

Eternal Security

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Can you accept Christ, become saved, and then lose your salvation? Only if the Lord's crucifixion was insufficient. Meaning: Jesus, plus ... "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have **eternal life**." (*Jn.3.16 NIV*) This means faith in Christ plus nothing.

Permanence of salvation

In the Gospel of John, Jesus, responding to the Jews during Hanukkah, answered, "... but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name testify about me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will 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. I and the Father are one." (*Jn.10.26-30 NIV*)

An explicit phrase here is, "they shall never perish." If you could lose your salvation, you could perish, and Jesus would be a liar. Therefore it must not be possible. There are two hands here: The Father's and the Son's. It's a picture of one hand over the other, a complete enclosure, so that "no one can snatch them out." That's comforting, because if no one can snatch them out, you can't snatch yourself out. WC

We must not interpret the permanence of salvation to mean we can claim salvation then live any way we want and still consider ourselves being saved. If someone lives in perpetual sin it's a pretty good bet they most likely are/were not saved, no matter what they say. Many people may believe they're saved, but if they don't bear any fruit with their lives, their proclamation of being saved is worthless.

Another way to look at it is if you ever have eternal life, but then lose it, was it really eternal to begin with? Eternal life is by definition irrevocable. To say otherwise means not only was it

not eternal, but God somewhere, somehow changed His mind, and that's not an acceptable position.

You did nothing to earn your salvation (*it's a gift from God*), so there's nothing you can do to lose it. In short, you know you can't lose your salvation, because you know **who** you've trusted for it, and you did nothing to earn or merit it. (*cf. Eph.2.8-9*) God won't change His mind, and He already knows all the mistakes you'll make until the day you die. And He still chose you anyway.

The FUD Condition

Satan wants to cause FUD (*Fear, Uncertainty and Doubt*) among God's people. Just before the Israelites were to enter into the Promised Land, they sent in twelve spies to search out the land. Ten returned with a bad report. Two of them said God is with us, it's no problem, let's go in and take it. But Israel succumbed to FUD. So, they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, and it was their children who entered into the land.

This has important implications for Christians today. The Promised Land represents a spirit-filled life. But there are still some battles to be fought. We all want a spirit-filled life, but we must be able to resist the FUD of the enemy. Satan uses FUD to keep us "wandering in the wilderness," unfocused and powerless to engage him and his emissaries.

The Apostle Peter put these words in the mix, "If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and are overcome, 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."
(*2Pe.2.20-21 NIV*)

Taking these verses out of context is a mistake. Chapter two of 2nd Peter begins with a warning about false teachers, and this thought continues throughout the chapter. It is not "about" Christians. It is a warning "for" Christians. Notice the wording: Peter uses the phrase "knowledge of the Lord

and Savior Jesus Christ". This does not even suggest, let alone imply they were saved. WC

James provides a commentary on what knowledge is good for in terms of salvation. "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder." (*Jas.2.19 NIV*) Are the demons saved by their knowledge? No. Knowledge does not imply salvation. There is an important distinction between the two. Peter was talking about false prophets who were never saved in the first place. His comments do not, and cannot apply to Christians.

There is also a difficult passage in the Book of Hebrews where the writer says, "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 and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance. To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace." (*He.6.4-6 NIV*)

Dr. Chuck Missler (1934 -) says "Enlightened means to make see, and both enlightened and illuminated are born-again references. But 'tasted' is a word implying a total experience. So, those referred to in this verse are believers. Does this actually mean a Christian can lose their salvation? But what can they 'be brought back to,' salvation? No. The word used here is repentance. We can equate repentance with salvation, but that's not necessarily so." Dr. J. Vernon McGee, (1904-1988) suggested "The whole tenor of the text reveals that the writer of Hebrews is talking about the fruit of salvation, not about the root of salvation. The writer was warning those 'sidetracked' Hebrew believers of the high probability of losing their reward."

