

“ONCE SAVED, ALWAYS SAVED!”
John 10:22-30

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July 3, 2016

INTRODUCTION:

1) Some legitimate questions: A question that has been asked throughout the past 2,000 years is “Can a person who was saved later lose his status of salvation?” Is there any biblical support for this statement: Once saved, always saved? If this statement is true, could it be abused by some Christians, particularly the unfaithful ones, as an excuse or a guarantee for their reckless life? How about if some people just want the benefits of salvation without doing their duty of a saved person as stated in the Bible? Can anyone lose his salvation if he continues to live in sin? There may be more on this line.

2) The purposes of salvation: Most of us usually focus on the benefits of being saved, such as a guarantee to go to heaven, which is true and very important. In John 3:16, the ultimate purpose of God's sending his Son, Jesus, to this world is that “those who believe in Him shall never perish but have eternal life.” But that isn't all the purpose of God's saving us. He also expects us to be the light and the salt of this world, so we may light the world, help to heal the world from the sickness of sin, and lead people to God through Jesus. To focus only on the benefit side of salvation isn't a complete understanding of God's purpose in giving us salvation. God also wants us to be his witnesses.

THE BASIS OF SALVATION: Before we answer the question whether any saved person could lose his salvation, we need to know “How do we receive salvation.” The Bible has so much to teach us about the basics of salvation that we can't list them all in one sermon. Let us look at just one passage, Ephesians 2:8-10, to see the essential elements of salvation:

1) “For it is by grace you have been saved.” (2:8a) Grace in the Bible means free gift without any condition. We are saved by God's grace, without any condition before or after salvation. Grace also means undeserved, not through any exchange or merit.

2) “Through faith (in Jesus, God's Son): (2:8b) This is the only thing anyone may do to receive salvation: believe. This is the only way to receive God's grace and salvation. If you want to say this is an action on the human side, then this is the only action that we can and need to do to receive the gift of salvation.

3) Not from ourselves, it is the gift of God: (2:8c) No one can do any work good enough to buy or earn God's grace for his salvation. We need to do good works with the new life in us after we are saved and given the power of the Holy Spirit, but that is for our being witnesses to lead the world to God, not to buy God's grace so we may be saved. Salvation is a gift, freely given.

4) No one may boast of his salvation: (2:9a) To boast is to brag, to glory, to put on one's face something to make himself look good. We all are saved by God's grace and nothing else. So, no one may claim any credit because of his status as a saved person. We may boast about our grades in school, our success in our business or our job, but as to our salvation, we have nothing to brag about, and that is the way God wants it to be.

5) Our salvation is complete in Jesus: (2:10a) “Workmanship” means “completed product,” no need of any addition or assistance. God, in Jesus, has done it all without any help or addition or contribution of any kind from anyone. Salvation for man is completely the work of God without any human interference or assistance.

Most of those who raise questions whether “salvation could be lost,” ask with good reasons: They have seen some Christians not live their lives to their expectation. They think Christians are supposed to have a life style close to how the Bible says they need to live. These people believe that even if you are a saved person, you

need to live by all the requirements in the Bible to keep your status valid, like keep paying dues to a country club, otherwise you may risk losing that membership. With all their good intention and reason, this belief is not biblical: We can't get saved by our good work, and we can't lose our salvation by our bad work either. Salvation is all by grace, and it has nothing to do with our works, either good or bad.

THE SECURITY OF SALVATION: “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 10:28-29) These are words of Jesus on the security of salvation to all who have placed their faith in him, that no one or anything can cause them to lose the eternal life Jesus has given them. There are other passages in the Bible that clearly explain the security of salvation:

1) Security in the past: In Ephesians 1:4-7, the Bible explains to us clearly our security was well established far back in the heart of God: “For He (God) chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His children through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will.” (1:4-5) Then in Eph 2:4-5, “God who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in sin; it is by grace you have been saved.” Salvation was in the heart of God far in the past without any of our work, not even our existence.

2) Security in the present: John in 1 John 2:1-2 laid out the security of salvation in the present: “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for the sins of the whole world.” This doesn't mean God is

lenient about our sins, for John says in the beginning of this chapter that we should not sin or continue to live in sin. But John wants us to know that God's mercy and love are far greater than our sins when we do sin, to forgive us because Christ has paid for all the debts of our sins. In Romans 8:31, the Bible says, "If God is for us (on our side), who can be against us?" We also need to know this: "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us." (Romans 8:33-34) From all these we know that even if we could live our lives without sin, which isn't in our power to do, it is entirely by God's grace that Jesus is right now pleading for us before the Father.

3) Security in the future: Our salvation is guaranteed by what Jesus said and did. In John 5:24 Jesus says this: "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." Again, in Romans 8:1-2, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death." Again, in Romans 8:29-30, "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified." Then in Revelation, the last book of the Bible, 5:9-10; 7:13-14; 14:13; and 19:7-9 all describe the final celebration of all those whom God has called and justified.

SO, CAN CHRISTIANS CONTINUE TO LIVE IN SIN? This is a question we all need to ask, both Christians and non-Christians. If our salvation is so secure, can we live in sin and never suffer any consequences? Not exactly.

1) We were crucified and raised with Christ: Paul in Rom. 6:1-7 called on the early Christians, and us, to pay attention to our duties as Christians. “What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead, we too may live a new life. For we know that our old self was crucified with him, so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin, because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.” (6:1-7) No truly born again Christian will continue to live in sin. That is impossible because the power of new life in Christ will raise him from the deadly power of sin. We are saved to live a new life, not continue to live in the old sinful life.

2) Never allow sin to dominate our life: We may sin occasionally because our old nature still struggles to control us, but we can never allow the power of sin to control our life. In Romans 6:12, we are encouraged in this: “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.” It is imperative that Christians be alert all the time to the desires of the flesh and temptations in the world that may lure us away from the grace of God. We cannot continue to sin because we are not under the law but grace. (6:15) Keeping a close walk with God is the way to stay away from sin.

3) Beware of the consequences of sin: To continue living in sin is a terrible choice in life. Here are few of the things you will suffer if you choose that route: You will waste your life being unproductive; you will forfeit the joy of service in God's church; you will lose the sweet fellowship with other believers; you will not have peace in your heart and life; you will not have the sense of security of God in your heart; you will bring shame to the name of God; you may

experience poor health related to a sinful lifestyle; you will lose the rewards of God for the good and faithful; finally, you will suffer from the sin in your life: “If it (a person's lifestyle) is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.” (1 Corinth 3:15) Don't gamble your life this way. Not worth it.

CONCLUSION:

1) Don't take salvation for granted: Yes, the Bible has so much to say about the love and grace of God in saving us, sinners, from our sins so we may have eternal life through Jesus Christ. Instead of abusing God's grace and mercy to live a reckless life in sin, we need to treasure God's grace by doing our best to bring glory and honor to him through our everyday lifestyle. The purpose of God to save us from sin isn't to allow us to sin more, but to allow us to love him back by offering our body as a living sacrifice. (Rom 12:1-2) We all need to strive to do our best while we are here on earth, so we may hear him say to us when we see him in heaven that day, “Well done, good and faithful servant! Come and share your Master's happiness.” (Matt 25:21)

2) Don't try to play God: Things like who is a true believer and who deserves to be saved are in God's hand. Only God has the knowledge and power to make that decision. We need to know that we all are sinners; some may be more sinful than others, but this isn't our job to judge. Playing the role of God is a serious sin because it commits the sin of being self-righteous, and only God is righteous. The Bible instead encourages us thus when we see a brother sin: “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” (Gal 6:1-2) A sinner doesn't have the right to judge another sinner.

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