

Can a Christian lose his salvation?

This study is to give assurance to Christians who are afraid that they may have lost their salvation. If you are not a Christian, please [read Answers to FAQ's #2: "How can I know that I'm going to heaven?"](#)

Once a person calls out to Jesus and is saved, is it possible for that person to lose his salvation? Sooner or later you will have to decide what you believe about this. We have all known people who were highly involved in church and were apparently Christians, but they no longer attend church for whatever reason and now say they don't want anything to do with God. How do we explain what happened to them? There are three possibilities:

- 1) They were at one time saved but lost their salvation
- 2) They are still saved but are in a backslidden state
- 3) They were church members who thought they were saved, but they had deceived themselves because they never were true believers.

A good friend of mine believes that a Christian can lose his or her salvation, while I believe if someone receives eternal life it is forever. As we discussed our positions, I told him, "If I can lose my salvation then I lost mine a long time ago!" My point was that I knew I could never be good enough my entire life to maintain my salvation. However, I believe I cannot lose it. I wasn't saved by my own righteousness, so why should I think I can maintain it by my own righteousness?

I told him, "If you want to believe you can lose *your* salvation, then so be it, but I'm keeping mine." Finally he admitted, "I can see how I would be a lot happier if I believed what you believe."

When I was a new Christian, I believed a person could lose his salvation based on a couple of verses that I didn't understand. However, after comparing all the Scriptures on this topic, I changed my mind. Since no verses in the Bible actually say "a person can lose his salvation" or "once saved, always saved," we have to examine the Scriptures for ourselves and draw our own conclusions.

Comparing the Beliefs

Can lose your salvation	Cannot lose your salvation
Views God's forgiveness of sins from a time perspective	Views God's forgiveness of sins from an eternal perspective
Views God's justification as a day-by-day process that must be maintained	Views God's justification as a one-time completed event at the moment of salvation
Believes when a person is saved he is cleansed from all past sins but not future sins.	Believes when a person is saved he is cleansed from all past and future sins forever.
The believer must keep himself saved by walking in holiness and obedience.	The believer is kept saved by God as a promise of eternal life.
The believer depends on his own works and behavior to keep himself saved.	The believer depends on God's grace to keep him saved.
The Christian can choose to quit believing in God.	The Christian would never choose to quit believing in God because the Holy Spirit is in you.

Whenever we don't have a clear statement in Scripture, we must examine all the verses in the Bible that speak on that subject. When verses appear to be in conflict, follow these two rules of interpretation:

1. Form your beliefs on the majority of Scriptures, not the minority.

If ten verses teach one thing and one verse appears to contradict them, go with the ten verses.

2. Form your beliefs on the clearly understood verses, not the verses that are unclear.

If a verse is unmistakably clear on an issue and another verse is ambiguous, interpret the unclear verse in light of the clearly understood one.

23 Reasons a Christian Cannot Lose His Salvation

John 10:27-29 Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who have given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."

1. Eternal life is a gift and you can't do anything to earn it. Jesus said, "I give eternal life to them" (John 10:28). A gift ceases to be a gift if it is earned. You cannot earn it by works or keep it by works.

2. Eternal life is eternal. "I give eternal life to them." (John 10:28)

He qualified the type of life by giving a duration—that it will last forever. If it could be lost, He would have said, "I give spiritual life to them." There's no termination for eternal. If you could lose your salvation, you could say, "I got saved yesterday, but I sinned today and lost it. I had eternal life for one day." If you believe that you can lose your salvation, you must call it temporary, conditional life and not eternal life.

Eternal life begins at the moment of salvation and not after you die. Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life" (John 5:24).

3. No one who has eternal life will ever perish. "And they shall never perish" (John 10:28)

Jesus is talking about people who already have eternal life. If a person could lose his salvation, Jesus would have said, "But some of them are going to perish."

4. No one will snatch us out of Jesus' hand. "No one shall snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:28)

My friend said, "No one will snatch us out of His hand, but you can jump out." But does this verse say that you can jump out of His hand? Jesus never said that. Don't form your theology on statements that aren't in God's Word. If jumping out was a possibility don't you think He would say that? Let's just say (hypothetically) that you could jump out of His hand. What would happen to you? You would perish. But Jesus already said "they shall never perish."

5. No one will snatch us out of the Father's hand. "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all. And no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand" (John 10:29)

That's double protection. Satan can't take you out of His hand, no person can take you out, and you can't even take yourself out.

6. Jesus promised that He would not lose anyone.

John 6:39--"And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise him up on the last day." But what about Judas? Did he lose his salvation? No, because Judas never was a believer. He said, "'But there are some of you who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him." (John 6:64). Jesus answered them, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?" Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him. (John 6:70-71).

When Jesus chose Judas, He knew from the beginning that Judas wasn't a believer. Judas was never saved, but Jesus chose him so that the Scripture might be fulfilled. "While I was with them, I was keeping them in Thy name which Thou hast given Me; and I guarded them, and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled." (John 17:12)

7. If you have eternal life now, it is a guarantee that you will receive a glorified resurrection body.

John 6:60--"For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

8. The Holy Spirit is given as a promise of redemption.

Eph. 1:13-14-- "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory."

