

Hebrews 1 Once Saved Always Saved

Many verses in the book of Hebrews, and other passages as well, could make us doubt if we truly are once saved always saved. Two things are certain. First, we cannot be once saved always saved if we have not ever been saved. Being “always saved” is entirely conditional on first being saved.

Second, **if** a person can be lost again after being saved that person will be lost forever. “For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame” (Hebrews 6:4-6).

There is disagreement on whether the “enlightened” people described in this passage were or were not actually true believers. In the notes of seven different study Bibles, all seven interpret the enlightened to be people who had full exposure to the gospel, had witnessed the power of the Holy Spirit in the church and Christians, did all the Christian activities, but had not placed their faith in Jesus Christ and were therefore, not true believers.

Some of the confusion over whether we are once saved always saved may be because we Christians have done a poor job defining “believe” and “faith.” The book of Hebrews provides a comparison of people without faith and those with faith. The Israelite people at the time of the Exodus were people without faith and they lived a life of constant grumbling and disobedience (Hebrews 3:7-19). They had every reason to believe and trust God, but they did not. The list of faithful people in Chapter 11 had every reason to doubt, but they believed God and obeyed Him in their time of testing. See the difference. Without faith, the people were disobedient (the natural fruit of disbelief); with faith the people were obedient (the natural fruit of belief).

Those who fall away are those who never really made Jesus Lord. They want the blessing of God, while serving the pleasures of man. We cannot just desire God’s blessings, we must desire God! Genuine Christians have faith, obedience, and fruit. Endurance is the test of our faith. Departing from the truth is the uncovering of our deceit. Perseverance is proof of real faith.

The unbelieving will comply to get relief, such as Pharaoh during the time of the plagues. The believing will comply because of hope for the future. Scripture speaks of those who fall away:

- Jesus said, “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in” (Matthew 23:13).
- Speaking of the end times, Jesus said, “At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved” (Matthew 24:10-13).
- “Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour. 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” (1 John 2:18-19).

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Jesus, in His Revelation to John, dictated letters to seven churches. Each of these letters speaks of times of tribulation for the believers and rewards if they overcome. Consider Jesus' words:

- “Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death” (Revelation 2:10-11).
- “Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come. He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations” (Revelation 2:25-26).
- “He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels” (Revelation 3:5).

Also in Revelation 2:7, 2:17, 3:11-12, and 3:19-21 Jesus offers rewards to those who overcome. We can easily see that these rewards are only for the overcomers. These rewards require perseverance and endurance during times of testing so extreme that it is described as tribulation, and the people are told to be faithful unto death. Who can overcome such hard times? In 1 John 5:4-5, before the Revelation was received by him, John provided the answer: “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”

It is not enough to believe that God exists; it is not enough to have great knowledge about God and the gospel; it is not enough to live closely by His laws; it is not enough to serve at His temple/church; it is not even enough if we have all the above and are very interested in Jesus. If we are intellectually convinced that Jesus is who He says He is, but we have not placed our faith in Him, we are still bound by our sin.

A Biblical example of one who fits the intellectually-convinced-but-not-committed description is the Rich Young Ruler (Matthew 19:16-26). This guy knew something was still lacking and He knew to come to Jesus for salvation; however, the complete devotion Jesus required was more than this man was willing to give. He wanted to do something and have his eternal life secured, but Jesus required him to leave everything to the poor and follow Him. The rich young man thought he was following all the Commandments and thought he was willing to do whatever Jesus said, but with Jesus' instruction it was evident this man did not and was not willing to follow either of the two greatest commandments—to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself. The Rich Young Ruler found out his faith was in his money and he refused to believe life with Jesus was better than life with his money. He discovered the truth of Jeremiah 17:9, “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?”

We see salvation-type faith in Jesus in the lives of eleven of Jesus' twelve apostles, and in the Apostle Paul. They left everything to follow Jesus. Peter once asked Jesus, “Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?” Jesus answered, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And

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everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life" (Matthew 19:27-29).

What creates that kind of commitment in us? Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."

Romans 10:9-10 says, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. The word "believe" means to entrust ones spiritual well being to, in this case, Jesus. These verses tell us the commitment level required for salvation—confessing Him as our Lord and entrusting ourselves to Him so completely that the result is right living (righteousness).

Scripture provides us some indicators our faith is in God:

- If I truly believe that peace with God is impossible and eternal life is hopeless without Jesus, then I will certainly want my loved ones to believe in Him too. Hebrews 4:1 tells us we should tremble with fear that some could miss God's rest.
- Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15). The saved will desire to obey God. Our obedience will not save us and we will not be perfect at it, but obedience is a result of our salvation.
- Salvation occurs at a moment in time. If you do not remember when you gave your life to Christ and accepted His gift of forgiveness for your sin, then you may only have an intellectual agreement that He exists and died for you without following through with full commitment. Just like a married couple has a specific time they said "I do", so we too should have a time we said "I do" to Christ.
- "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20). This is a clear statement of what it means to put our faith in Christ.
- "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). The saved have put all their faith in Jesus and nothing else in all creation.

Once we have reached the point that we have placed our faith in God and know He has saved us, how do we know we will always be saved? What about when we don't obey Him? We know we have sinned after the time we were saved, so how do we keep from being lost again?

The key here is to realize that it is God who saves us and it is God who keeps us saved. We are saved by God's grace, not works; we are kept saved by God's grace, not works. It was the works of Jesus that provided our salvation; it is the work of Jesus that keeps our salvation secure.

Consider the following verses:

- "And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation" (Hebrews 5:9).

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- “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 7:25).
- “Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him” (Hebrews 9:28).
- Jesus said, “This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:39-40).
- Jesus said, “Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught of God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me” (John 6:43-45).
- “For indeed He was crucified because of weakness, yet He lives because of the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, yet we will live with Him because of the power of God directed toward you” (2 Corinthians 13:4).
- Jesus said, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My 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 10:27-28).
- “Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, ‘For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:35-39).
- “The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment” (2 Peter 2:9).
- “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” (Philippians 1:6).

These Scriptures and many others tell us that once we are saved, we are always saved.

“Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:7-9).

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:3-5).