

Can I Lose My Salvation?

To be fair, denominations who teach that salvation can never be lost, dislike the term “Once-Saved-Always-Saved” (OSAS). Unbelievers and even other Christians perceive those promoting this teaching as arrogant. The message it sends is, “I’m saved, and I can do anything I want and never lose eternal life.” In other words, OSAS gives them a license to sin, in someone else’s eyes.

In the most technical definition, eternal life is just what it means—something that lasts forever—a crown that will never fade away, as the New Testament teaches. But can a person who has received the gift of salvation lose that gift? This study will examine the main arguments and try and show what the bible teaches.

That said, anything we believe must be founded on scripture, and those scriptures must be used in context. Ninety percent of false doctrines are due to lifting verses from their context and mixing them with opinion. If it supports our view, it must be true. Unfortunately, if the opinion comes from a “scholar” or college-educated preacher, most tend to regard it as Truth.

Jesus said of His followers, “No one can snatch them out of His hand.” That’s proof that you can’t lose your salvation.

Here is the scripture mentioned:

“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.” (John 10:28-30)

Does this scripture teach that a person can never lose their salvation? No. It confirms that no outside influence can take it away. Paul writes, “I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom 8:38-39) A person, however, can choose to “jump out of” Christ’s hand by willful disobedience.

A person who willfully sins was never a real Christian in the first place.

This is an opinion not based on biblical truth. Nowhere do the scriptures teach that “real Christians never sin on purpose.” In fact, it claims the opposite:

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 that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit

of grace? (Heb 10:26-29)

That this scripture is speaking of a saved person is seen in the following excerpt from Hebrews 10:

1. They *received* the knowledge of the truth.

An unbeliever can go on sinning after receiving a “knowledge of the truth,” and still have the opportunity to repent and be saved. The believer, on the other hand, “has no more sacrifice for sins.”

2. They “trampled under foot the Son of God.”

3. They treated Christ’s blood as unholy, the blood that sanctified them.

4. They insulted God’s grace.

Unbelievers, no matter how righteous they may be, are never sanctified, a process carried out by the Holy Spirit. The clear testimony refers to those who were once sanctified or *set apart*. The word ‘church’ means ‘called out.’ They are those called out and set apart from the world.

An unbeliever can trample under the Son, treat the blood with contempt, even insult God’s grace, and still be saved if he or she later repents and obeys the Gospel. These things do not constitute the Unforgivable Sin. The believer, however, who decides to toss away their salvation has sealed their doom. All they can expect is judgment. Yet even that person may have hope; God’s grace is always greater than our sin.

1 John 3:9 says that the believer “cannot sin because he is born of God.”

Remember that 90% of false doctrines are from lifting verses out of context and applying them to our opinions. Some hold to a belief and then use verses like 1 John 3:9 to support that conclusion. Let’s look at its context:

Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. **No one who abides in Him sins**; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. **No one who is born of God practices sin**, because His seed abides in him; and **he cannot sin, because he is born of God**. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. (1 John 3:4-10) (Highlighting mine.)

Immediately, we see that John’s not talking about sins of ignorance, or sins borne out of failing to overcome temptation. He’s talking someone who is actively *practicing* sin.

No one who is born of God *practices* sin because His seed abides in him; and he cannot (practice) sin, because he is born of God.

This is a reciprocal statement: A Christian doesn't actively practice sin. Why? Because His seed (God's Word) dwells in the person. Then he says he cannot sin WHY? Because he is born of God. The "sin" refers back to the *kind* of sin: a deliberate *practice* of sin. In other words, a Christian cannot practice sin if they are truly born of God. They make mistakes, but they don't practice or engage in deliberate, unconscionable wrongdoing.

This agrees with Paul, who said Christians "are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ." (Rom 8:9)

"No one who abides in Him sins." This doesn't mean Christians never sin. Otherwise, we have a serious contradiction within the New Testament. As long as we have this body of flesh, we are always burdened with the opportunity for sin.

John said, "*If* we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. (Christians still sin but we have a way out, in other words.) If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us." (1 John 1:7-10)

John is saying we still sin, but we don't *deliberately practice* it. There is a serious implication, however. If we confess our sins, He'll forgive us. But what happens if we *don't* confess those sins? What if we forget? What if we sin and don't even know we sinned? The implication is that there is no forgiveness. A person who doesn't confess their sins has a proud and stubborn will, unfit for heaven. An individual who is not "walking in the light as Christ is in the light" is a child of Satan.

Scriptures That Show Salvation Can Be Lost

You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either. Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. (Rom 11:19-22)

Paul is speaking of the Jewish people who were removed from God's covenant due to disobedience. They were the "natural branches" who were broken off. God's kindness is extended, if you continue in His kindness, otherwise you also will be cut off.

Those who want to argue that being "cut off" doesn't mean "lost salvation" have not studied the scriptures. The OT is clear on the issue. Let's examine the context to see the truth.

Paul spoke of Christians being able to stand "before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—if *indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard.* (Col 1:22-23) In other words, you'll go to heaven IF certain conditions

are maintained, namely, continuing in the faith and not moving away from the hope of the gospel. The implication is clear: people may not carry on in the faith; they can indeed step away from the gospel's hope of eternal life.

For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. (1 Cor 10:1-5)

Paul is writing to Christians, telling them “don’t make the same mistakes Israel made.” Even though they were God’s chosen people, as is the church today, many were killed due to lustful desires (vs. 6), idolatry (vs. 7) immorality (vs. 8), tempting God (vs. 9), and grumbling (vs. 10). Claiming that “true Christians don’t do such things” just doesn’t jibe with scripture. Note what Paul then says:

Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. (1 Cor 10:11-13)

Those terrible things happened, Paul says, as an example. An example for whom? They were written for *our* instruction. Whose instruction? The church’s!

Wrapping up his conclusion, he says, “therefore, let him who thinks he stands”—the person who thinks they can never lose their salvation—“take heed that he does not fall.” Fall from where? The hand of Christ.

To whom is Paul speaking? Christians, not people who “really weren’t Christians to begin with,” but with the entire congregation at Corinth. That same letter still applies today, or God wouldn’t have included it in the NT canon.

It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace. (Heb 6:4-6)

Some teach that this merely says that a person can’t be brought back to repentance, not that they lose their salvation. The definition of repentance is to “turn around.” If a person doesn’t confess or admit to their sinful condition, they don’t get forgiven. The idea that God is some kindly old doddering and indulgent grandfather who lets anyone into heaven is patently bogus. As it says, “our God is a consuming fire.” (Heb 10:31)

The Bottom Line

Peter spoke of those who had escaped the corruption of the world by “knowing” our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and being tangled up in it and overcome. That “knowing” is an intimate knowledge, not some academic acknowledgment. They are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. (2 Peter 2:20-22)

They have “escaped” Satan’s kingdom of darkness. Now they’ve been captured again, thanks to their cravings and desires. They’re back in Satan’s kingdom, in worse shape than before. They are in such a condition that it would have been better to have never been saved in the first place. He’s not talking about an unbeliever who shuns the Gospel. If he was, why does he say “it would have been better to have *never heard the Gospel?*” An unbeliever still has a chance to obey, but a Christian who deliberately throws away their salvation is in a terrible state. They have jumped from Christ’s hand and are falling toward the Lake of Fire.

Angels lost their eternal lives and are cast into hell. The same thing can happen to a Christian who deliberately chooses to rebel against God.

Terry DeLaney
Updated August 2017