

# Continue In The Faith

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The issue to be addressed here is the doctrine known as "Eternal Security," also known as "Once Saved, Always Saved." This is the belief that once a person has believed and asked Jesus into his heart, that person can in no way lose his salvation, even if he practices sin without repenting. I am very familiar with this doctrine, having grown up with it in an evangelical church and having experienced its negative effects.

This study is not suggesting that we lose our salvation every time we sin. Neither is it implying that God is angry at us or that His love for us is in any way diminished. These things should be kept in mind as one reads this study, remembering that the purpose of this study is to point out specific dangers, not to present a balanced summary of God's Word (though attempts at balance are sprinkled through out). This study has a specific purpose - to point out the dangers of a specific doctrine.

As we refute this doctrine and point out its negatives, it should also be kept in mind that all who have embraced it are not necessarily guilty of the errors that are associated with it. The goal here is to help establish a biblical and healthy fear of God where some have continued in their sin with no fear of God and no felt need for repentance. This article has three parts and a summary:

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## Biblical Evidence to Refute The Once Saved Always Saved Doctrine

### *Jude's Warning*

Jude was writing to saved New Testament believers when he warned them, using backsliders who came out of Egypt, the angels who were once holy, and the people of Sodom as examples.

#### **Jude 1:5-7 (NKJV)**

<sup>5</sup> But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.

<sup>6</sup> And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day;

<sup>7</sup> as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

If Christians could not lose their salvation, then why did Jude write this to those whom he referred to as “called, sanctified and preserved,” clearly saying, “...the Lord saved the people ... and afterward destroyed those who did not believe?” Much like the warning Jude gave concerning the people of Sodom, Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians, not unbelievers, warning that those who practice such things as adultery, fornication, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these will not inherit the Kingdom of God (see Gal. 5:19-21). Without holiness, no one will see God (see Heb. 12:14).

Jude's warning is about those who pervert the grace of God. The parallel is clear here: Just like those who were saved out of Egypt and were later destroyed, just like those angels who were once holy but are now destined to eternal fire, we can believe and be right with God, but later depart from the faith and suffer eternal fire.

### *Making Our Calling and Our Entrance to the Kingdom Sure*

The work of Christ is a complete work. This is without question. No other sacrifice is needed. He has provided everything we need to be saved. **His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust** (2 Peter 1:3-4). It is precisely for this reason (because such provision has been made for us) that if we fail to be diligent and continue in the faith, our calling and election becomes unsure and entrance into the kingdom could be denied as Peter continues,

**"But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of**

**our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet 1:5-11 underline added).**

If our salvation could not be lost, why does Peter exhort *believers* to be diligent to make our calling and election sure and give us a list of actions saying that if we do them, our entrance into the everlasting kingdom will be abundantly supplied. The work of Christ is complete, but ours is not.

### ***Grafted in and Cut Off***

**For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.** (Rom 11:21-22). Those who have been grafted in is a direct reference to gentiles who have become believers (Christians). If we can in no way lose our salvation, why does Paul warn that those who have been grafted in could possibly be cut off? Scripture contains many such warnings and exhortations about our salvation and that our time here should be with fear (1 Peter 1:17).

The "Once Saved Always Saved Doctrine" discounts the severity of God. Yes, God is love and full of kindness and tender mercy. But we can never really know God if we do not grasp the proper balance of understanding regarding His severity and His Kindness.

### ***Drawing Back***

**Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.** (Heb 10:38-39).

If it were impossible to fall away, why would this verse speak of "drawing back" if they had not first been "drawn forward?" This is clearly a warning to Christians to, not only consider salvation a past event, but also a present and future thing; i.e., **believe to the saving of the soul** (Heb. 10:39). This implies that salvation is a process, as also indicated by several scriptures that say that those who endure to the end shall be saved. Peter also speaks of **...receiving the end of your faith; the salvation of your souls** (1 Pet 1:9). As we received Christ (by faith), so should we walk with Him (Col. 2:5-6). If we are to enjoy the fruit of the Spirit, we must walk by the Spirit.

Some have suggested that "drawing back" refers to something less than a loss of salvation. But drawing back cannot be taken as a drawing back to something less since it speaks of drawing back unto perdition, which means total destruction and eternal damnation.

### ***Second Birthing***

**My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you,** (Gal 4:19).

Apparently, Paul believed these Galatians had been in faith, had departed from faith, and were in need of salvation again- a second birthing. We cannot assume that Paul was laboring a second time because the Galatians were not "really" saved the first time. That would be a stretch. These were genuine believers, the fruit of Paul's own ministry. Because Paul says here, "**...for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you...**," neither can we refer here to Hebrews 6 and say that the only people who can lose their salvation are those who cannot be renewed (i.e. the unforgivable sin).

### ***Being Disqualified***

**But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified** (1 Cor 9:27).

Paul also thought of himself as one who could lose his salvation. If one cannot be disqualified, are we left to assume that Paul was not yet really saved? No, that would be absurd.

