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Perseverance of the Saints

*Mick Alexander
Updated 27/08/08*

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Are you a saved or an unsaved believer?

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2 Cor 13:5

FREE BOOKS

The Calvary Road, by Roy Hession, is a wonderful little book that very simply outlines personal revival (sanctification) through being filled with the Holy Spirit. The 'how to' of Christian Surrender is revealed for all who would seek the Lord with all their heart. This is not another self help book but a most humbling revelation of the sin we fail (or refuse) to see and which keeps us from an intimate walk with Jesus. The book is free to download at:
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to take it to Jesus in repentance and He will forgive us and cleanse us of it as stated in **1 John 1:9**. The word 'if' in this verse is critical ... if we don't confess, we won't be forgiven. The choice is ours. If anyone reading this has asked Jesus to be their Lord and Saviour but has unconfessed sin then please get on your knees and take it to Him in heartfelt repentance. He's waiting.

Jesus said, *"he who stands firm to the end will be saved"* **Mark 13:13**.

This article is a very limited discussion on Perseverance and the Once Saved Always Saved doctrine. Robert Shank's book, *Life In The Son*, is very detailed and probes the Greek texts to show clearly that the doctrine of Eternal Security is a false doctrine. While firmly believing in the Once Saved doctrine, Mr. Shank set out to prove it from the Greek texts but his belief was turned around. Even though it is an in-depth study, there is no need to have a knowledge of Greek to see the Biblical truth of a believer's need to persevere in order to inherit eternal life.

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PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

Unconditional Eternal Security (UES) is the belief that once an individual has been genuinely saved he cannot, under any circumstances, lose his salvation. That is, he is eternally secure because all of his sins, both past *and* future, have been forgiven. This, in effect, means that once someone has been saved then he can fall into sin of any sort and still be saved. UES believers argue that a saved person will NOT fall into sin, such as drunkenness, but admit that if in the unlikely event that he does then he remains saved but God disciplines him here on earth. What does the Bible say about this?

Jesus brought us the New Covenant and, like all covenants, conditions must be met if the benefits are to be received. Throughout the New Testament, the word 'if' is used many times in association with salvation. When the conditions God sets by these 'ifs' are not met then an individual can't expect to receive the rewards as God never makes idle claims.

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THE CONDITIONAL WORD 'IF'

Rom 8:12-14 clearly state that Christians have an obligation to keep from a sinful lifestyle, through the power of the Holy Spirit, and the penalty for not doing so is death ..."*Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation - but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live...*"

The following verses use the conditional word 'if' regarding salvation:

1 Cor 15:2 says that we are saved only if we hold to the Word.

Heb 3:6 says we are of God's house if we hold fast.

Heb 3:14 says we are partakers of Christ if we are steadfast to the end.

Heb 10:36-39 says that if the righteous (just) draw back they face destruction (perdition).

There is a conditional 'if' associated with salvation in each of these verses. In each case believers must fulfil the condition in order to receive the promised reward. The condition is perseverance and the reward is eternal life.

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Regarding being sealed with the Spirit: Scripture plainly says that the Holy Spirit is given to us as a witness and a guarantee of our salvation until the day of redemption...**Eph 1:13-14** & **Rom 8:16**. His Presence convicts us of sin, leading us to repentance and holy living... **Rom 8:3-4** and **Tit 3:4-8**. However, Scripture also plainly says that if we fail to co-operate with the Spirit we will be lost...**Rom 8:12-13**.

FINALLY

The 'ifs' in many verses and the simplicity of verses such as **John 15:6** and **Matt 5:13** cannot simply be ignored. Like the Israelites of old, obedience (*following* God's laws) is required to reap the benefits of a promise as stated in **Isa 1:19-20**. Note the clear warning, to the righteous, in **Ezek 33:12-13**. We are saved by Grace, through faith and to remain saved we must persevere in that faith to be kept from deliberate, ongoing sin or face a Christless eternity.

No one can live a sinless life, we all sin occasionally, but we will be condemned if we continue in a sinful lifestyle. **1 John 2:1-2** says that Christians should not sin but if we do we are

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SOME OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

In **Eph 5:18**, we are told to be filled with the Spirit. From the Greek text, the word 'filled' is better translated 'continue to be filled.' Likewise, 'believe' in **John 3:16** has a similar tense, meaning that we need to 'continue to believe' or 'go on believing' in order to receive eternal life. In other words, we must persevere in believing. Jesus made this obvious in **John 15:6** when He said, *"If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned."*

In **John 10:27-28** Jesus promises to protect those who **hear and follow** Him. Following requires an effort of will, it's not automatic. The verses speak directly of Jesus' power to protect the believer against *anyone or any man* plucking a disciple from His hand. He doesn't say that an individual can't leave of his own free will but that no **person** can snatch him from His hand. **Jude 1:24** only tells us that Jesus is *able* to keep us from falling and not that He *will* regardless of our actions.

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Some say the word 'if' doesn't mean 'if' all the time but can sometimes mean 'since'. If we substitute 'since' for 'if,' then:

Rom 8:13 would read, *"since you live according to your sinful nature, you will die; but since by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of your body, you will live."* The verse no longer makes sense.