You are sealed with the Holy Spirit. A seal was a stamp of ownership. When a king put his seal on something, it meant he owned it. It was his possession. And that's what God says the moment you receive Christ into your life—you are His possession.

A pledge means a promise, deposit, or earnest money. A pledge is a promise. "I pledge allegiance to the flag" means you promise allegiance. If you call a telethon and make a pledge, you promise to send the money in. That's why the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Promise. God is promising to redeem you and it's impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18). Jesus said, "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever." (John 14:16)

9. You become God's own possession when you are saved.

1 Cor. 6:20—"For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."

1 Pet 2:9—"you are a people for God's own possession"

10. The New Covenant is an unconditional covenant

Heb. 10:16-17--"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws upon their heart, and on their mind I will write them," He then says, "And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

God has made 2 kinds of covenants with people--Conditional and Unconditional. Conditional has the word "if" attached to it. The Mosaic (Old) covenant was conditional. Deut. 28 says, "If you will obey, then these blessings will come upon you. If you don't obey, then these curses will come upon you." But the New Covenant is an unconditional covenant. Four times God says "I will" without any conditions of "if you will." When you accept Jesus Christ as Lord, you enter the New Covenant with God.

11. Under the New Covenant, God promises to remember your sins no more.

Heb. 8:12—"I will be merciful to their iniquities and I will remember their sins no more."

Heb. 10:17--He says, "I will remember their sins no more."

If you believe you can lose your salvation, you also have to believe that God will break His New Covenant and remember your sins.

12. Jesus died for all our sins, not part of them—not just past sins but also future sins.

Heb. 10:12 "He offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God."

Some people think, "Jesus died for my past sins, but not my future sins." Let's think about that. When Jesus died on the cross in 33 AD, how many of your sins were in the past? None of them because you hadn't committed them yet. All of them were in the future. This verse says by one sacrifice (2,000 years ago) He took care of sins for all time. The moment you are saved, He removes all your sins. We must look at salvation from God's eternal point of view and not from a "time" perspective.

13. At the moment of salvation, we are forgiven for all our sins.

Col 2:13--"He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions"

Rev. 1:5—"He has released us from our sins by His blood"

14. Since Jesus paid for your sins and forgave you, He will not hold you accountable for them.

Rom. 4:7-8—"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account."

15. People in heaven wear white robes washed completely clean by the blood of the Lamb.

Rev. 7:9, 14—"After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes. . . .they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Do you think any of those robes have a few stains in them? Of course not. No sin is so strong that it cannot be cleansed by the blood of Jesus.

16. God wants us to have the assurance that we are saved.

1 John 5:13—"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life." What does it say you can know? That you have eternal life. A person who believes you can lose your salvation says you cannot know you have eternal life because you could lose it at any moment.

I once talked with a woman who believed she could lose her salvation. She thought you could be saved one day, and then lost the next, but saved again the next day.

"How can you lose your salvation?" I asked. She said, "By sinning."

I asked, "Then you can be saved and lost thousands of times during your life?"

She said, "Well, I guess so."

"Are you saying that you can never be sure of your salvation?" "I guess not," she replied.

God tells us in this verse that we can know we have eternal life, which gives us peace and assurance. If you will believe the Scriptures already mentioned, you will have joy and peace instead of fear and turmoil.

17. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

Heb. 10:14—"For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

1 Cor. 6:11—"Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."

18. God began a work in you and will bring it to completion.

Phil. 1:6--"For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."

When you accept Christ into your life, He begins His work in you, and when you are resurrected, God will bring you to completion. If Paul believed you could lose your salvation, he could not make this statement. He would have said, "God began a work in you, but I'm not sure if He will bring it to completion. You might lose it before then."

19. Every believer is the righteousness of God.

2 Cor. 5:21—"He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Jesus took away our sin and gave us His righteousness.

Rom. 4:5—"However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness."

20. We can be confident that when we die we will be with Christ.

Phil. 1:23—"But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better"

Paul is talking about departing from the earthly life. He said when that he dies he will immediately be with Christ. Paul knew where he was going when he died.

2 Cor. 5:8—"We are of good courage...to be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord."

21. Rewards are laid up in heaven and await us there.

2 Tim. 4:8 "In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day." If Paul thought there was any chance of him losing his salvation, he could not have said this.

22. God promises to bring us safely to His heavenly kingdom.

2 Tim. 4:18--"The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom..." If you could lose your salvation, what might cause it? An evil deed maybe? Paul said the Lord will rescue him from every evil deed bring him safely to His heavenly kingdom.

23. If you have been justified by His blood, you will be glorified in heaven.

Rom. 5:1 "Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God"

Rom. 5:9 "Having been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God"

Rom 8:30 "Whom He justified, these He also glorified."

