

"Can a Truly Saved Person Ever Lose His Salvation?"

by Evangelist Dea Warford

If a person repents of their sins, receives Christ, and becomes a truly born again Christian, is there anything he can do to ever lose his salvation, and though once headed toward heaven, again be headed toward eternal Hell? There are many who believe a doctrine called "Eternal Security", which teaches once a person is truly saved, he will remain saved and go to heaven, unconditionally, regardless of the quality of his life or his works. Those who believe eternal security reason if a Christian "backslides", stops going to church, and starts living a sinful life again, he is, at best, simply "out of fellowship with the Lord", or at worst, was never really saved in the first place.

You should know that most Christians do NOT believe in eternal security. And most Christian leaders, myself included, believe that salvation is conditional, and those conditions are laid out clearly in scripture. If you have accepted Christ as your savior in the past, but are not presently living a holy life, attending church regularly and walking closely to the Lord, you need to carefully consider many scriptures which sternly warn against such "backsliding". If you believe in "eternal security", you owe it to yourself ("This above all things, to thine own self be true") to at least read this article and consider the many scriptures that speak strongly to this subject.

Where you spend eternity is not based upon what you or I theorize, or on what your church or mine believes. The final judgment of our soul is based on one thing, and one thing only-God's Word. Jesus said, "the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." John 12:48. Regardless of what a church teaches, God's word warns, *"if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them"* (Isaiah 8:20).

There are 7 clearly established principles in God's word that prove our salvation is conditional.

1. The qualifications: *"He that endureth to the end shall be saved"* (Matthew 10:22) , ". . . exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). *"To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath"* (Romans 1:7, 8). *"Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace"* (Gal. 5:4).

The Galatians were warned that if they tried to be saved by perfectly keeping the law, they would "fall from grace". One cannot fall from somewhere where they are not. Thus this warning was given to true Christians who had been saved by grace, but who were now being led astray by false teachers trying to convince them that they would only be saved by going back under the Old Testament requirements of strict adherence to Moses' Law. To do so, Paul warned them, would mean they would "fall from grace". If a Galatian Christian could "fall from Grace", for any reason, is proof that it is possible, once in grace, to "fall from graces" and lose salvation.

To these same Galatian Christians, Paul wrote a list of "the works of the flesh", enumerating many serious sins, and explaining *"they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God"* (Gal. 5:21). Willful continual involvement in sin disqualifies someone from the kingdom of God, regardless if they claim to have faith or not. Paul told the Philippian church to *"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"* (Phil. 2:12). He wasn't teaching salvation by works, of course, but he did clearly establish our personal responsibility in our salvation, which is to cooperate with the grace of God toward us allowing him to do His work in us as verse 13 explains, "for it is God

which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure". We "work out" what God "works in" us. God - As the savior., but we are the "saved", who realize our salvation is dependent on our continually taking advantage of God's means of salvation.

A few verses later he tells the Philippian church to be "Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain" verse 16. To labor in vain meant that all his work would be totally wasted effort. Paul warned the Corinthians to "receive not the grace of God in vain" (II Cor. 6:1). This could only mean that there was the possibility that they would lose their salvation, and not make heaven their home. Similarly, in 1 Thess. 3:5 Paul writes, *"I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labor be in vain"*. Again, for Paul's labor to "be in vain", would have to mean that Christians can yield to the devil to such an extent, that they lose their salvation, making the work of the preacher who led them to Christ "in vain" and eternal loss.

2. The warnings: If our salvation is unconditional, then why are there so many warnings in scripture? *"Beware lest ye also, being led astray with the error of the wicked, fall"* (2 Peter 3:17),

"if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to . . . eat and drink, and to be drunken; The Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour when he is not aware and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers" (Luke 12:40-47 - This verse is a warning to a "servant" of God, who by backsliding, goes to the same place as unbelievers - Hell). *"Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to . . . stand before the Son"* (Luke 21:34-36). *"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils"* (1 Tim. 4:1).

You can't "depart" from someplace where you have never been. In the last days (are these not the last days?) we are warned that many will "depart from the faith" because of demonic teachings. If it's possible to "depart from the faith", then those who do so are certainly not "eternally secure", but listening to the teachings of devils.

