

CHALLENGING QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK

Lesson 3

The Security of the Believer

We continue our study, "Challenging Questions People Ask." This lesson's question is one that I always look forward to addressing, as I'm sure that it's something many of us may have one-time wondered, or even asked. This question is, "Can I lose my salvation?" It is a question that I have been asked many times, and normally the person asking it is a new, or relatively new, Christian.

The impetus for this question follows this logic: Once we accept Christ—and come to know and appreciate the priceless gift of eternal life and what it is like living in God's presence with Christ as our Shepherd—we also realize that it's something that we *never* want to lose.

I believe that in our early days of growing in Christ, the concept of "once saved, always saved" can be adversely affected—either by the behavior of people whom we hold in high esteem (as "mature" Christians) or even by our own behavior (when that behavior runs counter to God's will). It is almost impossible to quantify the impact on a new believer's life when a respected Christian does something, or behaves in a way, that is clearly not Christian. As well, we ourselves begin to doubt our own salvation when we discover that we are still sinners and continue to sin in ways that are displeasing to God. Both of these circumstances cause us to doubt our salvation, and/or that of others.

So now let's take a look at this question, "Can I lose my salvation?" and see how God's Word speaks to us about our salvation, and if there is something or some things, that we can do that would cause us to lose our gift of eternal life with Christ.

1. Let's first consider the motivation behind the question. That is, what would make someone even ask the question? What would make you believe that a person could lose their salvation?

2. Now suppose for a moment that the question of losing one's salvation is being asked because someone doubts that they are actually saved. Perhaps, for whatever reason, they do not feel worthy; or maybe the new life in Christ isn't what they imagined it to be. In these scenarios, even though they have accepted Christ and repented of their sins, they are still unsure whether they are really saved. After all it must take more than a confession of sin and God's great grace to save them. Read 1 John 5:13 and note what it specifically tells us regarding this frame of mind?

3. Now consider John 3:16—the oft-quoted verse on salvation. What does it say about those who believe? Does it say that only those who believe in a certain way, or come from a certain walk, or have a certain experience can be saved? Who does it say is saved, for how long are they saved, and who saved them?

4. It is important to note this far into our study that there is nothing beyond repentance and believing on Jesus as the Christ that saves us. No act or religious practice (e.g., fasting, etc.) results in us being saved—only God’s great love for us and Jesus’ divine sacrifice for us. Now consider specific examples of acts or deeds that you would consider grounds for someone losing their salvation. List them.
5. Assume for a moment that when you answered question 4 above, you listed murder as a reason that a believer would lose their salvation, or perhaps cheating with another man’s wife. Based on those criteria, would you say then that King David lost his salvation?
6. Alternatively, perhaps you listed the reason that someone would lose their salvation was behavior that caused another person to stumble. Or perhaps the person did something that was directly counter to God’s will. Then, using these benchmarks, do you consider that Abraham, Moses, Peter and others in the Bible lost their salvation?
7. Or maybe you listed as an example a believer who lived a life of carnal pleasure and did not do the things that were pleasing to God—even though he or she was a believer. Then do you believe that Lot lost his eternal home? Here was a man who not only loved the carnal life but even offered his daughters to a rioting crowd outside his door who wanted him to throw the angels who had come to warn Lot of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah out to them. Did God still love him and save him from that destruction along with his family?
8. At the core, when we begin to think that someone can lose their salvation by specific sins that they commit, then we are focusing on works, not grace. We thus believe that our works are what keep us saved, and when those whose works aren’t in fact righteous, then we have lost their eternal hope. This is the wrong focus. What does Ephesians 2:8 tell us about this type of thinking?
9. Please take the time to consider just how firm and solid our salvation is by pondering the following verses:
 - a. Psalm 37:23
 - b. Psalm 138:8
 - c. Jeremiah 32:40
 - d. John 5:24
 - e. John 6:37
 - f. John 6:39-40
 - g. John 6:68-69
 - h. John 10:27-30
 - i. John 16:27
 - j. John 16:29-33
 - k. John 17:8
 - l. John 17:11
 - m. Acts 1:3
 - n. Romans 4:8-9
 - o. Romans 4:20-22
 - p. Romans 5:1-5
 - q. Romans 8:15-17
 - r. Romans 8:28-30
 - s. Romans 8:33-35
 - t. Romans 8:37-39
 - u. 1 Corinthians 1:8-9
 - v. 2 Corinthians 1:21-22
 - w. Galatians 4:6
 - x. Ephesians 1:4-5

- y. Ephesians 4:30
- z. Philippians 1:6
- aa. Philippians 2:12-13
- bb. Colossians 2:2
- cc. 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24
- dd. 2 Timothy 1:12
- ee. 2 Timothy 4:18
- ff. Hebrews 6:11
- gg. Hebrews 7:24-25
- hh. Hebrews 10:22-23
- ii. Hebrews 11:1
- jj. 1 Peter 1:3-5
- kk. 1 Peter 5:10
- ll. 1 John 2:1-2
- mm. 1 John 3:9
- nn. 1 John 3:14
- oo. 1 John 3:18-19
- pp. 1 John 4:13
- qq. 1 John 5:10-11
- rr. 1 John 5:13
- ss. 1 John 5:18
- tt. Jude 1:1
- uu. Jude 1:24

Early in my walk with Christ when I realized that I wanted nothing greater than to know more and more about the God who saved me and Jesus who died for me, I began studying the Bible in earnest. Fortunately at the same time, a wise pastor warned me of people who form their theology, their belief system, on one or two verses in the Bible taken out of context. I pray that this lesson has provided you some of the overwhelming evidence and assurances contained in God's Word that we are indeed saved, and saved forever. No one can take us out of God's hands, nothing, no one, ever.

