

OSAS - Once Saved Always Saved: True or False?

My heart aches for those caught up in the teaching that as a Christian their behavior will determine the state of their salvation at any given moment. Commit a sin, die with that sin unconfessed, and one may not enter the gates of heaven. I cannot imagine the stress this struggle for perfection creates because none of us is perfect. John, the disciple who outlived the others, captured words of hope regarding eternal life. We can know for certain that eternal life is ours.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.
John 3:16 NASB

"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 NASB

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.
1 John 5:13 NASB

Jesus promised His followers a salvation that ushered in peace and an abundant life.

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; **I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.**
John 10:10 NASB Emphasis added.

"**Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you;** not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.
John 14:27 NASB Emphasis added.

I grew up under the Biblical teaching that once a person accepts Christ, he is saved, and his eternal destiny is certain. My personal life-long journey through Scripture has not changed that position. When we compare Scripture with Scripture and rightly divide the Word of God on the topic of eternal security of the believer, we can reach one conclusion. True salvation is permanent.

I include the word *true* because not everyone who names the name of Christ is a believer. Christianity is easy to fake, and Satan himself uses that cloak to hide his actions.

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 NASB

We've all been there. We try and witness to someone and many times we are dismissed with a wave of the hand, "Churches are filled with hypocrites!" And that is truth. The hard fact is that I cannot tell if you are a true believer and you cannot tell if I am a believer. We can observe the externals such as works, life choices, speech patterns, and so on but the assurance of salvation happens when the Spirit bears witness inside my heart.

Folks who embrace the possibility of losing salvation seek to live in way that garner's God's approval. All believers should follow that recipe for life. But that approval is something He has already granted when the person trusted Jesus for eternal salvation. Sinless perfection is not the attribute of any Christian and will not be this side of heaven. Only Christ lived a sinless life thereby qualifying Him to be the sacrifice for our sins.

Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. **For we all stumble in many ways.** If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. James 3:1-2 NASB Emphasis added.

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. **If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.** 1 John 1:8-10 NASB Emphasis added.

Paul left us a treatise on his struggle with sin in Romans 7:7-25, and in those verses we find no mention of losing his salvation because of that sin nature.

I am not out to argue religion as most of us have our minds made up on that one. But I do hope to trigger some analysis. Are you willing to evaluate your position on eternal security? If so, here are my honest observations.

Some Scripture and thoughts to consider

1. Those who believe they have to keep themselves saved are buying in to a works-based salvation which the Bible clearly negates. Do I really believe that God, despite His numerous promises, is unable to keep me saved all on His own? Do I really have to play a part? No. I became a believer based on what God has done, not what I have done.

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. Ephesians 2:8-9 NASB

But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Titus 3:4-7 NASB

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.
Jude 1:24-25 NASB

2. Christ spoke the following words, recorded in John's Gospel. Nothing can take me out of His hand once I am there by salvation. I found 88 verses (NASB version of the Bible) in the New Testament referring to a believer as being "in Christ."

"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. "I and the Father are one."
John 10:27-30 NASB

3. If my salvation can be interrupted or lost due to unconfessed sin, what happens to the Spirit during the time between my committing that sin and asking for forgiveness? The Spirit's presence in my life is proof that I belong to God. If I cannot lose Him, I cannot lose that salvation. He is God's seal on my life, God's engagement ring on my finger that He will redeem me and take me to glory as promised. I have found no New Testament teaching on the possibility of losing the Holy Spirit.

Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is **God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.**
2 Corinthians 1:21-22 NASB Emphasis added.

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.
Ephesians 1:13-14 NASB Emphasis added.

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom **you were sealed for the day of redemption.**
Ephesians 4:30 NASB Emphasis added.

and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the **Holy Spirit who was given to us.**
Romans 5:5 NASB Emphasis added.

However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But **if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.**
Romans 8:9 NASB Emphasis added.

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" **The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,** and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.
Romans 8:14-17 NASB Emphasis added.

4. My righteousness, what God sees in me, is not based on merit of my own. I have none. I am a sinner in need of a Savior. I cannot earn righteousness through my works, but mercifully God sees the righteousness of Christ when He looks at me. That righteousness became mine when I became a believer. I will not face condemnation because Jesus already faced it for me on the cross.

More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.
Philippians 3:8-11 NASB

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.
Romans 8:1-4 NASB

Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.
Romans 8:33-34 NASB

5. Let's look at some of the champion passages for those who believe salvation can be lost.

Hebrews 6:1-12

So let us stop going over the basic teachings about Christ again and again. Let us go on instead and become mature in our understanding. Surely we don't need to start again with the fundamental importance of repenting from evil deeds and placing our faith in God. You don't need further instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And so, God willing, we will move forward to further understanding. For it is impossible to bring back to repentance those who were once enlightened—those who have experienced the good things of heaven and shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the power of the age to come—and who then turn away from God. It is impossible to bring such people back to repentance; by rejecting the Son of God, they themselves are nailing him to the cross once again and holding him up to public shame. When the ground soaks up the falling rain and bears a good crop for the farmer, it has God's blessing. But if a field bears thorns and thistles, it is useless. The farmer will soon condemn that field and burn it. Dear friends, even though we are talking this way, we really don't believe it applies to you. We are confident that you are meant for better things, things that come with salvation. For God is not unjust. He will not forget how hard you have worked for him and how you have shown your love to him by caring for other believers, as you still do. Our great desire is that you will keep on loving others as long as life lasts, in order to make certain that what you hope for will come true. Then you will not become spiritually dull and indifferent. Instead, you will follow the example of those who are going to inherit God's promises because of their faith and endurance.

