

ONCE SAVED, NOT ALWAYS SAVED

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The doctrine of “eternal security,” “perseverance of the saints,” or “once saved, always saved” is the doctrine that a Christian can never be lost, no matter what he or she does. Many if not most of those who refer to themselves as Christians today hold to that doctrine. But this doctrine is *not* taught in God’s word anywhere. Rather, this is one of those “doctrines of devils” that threaten to sear a person’s conscience with a hot iron (1 Tim 4:1-2). Satan would delight for us all to believe that we are okay just as we are and do not need to

When the righteous turn to iniquity

The doctrine of “once saved, always saved” is proven false by many, many passages of scripture in both the Old and New Testaments. For example, Ezekiel 18:24-26 clearly teaches that the righteous *can* turn from their righteousness to wickedness and become lost. *“But when the righteous turns away from his righteousness, and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All his righteousness that he has done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he has trespassed, and in his sin that he has sinned, in them shall he die. Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal? When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, and commits iniquity, and dies in them; for his iniquity that he has done shall he die.”* The principle taught in these verses is exactly the opposite of “once saved, always saved.”

Repent or else

Five of the seven letters from Christ himself, written to the “churches which are in Asia,” exhorted unfaithful and erring Christians to “repent or else” (Rev 2:5,16,22; 3:3,16-19). Without question or doubt, it is possible for a Christian to be lost. Similarly, in 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2, part of an epistle specifically addressed to those who were already Christians (2 Cor 1:1), Paul beseeched and begged these *Christians* to be “reconciled to God” (2 Cor 5:20). All Christians by definition have been reconciled to God (Rom 5:6-11; Eph 2:16; Col 1:20-22). Yet these Christians were again being told to be reconciled. It is beyond dispute that some of these Christians had gone astray and their souls were in jeopardy if they did not repent. They were reminded that Christ had died for their sins so that they might be made righteous (2 Cor 5:21). These Christians were presently living *unrighteously*. Paul then beseeched them to “receive not the grace of God in vain” (2 Cor 6:1). This has absolutely no meaning whatsoever if it is impossible for a Christian to fall from grace. If these wayward saints

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(continued)

did not repent, then the grace of God that *they had already received* would be in vain, because they would be eternally lost anyway. It is to these straying sheep that Paul quoted Isaiah 49:8: “For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2). Though this principle certainly applies to those who have never been saved, in this context it is specifically applied *to Christians*. It was the “day of salvation” and the “acceptable time” for the erring brethren of Corinth. They needed to repent or else they would be lost. Christians who become sinners again will *not* inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9-10).

The possibilities

We have eternal life now in the form of *hope* for the promise, *if* we meet the conditions for it (John 5:24; Rom 8:24). Christians are warned against falling into condemnation (Jas 5:12; 2 Pet 3:17). Salvation is conditional upon continued obedience and it can be forfeited (1 Chr 28:9; 2 Chr 15:2; Jn 15:6; Rom 8:12-13; 1 Cor 16:22; 2 Tim 2:12; 1 John 1:6-7). It is possible for those who have “escaped” from the world and know the way of righteousness to be lost (2 Pet 2:20-22). Being God’s “house” is contingent upon our holding fast to the end (Heb 3:5-6). It is possible for *brethren* to depart from God, and, again, holding fast to the end is a condition for salvation (Heb 3:12-15). It is possible for Christians to come short of the promise (Heb 4:1). It is possible for those who have been enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift to become “fallen away” (Heb 6:4-8). It is possible for those who have received the knowledge of the truth to turn away and be lost (Heb 10:26-31). It is possible to “draw back unto perdition” (Heb 10:37-39). It is possible to be a disciple, put the hand to the plow and then look back and be lost (Luke 9:61-62; 17:32). It is possible to become severed from Christ (which means they were first joined together), and fall from grace (Gal 5:4). Branches that are *in Christ* but do not bear fruit will be taken away, cast forth, withered and burned (John 15:1-6). Jesus warned of two categories of Christians who “for a while believe,” but later “fall away” (Luke 8:13-14). Let us never listen to the Devil’s lies to convince us of a false sense of security. “*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*” (Prov 14:12). Instead, let us listen to God, who says, “*Wherefore, my beloved, as ye 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*” (Php 2:12).