

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS Updated 20/9/08

Those who believe the Eternal Security doctrine (Once Saved Always Saved) say 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. They say that, once saved, even if they enter into a sinful lifestyle then they won't lose their salvation but simply lose fellowship with Jesus. This is despite the fact that **Heb 12:14** says that *"without holiness no one will see the Lord"*. The Once Saved doctrine makes holiness (sanctification) nothing more than an optional extra.

The following verses refute the idea entirely.

In **Matt 7:21**, Jesus said that only those who do His Father's will will enter heaven.

What is God's will? **1 Thess 4:3** tells us that *"it is God's will that you should be sanctified."*

Then **2 Thess 2:13** inextricably links salvation to believing *and* sanctification where it says that *"God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth."*

The following examples are among many which can be used to clearly show that a believer can lose his salvation.

THE CONDITIONAL WORD 'IF'

Jesus Christ 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.

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 ..."* Jesus also made it very clear that obedience is the condition for salvation. In **John 15:10** He said, "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love ...". Plainly, if we are not obedient to the Spirit's leading then we will not remain in Jesus' love but will be cut out of the Vine, just as it says in **John 15:6**.

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 deny the eternal security of believers.

THE WISE AND FAITHFUL SERVANT IN LUKE 12:42-46

Please read **Luke 12:42-46** and note that in this parable there is only ONE faithful and wise manager mentioned. Looking at the verses, we have:

V.42 - The faithful and wise manager (obviously a saved man) is put in charge while the Master (Jesus) is away.

V. 43-44 - He will be put in charge of all the Master's possessions if the Master returns and finds that he has been faithful.

V. 45-46 - The SAME servant will be assigned a place with the unbelievers if the Master returns and finds that he has fallen into sin and mistreated the other servants.

Saying that the servant will be assigned a place with unbelievers makes it abundantly clear that he was a believer initially. This parable clearly shows that a saved soul can lose his salvation.

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES OF JOHN 15

During the Last Supper, in **John 15:1-6**, Judas had left and Jesus was speaking to the eleven remaining Apostles and addressed them as Branches. Examining these verses we see that -

V.1 - There is only one Vine mentioned, which is Jesus, and God is the Gardener.

V.2-3 - God cuts out the fruitless Branches and prunes (cleans) the fruit-bearing Branches.

Vs.4-5 - The Branches (Apostles) are told that they must remain in the Vine in order to bear fruit.

V.6 - A Branch that fails to abide is thrown away, withers, picked up and burned in the fire.

Only saved souls can be Branches in the Vine Jesus and from this parable we can readily see that a saved soul can be cut out of the Vine and end up in hell.

RECONCILED, SANCTIFIED & IN GRACE

If an individual is reconciled, sanctified or 'in grace' then he is unquestionably saved. The following verses give examples of such individuals who were in these saved states but face or may face judgment because of sin.

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 body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation - **if** you continue in your faith...*" Here we are told of ex-enemies of God who are reconciled, born again believers and will be presented to God **only if** they continue in their faith. These individuals are clearly saved. A false profession of faith cannot bring about reconciliation with the Lord. Once reconciled, believers must continue in the faith in order to get to heaven.

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 ...*" In these verses we see that a saved man (sanctified by the blood) will face judgment if he continues to deliberately sin. If a believer fails to repent of his ongoing sin then his heart will harden against the Spirit's conviction. Over time it gets more and more difficult to repent and may lead to eventual salvation loss ... see **Heb 3:7-14**.

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.

A COUPLE OF OTHER VERSES

Jam 5:19-20 says, "*My brothers, **if one of you** should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.*" Christian brothers are urged to restore fallen brothers in order to save them from hell.

1 Tim 4:16 says, "*Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will **save both yourself and your hearers.***" Obviously, had Timothy failed to persevere then he would have lost his salvation.

PERSEVERANCE - WHAT IS IT?

There is a clear distinction between occasional sin and a wilfully sinful lifestyle. **1 John 2:1** tells us that Christians may sin occasionally and this sin is to be addressed as **1 John 1:9** tells us ... if the sinner confesses then he is forgiven. However, living a lifestyle of habitual sin puts a believer's salvation at stake. Some believers struggle with sin, even for a long period, but the fact that they struggle shows that they have a repentant heart and God will deliver them in time. This struggle can't be compared with having a sinful lifestyle and saying, "Well, that's me. I'm just human". The wages of (unconfessed) sin is death.

Persevering is not salvation by works: To be saved in the first place, a person must believe and repent of their sin and this is not considered to be works - it is an *internal* act of their 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 15:1-6**). 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 in Jesus (note **John 6:28-29** regarding the work of God).

See 'How Do We Know If We Are Saved?' at <http://www.christianissues.biz/saved.html>

Rom 8:35-39 say 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 act according to His good purpose ... **Phil 2:13**.

FINALLY

The 'ifs' in many verses and the simplicity of passages such as **John 15:1-6** and **Luke 12:42-46** 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 and be kept from a lifestyle of 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 to habitually sin. **1 John 2:1-2** says that Christians should not sin but if we do we are 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 save them but has unconfessed sin then please get on your knees and take it to Him in heartfelt repentance. He loves you and is waiting to cleanse you of all unrighteousness.

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

There are many other verses which can be used to disprove the Once Saved doctrine but this article is only meant to be a limited discussion. 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.

For articles closely related to this discussion, please go to:

Saved? How Do We Know? at <http://www.christianissues.biz/saved.html>

Are You A Saved Or An Unserved Believer? at <http://www.christianissues.biz/areyousaved.html>

The Power Of Sin at <http://www.christianissues.biz/thepowerofsin.html>

For answers to some objections to this argument against Eternal Security (Once Saved, Always Saved) download *Eternal Security Arguments and Proof Texts*, by Dan Corner at <http://www.christianissues.biz/pdf-bin/perseverance/eternalsecurityarguments.pdf>

See Lordship Salvation at <http://www.christianissues.biz/lordshipsalvation.html> regarding the vital need of having Jesus as both Saviour *and* Lord of our life.

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