Hebrews 6:1-12 NLT

Is this passage referring to a believer in danger of losing his salvation?

Is the passage referring to a pretender who, though exposed to the faith, is not actually a believer?

Or is the passage referring to something else entirely?

We must follow basic rules in Bible interpretation including:

1. Pay attention to the context.
2. Compare Scripture with Scripture. If the message we think we see in one place contradicts other passages keep digging. Pray for God's direction, and expand the analysis.

Comments on Hebrews 6:1-12:

- A. The topic spelled out in verses 1-3 is spiritual maturity.
- B. The passage is therefore referring to believers, true followers of Christ.
- C. If the verses address a believer's salvation, then verse 6 implies a believer can be moved from the state of being saved to the state of being unsaved under certain conditions. This contradicts the teachings on salvation elsewhere in the New Testament and cannot therefore be the correct interpretation.
- D. The agricultural example in verses 7-12 is crucial for understanding the text. Read it

carefully.

E. The example is about fruit in the life of a believer. One who has turned away from the faith and spurned God does not bear the correct fruit. His fruit is rotten and will be burned up. God does allow sinning Christians to face judgment including premature death as indicated in the passages to follow.

F. This errant believer has pushed God's patience to the max, and God will not allow him to repent. Judgment is pronounced. The field is burned.

F. The person is still saved though he may lose his life and will certainly lose any rewards in heaven.

Here are examples of physical death for unrepentant believers who embraced a sinful lifestyle.

I can hardly believe the report about the sexual immorality going on among you—something that even pagans don't do. I am told that a man in your church is living in sin with his stepmother. You are so proud of yourselves, but you should be mourning in sorrow and shame. And you should remove this man from your fellowship. Even though I am not with you in person, I am with you in the Spirit. And as though I were there, I have already passed judgment on this man in the name of the Lord Jesus. You must call a meeting of the church. I will be present with you in spirit, and so will the power of our Lord Jesus. Then you must throw this man out and hand him over to Satan so that his sinful nature will be destroyed and he himself will be saved on the day the Lord returns.

1 Corinthians 5:1-5 NLT

For if you eat the bread or drink the cup without honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God's judgment upon yourself. That is why many of you are weak and sick and some have even died.

1 Corinthians 11:29-30 NLT

Cling to your faith in Christ, and keep your conscience clear. For some people have deliberately violated their consciences; as a result, their faith has been shipwrecked. Hymenaeus and Alexander are two examples. I threw them out and handed them over to Satan so they might learn not to blaspheme God.

1 Timothy 1:19-20 NLT

Hebrews 10:26-31

Dear friends, if we deliberately continue sinning after we have received knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice that will cover these sins. There is only the terrible expectation of God's judgment and the raging fire that will consume his enemies. For anyone who refused to obey the law of Moses was put to death without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Just think how much worse the punishment will be for those who have trampled on the Son of God, and have treated the blood of the covenant, which made us holy, as if it were common and unholy, and have insulted and disdained the Holy Spirit who brings God's mercy to us. For we know the one who said, "I will take revenge. I will pay them back." He also said, "The LORD will judge his own people." It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Hebrews 10:26-31 NLT

This passage describes a believer caught in a carnal lifestyle who has become comfortable with sin. He loves what God hates. Chuck Swindoll writes:

"Just like the unsaved, believers face consequences if they turn away from God's truth and act with a continuous, deliberate disregard of Christ's lordship and a consistent spurning of the authority of Christ over their lives...I see this passage as referring to believers who willfully sin after acknowledging the truth. These are people who get caught in the vortex of carnality and get pulled under."¹

This believer pushes the limits until God's judgment falls just as we saw in the Hebrews 6:1-12 passage.

1 John 3:4-10

Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

1 John 3:4-10 NASB

Again, context is crucial. John is referring to people who practice sin (verses 4, 8 and 9). For these people sin has become an accepted way of life, a habit. That description should never apply to a believer, one who names the name of Christ. If I claim to be saved and wallow in sin then I am

¹ Swindoll, Charles. The Swindoll Study Bible. Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers. 2017. p 1575

likely faking my Christianity. God's grace and mercy are not licenses for me to engage in sin. If my faith is genuine, I will not desire to live in sin.

Does this passage teach that a believer cannot sin? Of course not. Back up to chapter 1 where John writes:

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. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

1 John 1:8-10 NASB

I still have and wrestle with the sin nature I brought into this world at birth. As a believer I now have a new nature (2 Corinthians 5:17), and these two natures are at war within me. God knows my struggle with sin, and He made a provision. Confession. That is when I agree with God that I have sinned and claim His forgiveness. He does not revoke my salvation in that moment.

I will lay my head on the pillow tonight, and certainly I will run through the day's events and confess any sins that I remember. I strive to confessed them at the time of the incident, not because I fear losing my salvation but because my sin hurts my Savior. If I forget a sin, and I am only human, God still loves me, still sees me as belonging to Christ, and I still have my place reserved in heaven. If I die before I wake, I will see you there. I have God's guarantee.