it,' is the opposite of grace. Grace is a free gift.

Nevertheless there is a process of sanctification! Sanctification is setting apart unto God. It is a lifelong process we work out on a

daily basis. It is putting the Lord before everything else. It is being led by the Holy Spirit in all we do. Sanctification walking in holiness, which is the acceptable result of being made righteous.

Chapter 7

A) Ourselves

In the context of losing our deliverance from danger of the flesh (body and soul) we are the biggest problem!

The problems we face are:

- 1) Wrong thinking. This is probably the principal danger. Jesus told us it is the truth that sets us free – otherwise we are in bondage to some degree. Yet it seems there are very few who diligently study and rightly divide the word of truth.
- 2) Wrong guidance. We are called to be led by the Holy Spirit rather than by our own thinking and ideas. Our own projects, those not initiated by the Lord, are reliant on our own strength, and are thus likely to fail.
- 3) Wrong actions. A) Anything we do contrary to the written word of God - like any dishonesty for example. B) Anything we do that is unwise like taking drugs, excess alcohol, overeating, sexual deviation etc. C) Failure to deny the lusts of the flesh.
- 4) Wrong attitudes. Anger, spite, unforgiveness and so on will take their toll on our physical and mental state. Wrong

attitude towards, and concept of, our wonderful loving Father.

- 5) Pride. Thinking we are something of significance when we are not. God sets Himself against the proud. *'For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you,, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.'* Romans 12:3

- 6) Religion. A religious attitude is anathema to the freedom we have in Christ. Those the Son has set free are free indeed. (John 8:36)

- 7) Being judgemental. We are not called to judge others – the Lord deals with His children Himself.

And then – lack of time fellowshiping with the Holy Spirit. Lack of time seeking to understand the truth. Failure to ask in a time of need. Ignoring wise counsel. Failing to check our intentions with the Lord before we launch out.

Lack of generosity. A vital principle for the Christian life - as you sow so shall you reap.

Failure to enter into God's rest – detailed study in the booklet - 'Working from rest.' Another vital principle.

Our inappropriate thinking and actions can and will cause mental problems and physical infirmities putting us in danger.

Deliverance can come when we realise, repent, change our actions and call on the Lord for help.

If we continue in our inappropriate ways -

Firstly we quench the Holy Spirit. All the time, but getting fainter, the Spirit is urging us to change our thinking and actions through our conscience. We know something is out of order, but we quench the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19) and continue – and if we do that, then:

Secondly we grieve the Spirit. Now the indwelling Holy Spirit is uncomfortable. He cannot leave but He becomes increasingly uncomfortable. (Ephesians 4:25-32). Weaknesses and adverse symptoms will start to appear in our flesh.

Thirdly, and rarely, if we steadfastly refuse to change then eventually we commit the sin unto death. (1 John 5:16.) In the early church we see this in action in Acts chapter 5. Bear in mind this was the very early church and therefore foundational and critical days of establishment of the church. The sin unto death is very rare in our age – though it does happen occasionally. The Lord being amazingly patient with us. Death is the death of our flesh that our spirit may be saved. (1 Corinthians 5:5)

Chapter 8

B) The world

'Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

Colossians 2:8

The world tells us to strive – God tells us to work from rest.

The world tells us to trample on others as we make our way forward. - God tells us to love our neighbour and to consider his well being at least equal to if not above our own. (Matthew 6:33)

The world tells us we need to have this and that and to get rich – God tells us to seek first the Kingdom and all we need will be added to us.

The world, working though other people will try to draw us aside into its ways. An example is in the police force – historically officers were encouraged to join the Freemasons as a way to get promotion. This applies in other work realms also.

The world, through the media particularly, flashes enticing images before our eyes. Become worldly and indulge. You too can have this exciting life - just borrow and spend, borrow and spend, borrow and spend. Whereas the word of God tells us to be content with what we have, to seek the Lord and to enjoy Him.

The world says – come on try this. It may be drugs, it may be violence, it may be many things which are harmful.

Our flesh – physical bodies and our minds our wills and our emotions can be severely tested by the world. The antidote is to be thoroughly in love with Jesus and well versed in wisdom.

Wisdom is that which the Lord deems to be right.

We can overcome the world. 1 John 5:4-5 states that whatever is born of God overcomes the world. The born again human spirit, indwelt by the Holy Spirit has overcome the world. Follow the Spirit!