### ***You Have Fallen From Grace***

**You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace** (Gal 5:3-4 underline added).

If a Christian cannot fall from grace, then why did Paul say, "**...you have fallen from grace?**" One cannot fall from grace if they were never in grace.

### ***"Blot Out His Name"***

**He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life.** (Rev. 3:5).

Once again, if a person cannot lose their salvation, then why did Jesus speak of "blotting out" or erasing names from the book of life? A name cannot be erased if it were not first written. Some suggest that there is a book of life in which everyone who has ever lived is written, and only true Christians' names are allowed to remain. But Rev 17:8 speaks of those whose names were *not* written in the book of life from the foundation of the world.

Regardless, the point to be made here is that overcoming is associated with eternal life - and names can be erased. But also, we can overcome! Jesus would not ask us to overcome if there was no way provided to do so. We can overcome because greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4). We can overcome by the blood of the Lamb, the word of our testimony, and by loving not our lives, even unto death (Rev. 12:11).

### ***Nullifying the Sacrifice***

**For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries** (Heb 10:26-27).

This the context of this passage is Jesus' blood sacrifice. Those who willfully continue in sin and do not seek repentance have **...counted the blood of the covenant by which he was**

**sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace** (Heb. 10:29). They have nullified the sacrifice of Jesus, have lost their salvation and can expect judgement.

***Other References***

There are many other warnings in the Bible that exhort us to continue, endure to the end, etc., lest we be disqualified. Below are a few more. Keep in mind that all these were written to Christians.

Heb. 3:6

Matthew 10:22

Matthew 24:11-13

1 Corinthians 10:1-12

2 Peter 3:17-18

Revelation 2:5

Revelation 3:15-16

Colossians 1:21-23

1 Timothy 4:16

1 Chronicles 28:9

## The Bad Fruit Associated with the Doctrine

Though it is not always the case, there are several undesirable things that seem to find traction in the Once Saved Always Saved teaching.

### ***Failure to Know God***

This doctrine often produces people who do not know the true nature of God and who invent their own God. To some, Jesus is little more than a Divine Santa Claus who would never deal severely with them beyond withholding a few rewards. As stated above, we will never fully understand who God is if we do not embrace His severity along with His goodness. **Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off** (Rom. 11:22). Grace is not about a God who simply "understands" that we cannot stop sinning and simply overlooks it, it is about a God who died on a cross and rose again to make available to us the power to overcome sin.

### ***Does Not Promote Personal Responsibility***

The "Once Saved Always Saved" doctrine fits well with other doctrines of irresponsibility in the church and in society which "excuse" the individual of sin. These would include many of the views which have their basis in psychology instead of the Word of God. Instead of lust we have sexual addiction, instead of anger we have frustration; instead of unforgiveness we have hurts; instead of sinners we are victims. The result of such language pollution is often a mentality that views sin as a thing to be recovered from instead of repented of. In such circles, the individual is no longer responsible for their sin, it is the result of injustice and unfortunate circumstances. Only after repentance can any real for recovery healing be accomplished.

### ***Lack of Discipleship/Maturity***

To say that we cannot lose our salvation can not only promote personal irresponsibility, it can also promote a lackadaisical attitude that keeps us from being concerned about the sin of others and exhorting them day by day concerning the deceitfulness of sin. There may be many people who hold to the "Once Saved Always Saved" doctrine who will be saved, but if they do not exhort those they minister to be holy, they probably will bring little fruit to maturity. Much of their work (converts/fruit) will not finish the course and will end up being burned, yet they themselves will be saved, though as by fire (read 1 Cor. 3:9-15).

#### **1 Corinthians 3:9-15 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, *you are* God's building.

<sup>10</sup> According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.

<sup>11</sup> For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

<sup>12</sup> Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

<sup>13</sup> each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.

<sup>14</sup> If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward.

<sup>15</sup> If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

The gold, silver, and precious stones are true Christians who will be tried in the day of burning and found true. But the wood, hay, and stubble are either false Christians or those who did not continue in the faith. These are those who fall away when things get difficult, having been built into the church by those who are poor builders who do not bring fruit to maturity.

### ***Lack of Good Works***

Some may assume that what is being presented here is a "salvation by works" view. Nothing can be farther from the truth. Without question, salvation is not by our works, it is by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9). However, we must remember that grace provides the faith and real faith produces works. When we read Ephesians 2:8-9, we must not stop without reading verse 10. You were saved by grace **for good works**. James implies that this kind of faith, which has no works, cannot save us.

**"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?" ... "Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works."** (James 2:14,17-18).

It is sometimes hard to tell if someone is doing works out of dead religion or out of a sincere faith and love for God. Therefore, we should encourage one another continually to first love God and then to do good works because of the deceitfulness of sin (see Heb 10:24). Good works, works done in faith, only come out of an obedient loving relationship with Jesus. Faith works by love (Gal. 5:6).