Questionable Verses Answered

Hebrews 10:26 "For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins." To sin willfully means to deliberately choose to live a life without Christ. This verse is speaking to the Hebrews (Jews) who had received the knowledge of the truth about Jesus dying for their sins but rejected it. They chose to put their faith in the animal sacrifices instead of the sacrifice of Jesus. The verse says no sacrifice remains that will cleanse them other than the one sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

Hebrews 6:4-6 The book of Hebrews was written to Jews who were examining the claims of Christ. This passage is talking about Jews who had received an intellectual knowledge about Jesus, but had never given their lives to Him. They were enlightened (which means they understood) and they tasted of spiritual things (perhaps they had observed a miracle). If they crucify to themselves the Son of God (they want nothing to do with Him), then they can't be renewed to repentance (v.6). The verse doesn't say they had lost their salvation and couldn't be renewed to salvation, but they couldn't be renewed to repentance. It was "repentance from dead works" (Heb. 6:1) To repent makes to change your mind. This verse means there is nothing more that can be said to change their minds.

With this in mind, let's look at some other verses in Hebrews written by the same author. The same author who wrote Hebrews 6:4-6 also told us that 1) God will save us forever 2) He will remember our sins no more 3) That we've been perfected for all time, and 4) we have eternal redemption.

- **Hebrews 6:19** "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil." The anchor of my soul is in heaven.
- **Hebrews 7:25** "Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."
- **Hebrews 8:12** "For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."
- **Hebrews 9:12** "(Christ) entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption."
- **Hebrews 10:10** "By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."
- **Hebrews 10:14** "For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified."
- **Hebrews 10:17** "And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

Hebrews 6:4-6 is talking about someone who has examined Christianity and then nails Jesus back up on the cross and says, "No, Jesus is not the Messiah" and then returns to the Old Testament sacrifices.

Matthew 7:22-23 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"

- A few verses before this passage in Matthew 7:15, Jesus said to beware of false prophets who come in sheep's clothing. By outside performance they appear to be sheep, but their inward motives are like wolves—to devour the sheep. These false prophets were not followers of Jesus.
- Jesus didn't say these people actually performed the miracles and cast out demons, but that they would claim they did these things. "Many will say to me on that day..."
- Jesus will tell them, "I never knew you..." He won't say, "I once knew you, but you lost it." These counterfeit believers never knew Jesus or experienced salvation. Jesus said they practiced lawlessness. It's interesting that these people are described as very religious and were probably highly involved in church. They believed that they were saved, but they never were true Christians. This should be a warning that many people who think they are Christians are not.
- These people didn't lose their salvation. They never were saved.

Revelation 3:5 "He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life..."

- "He who overcomes" is every believer, not just a few believers. The same apostle John who wrote Revelation also wrote the book of 1 John. He says in 1 John 5:4 says that everyone who is born of God is an overcomer.
- The verse doesn't say that your name can be erased from the book of life. Jesus said, "I will not erase your name." (Just in case you are worried about having your name erased).
- In every city there was a book or register for each resident. If they moved or died, the name was blotted out or erased from the book. Jesus says, "You might get erased from that book, but you will never be erased from my Book of Life." This verse doesn't teach that you can lose your salvation, but it teaches exactly the opposite—that you can't be erased.
- Jesus said, "Rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven." (Luke 10:20) If there was any possibility you could be blotted out, you would not be able to rejoice, but He said to rejoice.
- Rev 17:8 says, "And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast..." Notice it doesn't say that their names were blotted out, but that their names were never written in. From when? From the foundation of the world. God knows ahead of time those who will receive Jesus (of their own free will) and records their names in the Book.
- When people believe they can be saved, then lost, then saved, then lost, it would mean that God keeps writing it in, blotting it out, writing it in, blotting it out—the Book of Life would be pretty messy. But God doesn't make mistakes and He doesn't have an eraser on His pencil.

1 John 1:8-9 "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."

Some people think this verse means we must confess every sin to maintain our salvation. But this passage doesn't mean that. It means that a person cannot be saved if they believe what they have done isn't sinful. To be cleansed, they must be honest and admit they have done wrong, and agree with God that Jesus died for their sins. The Greek word for "confess" means "to say the same thing." It means that we say the same thing as what God says—that we are sinners, and Jesus died for our sins and has cleansed us from all unrighteousness. It does not mean if you die with one unconfessed sin then you have lost your salvation.

2 Peter 2:22 "A dog returns to its own vomit," and "a sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire." This is not talking about a person losing his salvation. Peter is talking about people who have knowledge of Jesus and the freedom He gives, but reject it to follow their own way. Their nature never changed. It doesn't say that a sheep returns to its vomit or mire. "Dogs" and "hogs" always refer to people who haven't been saved. Jesus said, "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn and tear you to pieces" (Matt. 7:6).

Why people drop out of church and turn against God

1 John 2:19 "They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us." These were people who were involved with other believers (went to church) but later dropped out, in order to show that they were never really saved in the first place.

If you are a true believer in Jesus, your life will change and you will live for Him. Examine yourself and ask, "Am I really a Christian?" A true follower of Christ has Jesus living inside. Second Corinthians 13:5 says, "Test yourselves *to see* if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?"