Chapter 9

C) The devil

'Be sober, be vigilant for your adversary, the devil, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.' 1 Peter 5:8-9

'For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.' Ephesians 6:12

It is with regret one has to note that many, many Christians and many, many churches have reduced Paul's letter to the Ephesians to 'we do not wrestle,' and ignored the instruction of the Holy Spirit through Peter to be sober and vigilant and to resist the devil.

Many do not believe there is a devil – even though the scripture is abundantly clear on the issue, and Jesus Himself was tested by and overcame him.

If we take that attitude that there is no spiritual enemy then we deny the truth and will be robbed without knowing it. That sickness that just won't heal. That bad event that took away something of yours. That struggle to get something done. That .. *fill in your own bad experiences* .. Its time to acknowledge that we

have an adversary – the thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. John 10:10.

If we don't discern when the devil (or his minions) are having a part to play in something badly affecting us, then how can we expect to overcome.

If we don't take action over the works of the devil how will we overcome, and how will we demonstrate to the principalities and powers the manifold wisdom of God. (Ephesians 3:10)

Jesus delegated His power to His disciples.

'Behold, I give you authority to trample on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy.' Luke 10:19

Now that power resides within us in the person of the Holy Spirit.

'He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.' 1 John 4:4 (Context - John is talking about the spirit of antichrist – he who is in us is greater.)

A closer walk with the Holy Spirit, keeping attentive to Him, will be helpful in alerting us to danger from our enemy.

Testimony

Here is the testimony of a good friend of ours who recently experienced a new freedom in Christ.

Her story is one of a manipulating and controlling mother in law whose actions were in the process of destroying our friend's marriage. This started from the day she was married 40 years ago

right up to the time of her recent breakthrough. At her wedding when the prayer for blessing, for happy and long marriage, was being spoken over the bride and groom the mother in law was heard to say, 'not if I can help it.'

Throughout her marriage the mother in law would interfere. Her son (the bridegroom) was, without realising it, being badly affected and the spiritual power was being brought against the marriage.

Our friend came to a point in time when the Spirit gave her extra insight and strength through a friend who did not realise what she was saying to her. Now our friend had the insight and the strength necessary to come against this bad spiritual power in the name of Jesus. She spoke out against the enemy breaking the spiritual tie and influence of the mother in law – and now enjoys better health and freedom – and the marriage has taken on a new level of vitality – and the bridegroom has also entered into greater freedom.

For a long time it was not clear that the enemy was at work behind the mother in law. Once insight and strength were received the enemy's power could be and was broken.

Regretfully many Christians are not aware of the spiritual force raised against them even though the scripture makes it clear that we have an enemy who prowls around trying to destroy. Any ongoing problem should be a trigger or us to ask the Lord for insight and guidance in obtaining the freedom Jesus has bought for us.

Chapter 10

Conclusion

Our question is answered – can you lose your salvation – the answer is:

No you cannot lose your eternal salvation and

yes you can lose aspects of the salvation, that is the deliverance from danger, of your body and soul, in your journey through life. However, the loss can be temporary as we pray and as we correct our lifestyles and as we exercise faith.

We are seeing a three stage process:

We are saved - yes definitely.

We are being saved - yes as we work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

We will be saved – on that glorious day when the great and precious promises of God are fulfilled when we meet Jesus and receive our new bodies just like His resurrection body. (1 Corinthians 15:35-49)

Chapter 11

What about objections.

As we said in the introduction there are many who say we can lose our salvation. Hopefully, now we can understand that this is not possible for the born again, human spirit indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but is possible for aspects of the deliverance from danger of our body and soul.

We need to take a look at the type of scripture used to try to validate the argument that unless we are very good we will lose our salvation.

Before we do we need to establish a basic rule of bible interpretation – that is - when considering a verse or passage that appears to be capable of interpretation in more than one way, we dismiss any interpretation that does not agree with scripture as a whole.

Here is an example – where translators (except the King James Bible) have fallen into this trap in Revelation 19:8

'And to her it was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints.' Authorised version

Other versions say *'for fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.'* 'Acts,' not in the Greek, has been added.

The Greek text says – it is the righteousnesses (plural) of the saints.

So which translation is correct?

Well we know that at salvation we are given the gift of righteousness by Jesus – so every born again believer has this precious gift.

