

Is it Possible to Lose Your Salvation?

Sometimes we come across Biblical teachings that lend themselves to varying interpretations. The question of whether a true Christian can be lost again is one of those. There are three basic ideas on the subject.

There are those who don't believe that what a person does has any bearing on his salvation. The only question is whether he ever "trusted Christ." If he did, he is saved, and nothing (even denouncing the faith) could ever change the fact.

Still others believe that those who are saved do show the evidence of conversion, but again that nothing can ever sever their relationship with God.

Those of this persuasion claim that losing one's salvation is impossible. They take the position that those who evidently turn from the faith were never saved to begin with. Also within these two camps, some believe that sinning Christians may get "called home to Heaven," because they bring reproach to Christ on earth.

Those who hold this view of unconditional, irreversible salvation, believe that to later "lose" salvation would be a negative reflection against God—that the God who saved them, must also keep them (even if against their own will) and ultimately take them through to Heaven. However, the real reproach against God is the shame to His name when it is acceptable for "Christians" to continue in sin. This also would place God in the dilemma of a double standard, condemning an unbeliever for the same sinful acts that a "believer" might engage in. The Bible makes no such distinction.

There is a third way that matches all Biblical teaching. It is the one that receives (credits) the power of God for salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus. It actually delivers from the former bondage to sin. This relationship with God continues so long as one abides in Christ, and continues in the Word. It is the doctrine of security for the faithful. They are those whose names will not be blotted out of the book of life. "*He that overcometh, ... I will not blot out his name out of the book of life*" (Revelation 3:5). Such a promise is not extended to those who depart again from the faith, to live according to the former lusts which they followed in their ignorance. Scripture rings with warnings against an irreversible guarantee of eternal life and an irresistible destiny of Heaven. Forgiveness of sin and peace with God is too precious to be trifled with—a view supported by sound Biblical interpretation while meeting the criteria of sound thinking.

When interpreting Biblical passages that could sustain opposing views, one must avoid applications that violate the clear teachings of other passages, rendering them pointless, senseless, or worse, an actual contradiction of the truth. For example, the Bible does teach a falling away doctrine from sample statements that follow:

“Judas by transgression fell” (Acts 1:25). “If they shall fall away” (Hebrews 6:6). “Him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12), “If ye do these things, ye shall never fall” (2 Peter 1:10). “The latter end is worse with them than the beginning” (2 Peter 2:20), etc. The Bible does not promote error. Neither would it repeatedly appear to do so.

Let’s further note several passages that are often cited as evidence of unconditional eternal security:

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38, 39).

This harmonizes well with the true security of those who *continue in the faith*, showing that there is no external force sufficient to sever the faithful (those who abide in Christ), from their relationship with God. The faithful believer is always secure in the faithfulness of God. But does this “security” passage still allow for actual falling away from God and salvation? Yes. This passage simply means what it says.

The things listed are all *outside forces* arrayed against the believer. Many believers have been put under incredible pressure, and found the power of God totally sufficient. But there is a key here that rests with the believer. Colossians 1:22 contains the same glorious element of being presented *“holy, and unblameable and unreprougeable in his sight.”* The condition for this follows: *“If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel.”* This is security grounded in continued faithfulness.

Also examine 2 Peter chapter one. Verse four identifies the believer as “[partaker] of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” Yet this position is conditional. The believer must “give all diligence” by incorporating non-optional qualities of faithfulness that actually guarantee fruitfulness. In summary, the exhortation is to *“give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall”* (verse 10).

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (John 10:27, 28).

This, perhaps, is the all-time favorite—the clinching argument against the possibility of falling away. But notice here that the sheep that never perish both *hear* the shepherd’s voice, and actively *follow* the shepherd. These cannot be plucked from the great Shepherd’s hand. He

does indeed lead them, and carry them through to salvation—providing they hear His voice and follow Him.

One of the compelling concepts of Scripture is that God does not play favorites:

“And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear” (1 Peter 1:17).

How then shall God make a difference between impenitent unbelievers, and impenitent Christians? Indeed, this would be the worst form of favoritism or reverse discrimination. In accord with Scripture, the more grave judgment goes to those who profess Christianity, but will not depart from, or else return to the very sins that brought condemnation in the first place. This does not align with the idea that professing the name of Jesus is a free pass to do what we will. What about the angelic proclamation before Christ was born? *“He shall save his people from their sins.”*

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21).

Apparently, there is a certain revulsion among those who do not believe it is possible to fall away, with the idea that God would cast off those who go back into sin. But that is misguided. The revulsion should go with living in defilement of the righteousness of God, not in God taking just judgment on those who do so. If you must believe that God’s grace cannot be resisted, why not take it to the level that magnifies God in the faith that produces righteousness and holy living, versus corrupt living that makes a mockery of the grace of God, and causes the enemies of God to blaspheme?

What would God do with impenitent “Christians” in Heaven? Would He take people unwilling to forsake sin, give them a no-questions-asked ticket to Heaven, and cleanse them on arrival to enjoy eternal bliss forever? There are those who claim that a sinner in Heaven would be more miserable than a sinner in Hell. Though I strongly disagree (there is no misery greater than punishment in Hell), there is a point here that is worth noting. Heaven is no place for people who love their sins.

“And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth” (Revelation 21:27).

“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still” (Revelation 22:11).

But why bring up this contentious issue at all? Because there will be widespread consternation in the day of judgment when God divides between the sheep and the goats—when counterfeit salvation meets up with the reality of the just judgment of God.

~Lester Troyer