It has been my observation that many of those cling to the "Once Saved Always Saved" doctrine have come from a religious background of extreme legalism, or a works mentality. Being on the "rebound" they find it easy to accept this doctrine. However, many are changing their view after examining the scriptures more carefully.

### ***Lack of Godly Sorrow, Repentance, and Obedience***

Some have struggled with their salvation continually because of an unbiblical works mentality. Each time they stumble the condemnation is so great that they feel no assurance of their salvation. This is tragic and shows a lack of scriptural understanding. These are weak in faith and need to be encouraged and taught the Word.

On the other hand I have known people who have equal but opposite lack of scriptural understanding and never seem to feel godly sorrow for their sin. This is the primary reason for this article. Having believed the "Once Saved Always Saved" doctrine, they see no need to overcome sin, and in some cases, they do not think they can! Therefore they continue in their sinful lifestyle. But the Word says:

### 1 John 3:4-6 (NKJV)

<sup>4</sup> Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.

<sup>5</sup> And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.

<sup>6</sup> Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.

Most continue to go through some form of religious activity which becomes a form of godliness that denies the power thereof. Others abandon all forms of godliness, yet claim to be "saved." Both of these are an insult to the Spirit of Grace.

As Christians, we do not lose the seal or assurance of salvation each time we stumble and sin. This is without question. But we know we are true Christians because, if we sin, we run to God, not from Him, and take the appropriate action and repent. **“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”** (1 John 2:1). We should be deeply sorrowful and seek strength for repentance from God.

Paul, wrote a letter of reproof to the Corinthian Christians in which he acknowledges that it made them sorry. He then says:

### 2 Corinthians 7:9-10 (NKJV)

<sup>9</sup> Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing.

<sup>10</sup> For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

Until Jesus returns and we are glorified in our new bodies in His likeness, we will need cleansing. **“And everyone who has this hope in Him [hope of being like Jesus] purifies himself, just as He is pure”** (1 John 3:3). How do we purify or cleanse ourselves? Peter tells us quite clearly: **“Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit ...”** (1 Peter 1:22). It is a simple thing called obedience. Repentance is coming back to obedience.

## Having the Assurance of Salvation

Though it is the intent here to show the danger of the "Once Saved Always Saved " doctrine and that it lacks biblical basis, I also wish to be very clear that we can and should have complete peaceful assurance of our salvation. Scripture is clear, "**These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in t he name of the Son of God**" (1 John 5:13 underline added).

Those who have believed and call unto the Lord in sincerity are changed internally. A seal is given them, the Holy Spirit of promise. This gives us confidence regarding our future salvation, the redemption of our bodies at His appearing. We need not struggle or wonder whether we are saved. We can know that we have eternal life.

### *How Can I Know?*

One might ask, "If it is possible to lose my salvation, how can I know that I am saved?" The answer is pretty simple. We can know we have eternal life if we know Him. John 17:3:

#### **John 17:3 (NKJV)**

<sup>3</sup> And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

Our salvation and our confidence in our salvation is based on a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This "personal relationship" phrase has become such a buzz word in Christian circles that many have lost its true meaning. To regain its true meaning think in the natural sense for just a moment.

Think of someone, another person, with whom you have a personal relationship. Maybe someone you work with or maybe your mate if you are married. Have you ever done something that was offensive to a person with whom you have a personal relationship? Of course you have. How did you respond to the situation? Hopefully, you apologized and decided not to do it again, assuming of course that you valued the relationship and desired to preserve it.

When you offended the person, did the offense end the relationship? No. Seldom if ever does one offense, or even many offenses, end a relationship as long as the offender is sincere about repentance and is diligent to demonstrate a desire to stop offending. But if you failed to demonstrate any desire to restore the damage done by the offense, and even continued to act in an offensive way, can you expect to remain in a favorable relationship with that person? Of course not. Such behavior would be considered an insult!

The same is true with God. He loves us and if we love Him, we will humble ourselves in godly sorrow should we sin.

## Summary

Salvation in this current age cannot be considered a done deal that cannot be reversed, not because Christ's work is incomplete, but because ours is. Our faith is to be proven by our endurance, our perseverance, and our works. Certainly, our works are accomplished by His strength; He is the author and finisher of our faith. Our works can never take away our sin. Only the Blood of Jesus can do that. However, when one believes on the name of Jesus and His work of grace on the cross, then true belief will bear righteous fruit - good works. In other words, people who are saved act like it.

We should be confident and assured of our salvation. This is expected of those who walk in the Spirit and obey the Word. However, we must not take for granted the grace of God and insult the Spirit of Grace. As Peter said, **“And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear”** (1 Pet 1:17).

Jesus told the parable of the widow who diligently and continually sought action from an unjust judge. The judge finally gave the woman what she wanted. Then Jesus said, **“...when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?”** (Luke 18:8). Like the persistent widow, may our faith be demonstrated by our diligence as continue in faith.