We also know that our acts or works are tested by fire - *‘Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver precious stones, wood, hay, straw each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work (acts) which he has built on it (the foundation of faith) endures he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.’*

1 Corinthians 3:12-15.

Our acts are burned up – only the gold, silver and precious stones will survive the fire - no mention of linen.

Isaiah states – *‘all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.’* 64:6

So the only sound conclusion is, that the righteousness with which the bride is clothed, is that wonderful gift of righteousness given to us by the bridegroom. The plural being used in the text because the many, who make up the bride, each have their gift from Jesus – so many righteousnesses.

The acts/works which survive the testing by fire – that is gold, silver and precious stones make up the crowns which believers cast at the feet of Jesus in worship.

Unrighteous will not inherit.

'Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God. Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the Kingdom of God.' 1 Cor 6:9-10

'Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions heresies, envy, murder, drunkenness revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as told you in time past, that, those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.' Galatians 5:19-21

So those who teach that we can lose our salvation rely on these verses – which do seem to imply that possibility.

But Paul goes on to say : *'and as such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.'* 1 Corinthians 6:11

Everyone of us would fail to inherit eternal life if qualification relied on our actions, for we all fail in some way or another. But remember Jesus reply to Peter, when Jesus had said, *'If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me,'* and Peter said, *'Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.'* Then Jesus said, *He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean but not all of you.'* (reference to Judas Iscariot.)

The message is clear - we have been made fundamentally clean by receiving Jesus and the gift of righteousness. Of course, it is

very important for our actions to then increase and increase in holiness in life. That is we wash our feet, or each others feet, on our journey through life on earth.

Indeed, it is the promise of God that the Holy Spirit will accomplish this in us:

'For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, the He might be the firstborn among many brethren.' Romans 8:29

(Here is predestination - not predestined to be saved, but in the foreknowledge of God, predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.)

'being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.'

Philippians 1:4

'This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.' John 6:39-40

'But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory , just as by the Spirit of the Lord.'

2 Corinthians 3:18

So we apply our rule of interpretation to the passages which might be thought to imply loss of salvation. They cannot mean that a born again believer can lose his eternal salvation because of the rest of scripture, whilst they do clearly state that an unbeliever has no part in the kingdom of God. However, as we

have already seen, by continuing in sins we quench, then grieve the Holy Spirit eventually leading to the sin unto death – at which point we are taken to heaven where our sanctification is completed.

Co-operation with the Holy Spirit

We are expected to be changed from one degree of glory to another, and indeed that is the promised work of the Holy Spirit in us. So we have a choice -we can co-operate!

Peter made this assertion -

God has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness, by which have been given to us great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature.

Therefor (co-operate!)

'But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self control, to self control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' 2 Peter 1:5-11

We can recognise where we may be falling short. Then we can repent and ask the Holy Spirit to change us in that area. That is

co-operation. We cannot make ourselves perfect but we can co-operate with Him whose job it is to change us from one degree of glory to another. We will become more and more confident in our position in Christ as we do so.

'For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.' Ephesians 2:8-9

Chapter 12

Can I opt out of salvation?

Is it possible, once born again, to opt out and become unborn again?

Actually what we have seen already should have answered that question!

For the sake of clarity and certainty - (applies to all who have become, at any time, born again .)

- 1) You were purchased with a price – Ephesians 1:13-14 describes the process of salvation – *‘In Him you also trusted after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed (at a moment in time), you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.’*

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 *‘Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own. For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God’s’*

1 Corinthians 7:23 *‘You were bought with a price, do not become slaves of men.’*

Ownership fundamentally changed when the price was paid.

So unless you are able to buy back ownership from the Lord you are His possession for eternity. The price to buy back ownership, being equal to the sacrifice and blood of the Lamb of God, is beyond the scope or reach of anyone.

- 2) We have already seen - if we deny Jesus , He will deny us**, if we are faithless He remains faithful because He cannot deny Himself. (From 2 Timothy 2:12-13) So even those who deny Jesus in life after becoming born again - and some do, nevertheless ownership has changed and all the faithfulness of God applies even to them. He cannot deny Himself in the person of the Holy Spirit who has become one with your human spirit.

** Jesus will deny us – does not refer to the born again human spirit – that is ruled out by the other words of scripture - so it refers to our sojourn on earth.

- 3) The change of ownership in 1) means you do not have the right to opt out. Once a son always a son even if a prodigal!
- 4) Who would want to revert to being 'unborn again' anyway!

God is faithful even when we are not. He cannot deny Himself.