2 Peter 2:20-22 is clearly a warning to Christians, *"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (they escaped, that is, they got saved), they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after knowing it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But, it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."* This is a clear warning that there is a severe punishment in hell for those who having once known the Lord turn away from following him.

3. The "if 's: If we are eternally secure, then there should be no ifs in the Bible when referring to our salvation. However, there are many ifs we must consider . . . *"if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live"* (Romans 8:13).

"because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest lie also spare not thee. Behold therefor the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shall be cut off" (Romans 11:20-22).

"ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain" (Romans 15:2).

"If, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor" (Galatians 2:18.3).

Col. 1:22, 23 says Christians are *"holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel."* We are accepted "in his sight", only "if" we "continue in the faith". The decision to continue is ours and ours alone, thus we're warned not to "move away from the hope of the gospel"

4. The book of life: In Ex. 32:32, 33, Moses prayed for Israel thusly, *"forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee out of thy book which thou hast written. And the Lord said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book."* This is doubtless referring to the "book of life" mentioned in Rev. 20:15, "And whosoever was not found in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire". Whether we spend in eternity in heaven or hell, is determined by whether or not our name is written in the book of life. That it is possible to have your name blotted out of the book of life is evident, for God said above that *"whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book."*

Granted, this is Old Testament. But, the same truth is taught in Rev. 3:5, *"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life"*. What is the condition for keeping our name from being blotted out of the book of life? *"He that overcometh"*. Our eternal salvation is conditional on being an overcoming Christian.

Rev. 2:10 agrees, *"be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life"*. James says the same thing in James 1:12, *"blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life"*. The conditions to receive the crown of life are to "be faithful" and to "endure temptation"- things We must do.

5. The proof of true faith: We are saved by faith (Eph. 2:8, John 3:16). This truth is one of the clearest teachings in the Bible. We are not saved by our good works. Yet the question is not "are we saved by faith", but rather, "is the faith we have true faith, and a saving faith". Most Americans have "faith" in God and even "believe" in Christ. But, if we truly have a saving faith, then that saving faith will show evidence in a life that continually bears evidence of that faith.

The scriptures warn, *"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"* (II Cor. 13:5). If someone is saved, and "in the faith", they should be able to "examine" their lives and "prove" themselves. The "proof" of their faith is their works. *"Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works"* (James 2:18). If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, and sounds like a duck, (guess what,?) it's a duck! If you look like a sinner, walk like a sinner, and sound like a sinner, (guess what), you're a sinner! That's what James says ...

6. The James factor: The "coup de grace" of this discussion is found in the book of James 1:12-16 and 5:19, 20. *"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation ... every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err my beloved brethren"*.

This warning against yielding to sin which would ultimately bring forth death was a warning to Christians. James "beloved brethren". He warns them not to "err". Then, finishing his letter to these Christians in 5:19, 20 he warns, "Brethren, if any of you (thus he is speaking to Christians) err from the truth, and one convert him (he uses the same word "err" used in chapter one), Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner (thus a Christian who "errs" from the truth returns to the status

of a "sinner" who needs to be "converted" all over again) from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death (notice it is his soul that is saved from death, not just his body, thus indicating eternal damnation). This is probably the clearest "proof text" for the possibility of losing one's salvation than any other.

7. Logic: Man is a free-will being. To suggest we can be saved to such an extent there is nothing we can do to change that salvation denies the "whosoever will" clause of Rev. 22:17. Stan was a child of God (see Job. 1). He decided he didn't want to go to heaven, and God accommodated him. Is God going to take anyone to heaven cursing and kicking and screaming to stay out? Of course not, as it is would deny the free-will of man. That doesn't mean, however, that our salvation isn't secure. We are "eternally secure" as long as we remain in Christ and abide in the faith as Christ warned, "abide in me ... If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:4, 6).

Finally, if you are still convinced that you are eternally secure, let me say that I certainly hope that you are right! Because, if you are right, then you, me, and all the "backsliders" in America are still going to make it to heaven. But, consider for a moment: if you are wrong, and I am right, then there are doubtless millions who will one day be screaming in the flames of hell forever. The safest position then, is to accept Christ, trust him for eternal salvation, but yet "be careful to maintain good works" (Titus 3:8), and "*be ye also ready, for in such an hour as you think not the Son of man cometh*" (Matt. 24:44). Remain daily in Christ and you will indeed be eternally secure and ready for his coming.