Heb 10:38 would say, *"my righteous one will live by faith. And since he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him."*

Clearly, only 'if' makes sense in these two examples and both verses deny the Eternal Security of believers.

RECONCILED, SANCTIFIED & IN GRACE

If an individual is reconciled, sanctified or 'in grace' then he is unquestionably saved. The following verses speak of such individuals who have subsequently fallen, or can fall, from their position in the Lord.

Reconciled: Col 1:21-23 says, *"Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical*

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body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation - *if you continue in your faith...*" These verses speak of reconciled, born again believers who will be presented to God **only if** they continue in their faith. These individuals are saved as a false or half-baked profession cannot bring about reconciliation with the Lord. Reconciled never means anything but being right with God...saved.

Sanctified: **Heb 10:26-29** says "*If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire...a man deserves to be punished...who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him...*" People here are warned that they can face judgment even after having been 'sanctified by the blood.' Sanctification follows justification so the individuals alluded to here have been saved. If we fail to repent of our sin, to be cleansed by the blood of Jesus, then our heart will harden against the Spirit's conviction. It will get more and more difficult to bring to the Lord for cleansing and may lead to eventual salvation loss.

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OTHER VERSES SHOWING THE POSSIBILITY OF SALVATION LOSS

2 Pet 3:17 urges us to take care of the secure position from which we can fall. The onus is on us. There would be no care about falling, nothing to guard against, if we go to heaven no matter what we do.

Jam 5:19-20 speaks of a *brother* becoming a sinner and being brought back to repentance, saving him from death. A human effort is involved here. God puts the responsibility on man. The prodigal son, in **Luke 15**, is an example of this; he had died (spiritually) and was made alive **again**, saving him from death. **Heb 3:12-14** warns brothers not to turn from the living God but to hold firmly till the end.

Even Timothy is warned to watch himself and persevere in his life and doctrine to ensure his salvation (**1 Tim 4:16**).

In **1 Cor 9:27** and **2 Tim 4:7** Paul speaks of his efforts, fighting the good fight and keeping the faith, so that he wouldn't be castaway.

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2 Pet 2:20-22 tells us of people facing judgment after having once known Jesus. They had escaped the pollution of the world through knowledge of Jesus (**2 Pet 1:3-4**), but have returned to the mire. If they are going *back*, then they must have left it in the first place. Only Jesus could have initially saved them from the corruption of the world to which they have returned, as **Rom 8:7** makes clear.

In **Matt 5:13** Jesus tells his disciples, who are the salt of the earth, that if they lose their saltiness they will be cast out. Only the saved are disciples of Jesus and He warned them against going back into the world.

John 15:6 speaks of branches cast into the fire because they failed to abide. Only a saved person is a branch in the Vine.

In **Matt 10:32-33** Jesus tells the disciples that He will deny (disown) them if they deny Him. This is repeated in **2 Tim 2:12-13** where Paul says that if we endure (suffer) then we will reign with the Lord, but if we deny Him, He will deny us.

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In Grace: Gal 5:4 says *"You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace."* The Jews spoken of here, having reverted to the Law of Moses, have been alienated from the Lord; they have fallen from Grace. Obviously they were once 'in Grace,' that is, they were once saved.

PERSEVERANCE

Perseverance in faith is required to reap the benefits of God's promises:

Rom 2:6-7 says that eternal life is the reward for the saints perseverance (patient continuance).

Heb 10:36 says we need to persevere to receive God's promises.

Rev 14:12 speaks of perseverance.

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Persevering is not salvation by works: To be saved, a person must believe and repent of their sin and this is not considered to be works - it is an internal act of our will. Perseverance is nothing more than ongoing confession, repentance and believing in Jesus. If perseverance is considered to be works then our initial confession and repentance to be saved must also be works, and it is not. The Bible continually urges us to repent of all sin and to walk in the Spirit in order to remain in Jesus. We are saved as we 'remain IN Christ' (note **John 15:6**). God's Spirit works within us to convict, bring about repentance and empower us to resist sin. In order to walk in holiness we must choose to persevere and abide

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in Jesus (note **John 6:28-29** regarding the work of God). See <http://www.christianissues.biz/saved.html>

Rom 8:35-39 says that nothing in Creation can separate us from God's love, neither famine, sword, angels nor demons etc. These things are all *external* to us and things over which we have no control. God promises to keep us through these trials as clearly stated in **Heb 13:5-6**. However, these verses don't speak of the *internal* perseverance (our control of our will) required to walk in holiness through the Spirit. We have freedom of will to do this. God never controls our will, He wills us to do...**Phil 2:13**.

THE FAILURE TO PERSEVERE WILL BRING JUDGMENT

Heb 6:4-6 speaks of people being unable to be brought back (renewed again) to repentance. They were clearly saved at one stage as they shared in the Holy Spirit who only dwells in believers, as stated in **Act 5:32**. To be brought back to repentance can only mean that they had been repentant in the first place. You can't be brought 'back' to a place that you have never been to, you can only be brought 'to' that place.

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