The writer of Hebrews also says, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,..."
(*He.12.1 NIV*)

Paul was concerned with his running a race. He never feared losing his salvation, but being unfruitful. He exhorts us to lay aside anything hindering us, and run with endurance the race before us. As Christians, it's important to remember the kind of race it is. It's not a sprint, it's a marathon. That's the reason we need endurance. WC

“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.” (1Cor.3.11-15 NIV)

Here Paul talked of rewards, not salvation. The Word of God never speaks about being born again and then being born again and again. The Word talks about repentance. We repent of our sins when we accept Christ as Savior. We continue to repent when we sin after we have been saved. Even if a genuinely born again person loses all their rewards by living a carnal and unfruitful life, they are still saved. But this race theme echoes in his writings. WC

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.”
(1Cor.9.24 NIV)

Paul's first focus was heavenly, not earthly. Today it seems we lose this focus. The issue is the jeopardy of heavenly rewards, not salvation. Paul makes the distinction between the two very clear. WC

Dr. Chuck Missler concludes from the Hebrews 6 verses, “... The primary reference of this passage is to Jewish believers in the sense of them being called out of Judaism. Thus, this is not a salvation passage. It is talking of the fruits, the making of our lives into useful ministries. Those who have lost their first love (cf. Rev.2). As we emphasize the idea that Jesus did the whole

deal, we run the risk of sitting back on our security and not recognizing that we are in a race. Paul was preoccupied with this idea of being in a race. Only Christians are in this race. Paul was not running a race with sinners. Paul's fear was not that he would lose his salvation, but that he would have an unproductive life and have his witness curtailed."

In His prayer to the Father, Jesus, just before his betrayal, had this to say, "While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture (*cf. Jer.32*) would be fulfilled." (*Jn.17.12 NIV*)

It's not up to us to maintain our salvation. Jesus does all the work. Whose job is it to keep the sheep? Certainly not the sheep. It's the shepherd's job to keep the sheep. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "I am the good shepherd." (cf.Jn.10.11) If Jesus is the shepherd He isn't going to lose any sheep. You could say, "By myself, I'm sure I could mess it up, but fortunately, it's not my job." WC

There are several other considerations to think of. We are saved by faith, not by works. (*cf. Eph.2.8-9*) In fact, even the faith to believe is a gift from God. Logically, if you didn't do anything to obtain salvation, can you do anything to lose it? If God chose us before the foundation of the world (*cf. Eph.1.4*), will He unchoose us later? That would imply He can change, and God does not change (*cf. He.13.8*). Thus if you are chosen, you will remain so. Some folks may ask, "What if I haven't been chosen, and I'm believing in vain?" Anyone who truly comes to Jesus will be accepted (*cf. Jn.6.37*).

Paul also speaks of being "sealed" with the Holy Spirit of promise. (*cf. Eph.1.13*) If God seals something, how could it be unsealed? Paul goes on to speak of the Holy Spirit as "the deposit guaranteeing our inheritance." (*cf. Eph.1.14*) What God starts, he finishes.

Some may call the idea of eternal security "cheap grace". If we don't do anything for it, somehow it lessens the whole thing. **Totally wrong**. Just more FUD. Jesus made the supreme

sacrifice; to call it cheap belittles and demeans His whole experience. Paul deals with people who think grace means they can do anything they want. (*cf. Ro.6.1*)

In his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote, "For 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." (*Ro.8.38-39 NIV*)

Since we are all part of the creation, and since nothing in all creation can separate us from Christ, it should be understood that we cannot separate ourselves from Christ. Note the word "future". There's nothing that will occur in the future to separate us from Christ. This verse advocates eternal security. WC

What about the deceivers, self-diluted, pretenders? Those who appear to be believers but aren't. Christ dealt with them then, and will deal with them when the Day arrives. He told His Disciples, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name and in Your name drive out demons and in Your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from Me, you evildoers!'" (*Mt.7.21-23 NIV*) These so-called believers were very public in their actions and mannerisms of support for Christ, but they were, and those who follow their example today are, fakers, or false believers at best. Like Simon Magus, the magician. (*cf. Acts 8.10*)

God's Word has the answer

The real problem is not can you lose your salvation (*you can't*). The real problem is: Were you ever saved in the first place? This is perhaps a more disturbing question than losing your salvation. If you have made a sincere prayer of commitment to Christ, you don't have a problem. After that, we can be assured of salvation. The Bible speaks of several ways. First, it's important to realize we must not consider our feelings. They are easily manipulated by the enemy to deceive us. And if we have a great feeling, what

happens when we don't have it? Are we un-saved until we get that feeling back? Feelings are not a reliable assurance of our eternal security. We must trust in the Word of God.

“We accept human testimony, but God’s testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which He has given about his Son. Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has made Him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”
(1Jn.5.9-12 NIV)

We accept what a biased media says about someone in a particular venue, even though it is most usually propaganda. God’s testimony is greater because it is about His Son. One who believes in Jesus accepts this testimony: God has given us eternal life. This testimony says with Christ, there is life. And without Jesus, no life. WC

“If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, ‘Anyone who believes in Him will never be put to shame.’ For there is no difference between Jew

and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on Him, for, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’” (Ro.10.9-13 NIV)

Paul is saying a person’s confession of faith should be in agreement with a person’s life. Obviously a new believer should be trying to bring their life into agreement with their new faith in Christ. If you call on God, through faith in Christ, God will not ignore the call no matter from where you place it (make the call). Believe the gospel and be saved. WC

“The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.” (Ro.8.16-17 NIV)

Our spirit is “in-tune” with the Holy Spirit because we belong to God. No matter the situation, praise or suffering, we share His glory. It is part of our inheritance with/through faith in Christ. WC

What does this mean? How does the Holy Spirit bear witness with our spirit? One way is simple, and often taken for granted. Do you believe the Bible? The Holy Spirit inspired it. If you agree with it, your spirit and the Holy Spirit are in agreement. This is not a minor point. Majority of people today certainly don’t believe the Bible is the actual Word of God. It’s just something Christians take for granted. Paul says it is one way you can know you are a child of God. (cf. Ro.8.14)

“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him. This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth. This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and He knows everything. Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from Him anything we ask, because we keep His commands and do what pleases Him. And this is His command: to believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as He commanded us. The one who keeps God’s commands lives in him, and He in them. And this is how we know that He lives in us: We know it by the Spirit He gave us.” (1 Jn.3.14-24 NIV)

Right here, in these verses, the Word of God says we can know we are saved, because of our love for one another. No love, no life. If you are born again you will no longer live in/with hatred. Even so, when you become a believer you do not get rid of your old nature. Accordingly though, we are to manifest our new nature. God is our example. He set the standard when He laid down His life for us. Real love gets into action. Believers are to operate in a love relationship. God gave you an assurance in your heart that you are saved. But, when we fail Him, He doesn't fail us. We take our burdens and cares to Him in confidence. And, the confirming fact of your salvation is you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit who verifies these things in your heart. WC

Unfortunately, we frequently rely on feelings and experiences, which are unreliable at best, and can easily be used by Satan to deceive us. Satan himself can transform into an angel of light. (cf. 2Cor.11.13-14) We must anchor ourselves firmly to the Rock of the Word of God.

More Scripture

“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us. My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—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.” (1Jn.1.8-1Jn.2.2 NIV)

It is genuinely good to know you have an advocate when it comes to atoning for sin. While we were yet sinning Christ died for us. As believers we have the assurance of salvation even if we sin, regardless of the severity. A believer cannot / will not continue “sinning,” i.e., just doing what we know to be sin. Until we are in Heaven with the Lord we are subject to making mistakes. We are not condemned to Hell if we are killed before we can confess a particular sin. If that were

possible, then Christ's shed blood and death was not sufficient. Jesus said it was enough. WC

“The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

(Gal.5.19-25 NIV)

Obviously there are more or other acts of the flesh Paul could have listed, but these are rather demonstrative. To live like this indicates a pattern of life that will exclude one from heaven. A believer produces fruit of the Spirit and keeps at it. WC

“So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. For when we were in the realm of the flesh the sinful passions aroused by the Law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the Law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code: The Law and Sin. What shall we say, then? Is the Law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the Law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the Law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’ But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the Law, sin was dead. Once I was alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is

holy, righteous and good. Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! Nevertheless, in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it used what is good to bring about my death, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful. We know that the Law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the Law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this Law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's Law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's Law, but in the flesh a slave to the law of sin." (Ro.7.4-25 NIV)

On this side of heaven, every born again believer in Christ has a dual nature: The "old man" with his sin nature and the "new man" indwelt by the Holy Spirit through faith in Christ. (cf. 2Cor.5.17) We duel with this dual condition from conversion to physical death. As we surrender more of ourselves to Christ, the more fruit we bear. (cf. Gal.5.22-24) As strong in the faith as Paul was, he still struggled with sin in his life. We face similar struggles but, as we grow in faith, the struggles diminish and "grace abounds." Not condemnation. WC

"... He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit," (Titus 3.5 NIV)

God is rich in mercy and after renewing us He regenerates us. WC

“All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.” (Eph.2.3-5 NIV)

Even though you are saved, through sin you may fall out of fellowship with God, but you cannot get out of His favor. You can grieve the Holy Spirit, but you can always come back. (cf. Jn.1.9) You will always fall short, but the blood of Jesus Christ just keeps on cleaning you up by His grace. Every time grace is rendered in the New Testament, it is rendered from the Greek word charis / charis, which carries the meaning of God’s divine influence upon the heart. WC

“All those the Father gives Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me I will never drive away.” (Jn.6.37 NIV)

Election (predestination) and free-will are both in this passage. The Father gives believers to Christ, but those same believers have to come. Once a believer is in Christ, the Lord Jesus says He will never drive them away. WC

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Ro.6.23 NIV)

It requires constant dependence on Christ, through conscious effort to stay the course, looking to the Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit. We accept His gift of eternal life by faith. WC

“And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.” (1Jn.5.11-12 NIV)

Stern and simple: If you have Christ you have eternal life. You are saved. Do you believe God or not? If you do not believe God you are quite simply saying He is a liar. Something God cannot be. WC

“We ... know that a person is not justified by the works of the Law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law, because by the works of the Law no one will be justified.” (Gal.2.15-16 NIV)

The Apostle Paul uses “we” and in so doing includes himself and says that everyone must leave (abandon) the Law, come to Christ, and trust Him in order to be justified by faith in Christ rather than the works of Law. WC

“No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, ... “ (Acts 15.11 NIV)

All, Jews and non-Jews, must be saved by grace. Peter accepted his salvation and “knew he was saved.” He believed it and shared it. WC

“For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: That God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation.” (2Cor.5.14-19 NIV)

As believers we are convinced and convicted of Christ’s love for us. And, we no longer view other believers from a worldly perspective. We were not there, but we know Jesus was and that the Corinthians who saw Him quit thinking of Him as a worldly person. We also understand that through Christ we have been reconciled to God. Not being able to keep the Law no longer counts against us. WC

“The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” (Acts 2.39 NIV)

Those whom God will call today are “far off” from when this was written. The promise is still active. WC

“Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life.”
(Jn.6.47 NIV)

*How could it be any more clear? Jesus just tells it like it is.
WC*

“Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation— if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard ... “ (Col.1.21-23 NIV)

The reason folks are lost is their minds are alienated from God. But, Christ actually provided a way for us to be reconciled to Him. The open hostility toward God is replaced with an understanding that we, through the blood of Christ, are blameless and justified before God. Even if for whatever reason(s) we have denied the covering provided by faith in Christ. There is no “if” when you are a child of God. WC

“Timothy, ... fight the battle well, holding on to faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and so have suffered ... with regard to the faith.” (1Tim.1.18-19 NIV)

Like Timothy, we are not to give in to troubling thoughts and suffer the consequences associated with rejecting or not claiming what we know is truth. WC

Some more difficult verses

“My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.”
(Jas.5.19-20 NIV)

Wandering suggests not knowing and turning (converting) a sinner from their error indicates the wanderer was not yet saved. Christ's blood covers a multitude of misdirected wanderings. WC

“For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith.’” (Ro.1.17 NIV)

The righteousness he is talking about is what God demands. It is what God provides. It is a righteousness that is “from” God. He saves us on no other ground than that we trust Jesus. WC

“But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’”
(Jas.2.18 NIV)

Saving faith is “living faith” and produces good work (fruit). WC

“What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.” (Mt.18.12-14 NIV)

Emphasis in these verses is on saving the lost sheep (little ones – young children under the age of accountability). He will take care of them while they are “little.” Jesus was not talking here about a saved person wandering off and becoming lost. A mature believer won't be wandering. WC

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in Me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in Me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If

you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in Me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.” (Jn. 15.1-6 NIV)

Christ is saying He is the “true vine.” He is telling His disciples that Israel is not the genuine vine. The Holy Spirit puts every believer into the body of Christ to be a branch. It is important to understand that these verses are dealing with “fruit bearing,” not salvation. Abiding in Christ will produce perpetual fruit. WC

“See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called ‘Today,’ so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end.” (He. 3.12-14 NIV)

As believers we have the responsibility to keep our hearts and minds directed toward Godly things, not allowing ourselves, or other believers around us to turn away from the living God. What we received at our conversion should be encouraged and enriched by “faith-walking.” WC

“Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.” (He. 2.18 NIV)

Christ was tested during His entire time on earth. Unlike Him though, we can succumb to testing. We are to cling to Him and allow Him to “keep us in the way.” WC

“Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.” (2Cor. 1.21-22 NIV)

“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the

redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of His glory.” (Eph.1.13-14 NIV)

You don't get the sense that losing salvation is possible from verses which speak of unconditional guarantees. Having been sealed and guaranteed eternal life, doesn't sound like the rhetoric of a losable salvation. WC

“Who then is the one who condemns? No one. 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.” (Ro.8.34 NIV)

“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.” (Eph.2.6-7 NIV). Christ said, “The one who is victorious (*remember we are running the race to win* ^{WC}) will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels.” (Rev.3.5 NIV).

*The Greek word for blot is **exaleipho** and means to wipe away, blot out, remove, cancel. As believers, through the Holy Spirit, we are seated with Christ in heaven. If we are with Christ, then we cannot be lost or unsaved. If we could lose our salvation, Christ would have to remove our name from the Lamb's Book of Life, which He promised He would not do. If He would do that, when, and if, we repented and became saved again, He would have to re-insert our name into the Book of Life. He intercedes for those who are saved. If we could lose our position in Christ, He would have to cease His intercession on our behalf while we tried to work our way back into His grace. (Not in agreement with His Word). WC*

The one who is victorious, will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels.

Dr. Gerald H. Terrebrood (1941 -) says, “The Doctrine of Perseverance (once saved always saved, or that salvation can be

forfeited) has been discussed and debated by theologians and Biblical scholars for a very long time. If there was/is a definitive answer to this question, it would have been presented and universally accepted by the family of faith many years ago. All believers should concentrate on and share the desire to be unified in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Through that commitment, believers need to be effectively witnessing to the unsaved. Salvation of the lost; actual discipleship; and individual spiritual growth should be the goal oriented objective.”

The Judgments

God’s Word speaks of two explicit judgments: One for believers and one for unbelievers. Believers will receive their judgment at:

The Judgment Seat of Christ (the Bema)

The Judgment Seat of Christ is not a place and time when the Lord will mete out punishment for sins committed by the child of God. Rather, it is a place where rewards will be given or lost depending on how one has used his or her life for the Lord.

J. Hampton Keathley, III (? - 2002) suggested, “This event will occur immediately following the rapture or resurrection of the church, (*cf. 1Thes.4.13-18*) after it is caught up to be with the Lord in the air. It will occur somewhere in the heavenlies in the presence of the Lord. (*cf. 1Thes.4.17 and Rev. 4.2 & 19.8*) The order of events will be (a) the rapture (*the harparzō*) which includes our glorification or resurrection bodies, (b) exaltation into the heavens with the Lord, (c) examination before the Bema, and (d) compensation or rewards.”

To the believer Paul wrote, “So then, each of us will give an account of himself *or herself* to God.” (*Ro.14.12 NIV*) We know Paul is talking to believers because he says “us” not “them” in verse 13. Unbelievers are “them.” They have a larger problem. Jesus said, “Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already” (*Jn.3.18 NIV*) We go to the Reward Judgment before Christ. Judgment for sure, but not the same judgment as for unbelievers.

They go to the White Throne Judgment which has a very bad outcome, with no end.

The judgment seat referred to in Romans 14 and in 2nd Corinthians 5, is from a Greek word “*bema*,” which is used by Paul in these writings to picture the believer as a competitor in a spiritual contest who appears before the Bema to receive his imperishable reward. Christ is the Judge at the Bema and He is the one who gives out the awards. In other words, it is a reward seat and portrays a time of rewards, or loss of rewards following examination, (we will all give an accounting) but it is not a time of punishment where believers are judged for their sins. That would be inconsistent with the finished work of Christ on the Cross, because with that sacrifice, He totally paid the penalty for our sins.

The Judgment Seat of Christ (the Bema) does not determine salvation; that was determined by Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf (*cf. 1Jn.2.2*) and our faith in Him. (*cf. Jn.3.16*) All of our sins are forgiven, and we will never be condemned for them. (*cf. Ro.8.1*) We should not look at the Judgment Seat of Christ as God judging our sins, but rather as God rewarding us for our lives. As the Bible says, we will have to give an account of ourselves. Part of this is surely answering for any un-repentant sins we have committed. However, that is not going to be the primary focus of the Judgment Seat of Christ.

At the Judgment Seat of Christ, believers are rewarded based on how faithfully they served Christ. (*cf. 1Cor.9.4-27; 2Tim.2.5*) Some of the things we might be judged on are how well we obeyed the Great Commission, (*cf. Mt.28.18-20*) how victorious we were over sin, (*cf. Ro.6:1-4*) and how well we controlled our tongues. (*cf. Jas.3.1-9*) The Bible speaks of believers receiving crowns for different things based on how faithfully they served Christ. James provides a good summary of how we should think about the Judgment Seat of Christ: “Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.” (*Jas.1.12 NIV*)

On the other hand, unbelievers will receive judgment at:

The White Throne Judgment

The White Throne Judgment is reserved for unbelievers. This is where, at the end of the Millennium, (*1,007 years after the Rapture of the Church*), all who deny Christ will go and stand judgment for their actions in life and receive the justice promised by God in His Word.

Unbelievers will be judged at the White Throne Judgment. (*cf. Rev.20*) This judgment does not determine salvation. Everyone at the Great White Throne is an unbeliever who has rejected Christ during their life and is therefore doomed to the lake of fire. Unbelievers will be judged from/by those things written in the books, according to their works. (*cf. Rev.20.12*) Those who have rejected Christ as Lord and Savior will be judged based on their works alone. The Bible confirms that no one can/will be justified by work, i.e. keeping the law. (*cf. Gal.2.16*) No amount of good works or attempting to keep God's laws can be sufficient to atone for sin. All their thoughts, words and actions will be judged against God's perfect standard, Jesus Christ, and found wanting. There will be no reward for them, only eternal condemnation and punishment. This is the second death.

Conclusion

First and foremost, it is not possible for a person to lose their salvation, for it's not theirs for the keeping, it's Jesus' responsibility. We contribute nothing. Secondly, we must run the race set before us with endurance. Thirdly, it is possible to have assurance of salvation. The Bible provides multiple "proof texts." And, fourthly, we must be careful not to rely on feelings or experiences, because they can deceive us.

God's Word has the answer to any question we can formulate concerning the status of believers and how they and unbelievers will be judged in accordance with His will. Primary to this understanding is the fact that the Word of God was delivered to the world in the specific languages of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Modern translations of these original languages have resulted in some minor as well as some gross errors. As a result, many believers have become disquieted on/over several key

issues related to some doctrinal positions. Eternal security of the believer is most definitely one of those key issues.

Paul told the believers and non-believers in Galatia that “. . . through the law I (*he*) died to the law so that I (*he*) might live for God. I have (*he has*) been crucified with Christ and I (*he*) no longer live(s), but Christ lives in me (*him*). The life I (*he*) now live(s) in the body, I (*he*) live(s) by faith in the Son of God, who loved me (*him*) and gave himself for me (*you*). I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!” (*Gal.2.20-21 NIV*)

Exchange in pronoun and verb tense by WC

Christ declared the righteousness of all true believers. Having genuinely accepted Christ, a believer is righteous forever. Justified by faith, (our part) and righteous because of Christ's death and resurrection. (His part). God does not love us less or more due to our actions. We are saved by God's grace, through faith in Him alone. It is what we do "as believers" that results in rewards, or lack thereof, at the Judgment Seat of Christ. WC

Finally, think of Paul's final words to Timothy, just before his execution at the hands of the Romans: “ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for His appearing.”

(2Tim.4.7-8 NIV)

Good advice from a man who would know. WC

Supporting Information

From Chuck Missler with Koinonia House Ministry

Once Saved Always Saved is easily misunderstood due to confusion of terminology. Chuck uses an example from Dr. Earl Rademacher, who placed this question into a trilogy response:

I have been saved
I am being saved
I will be saved

Missler puts this concept of salvation into three categories and refers to this as a Paradigm of Salvation:

Justification ~ I have been saved, *past tense*

Separation from the “penalty” of sin

A gift from God of everlasting life received by faith alone

Sanctification ~ I am being saved, *present tense*

Separation from the “power” of sin

A work in progress involving faith and works of the believer

Glorification ~ I will be saved, *future tense*

Separation from the “presence” of sin

All believers will be glorified; some will have more glory (reward) than others

My salvation was “nailed to the cross” in Christ

All three members of the Godhead are committed to my eternal security

If I try to add to what Christ has completed, I am imputing his completed work (*tantamount to blasphemy*)