Many years ago in response to this question from my sister, I wrote a piece for her on this subject. It contains all of the scripture above included verse-by-verse within it. Again, I encourage you to take the time to look up all of the references listed above. However, if you can't, or if you would like to see what it's like to read each of these verses continuously taken from God's Word, I have provided a copy of it in the "Security of the Believer" link below. I can assure you that it will fill your life once again with hope and joy as you come to realize that we are indeed saved by His great grace for an eternity—and nothing can rob us of that promise.

We may stumble and fall, and we may sin greatly in both God's and man's eyes, but we were sinners before God saved us and He loved us then. So imagine how much more He loves us now as one of His children. He has much in store for us in the eternity to come and wants to reassure us through His word and His actions that we are His and His forever. Hallelujah!

Pass the word: God loves you, He sent His Only Son to die for you, and He is preparing a place for you for all eternity!

Have a great week everyone, and thanks for studying with us.

In Christ, **Wes**

The Security of the Believer
"For God's gifts and his call are irrevocable."
Romans 11:29
by
Wesley R. Husted

Judy, this is in response to your question “Is there security for the believer, or can we lose our salvation?” I thought I would prepare an answer in this format so that you or others who may ask later may have this as a reference when confronted with this question by someone else.

There is no way in a few short passages I could ever hope to fully address this doctrinal issue, especially since so many excellent books already exist on the subject. And so what follows below is a summary at best of my limited knowledge on the subject. I rely fully on the inerrant and inspired Word of God whenever I look for answers to any doctrinal issue and on this one in particular I am including all my biblical references (taken from the NIV, the underlining is my way of emphasizing some aspect of a specific scripture).

In short, however, ***THERE IS NO WAY ANY BORN AGAIN BELIEVER IN CHRIST COULD EVER LOSE THEIR SALVATION.*** The fact that Christ redeemed us provides us with that assurance, for if someone or something could take away our salvation they would have to be mightier and greater than God Himself, and clearly no such being exists. However, for the uncertain readers of this paper who want solid biblical evidence I provide the following information.

Before I begin with the numerous references to scripture on this matter I would like to point out a few quick details I about the question itself – “can I lose my salvation?” It has been my observation that when this question is asked it normally has one of two root causes. Either the person is asking the question because they doubt their own salvation experience, and thus fear they might lose it, or they have seen a “Christian” do some horrible thing and cannot believe that that person will get into heaven. Rarely have I heard someone ask the question because of some deep theological need to discover truth.

I say this because knowing why the person is asking the question will also tell you how they will receive the answer, and what answer they need. If, for example, the question is raised because someone doubts their own salvation experience, then read 1 John 5:13 – “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life” and John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only son that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

The second type of person, the one who appears to have a born again experience and then goes on to great sin, does not mean that that person has lost his or her salvation. God's grace is too great for that to occur. There are many examples within the Bible that illustrate this, such as the story of David who committed murder and others like him. But the best example would be Lot and not only the life that he led, but the place in which he purposely chose to live that life. He even offered his daughters to a rioting homosexual crowd at his door the night before Sodom was destroyed and yet we know that God found him righteous and saved him from that judgment.

While I recognize it is perplexing for Christians to see someone who blatantly goes against the will of God and sin this does not in and of itself mean that someone has lost their salvation, yes they may have lost rewards and yes they are clearly out of God's will but this does not indicate that God will go against his word, his promise given in John 3:16 – if a person thinks so, then they are focusing on works and not on grace. “For by Grace are you saved” we are told by God, and "not of works" typically when the loss of salvation question arises its because we observed someone doing "bad" works. I think we should leave that person's salvation between him or her and God and focus on our own redemption.

The bottom line is that our salvation is not based on us, on what we do, but our salvation is based on God, his great love for us and the sacrifice of his son for us. Your salvation is assured through Christ and through God's grace – not by anything you do or do not do (works). If, as stated in John 3:16, you believe on the name of Jesus, then you are saved – period – for an eternity.

The remaining scripture references are provided to give you an indication that from the Old Testament through the New Testament there is no question that our faith in Christ is justified and in no sense, no way, or in no fashion can we ever lose that blessed hope.

“If the LORD delights in a man's way, he makes his steps firm; though he stumbles, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand.” Psalm 37:23

“The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your love, O LORD, endures forever – do not abandon the works of your hands.” Psalm 138:8

“I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me.” Jeremiah 32:40

“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.” John 5:24

“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.” John 6:37

“And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but rather raise them up at the last day. For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” John 6:39-40

“Simon Peter answered him, ‘Lord, to who shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.’” John 6:68-69

“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 can 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.” John 10:27-30.

"No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God." John 16:27

"Then Jesus’ disciples said, ‘Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech. Now we can see that you know all things, and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God.’ ‘You believe at last!’ Jesus answered. ‘But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.’” John 16:29-33

"For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me." John 17:8

“I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name – the name you gave me – so that they may be one as we are one.” John 17:11

"After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God." Acts 1:3

"Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness." Romans 4:8-9

"Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had the power to do what he had promised. This is why 'it was credited to him as righteousness.'" Romans 4:20-22

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character, and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." Romans 5:1-5

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry "Abba" father. 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." Romans 8:15-17

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified." Romans 8:28-30

"Who will bring any charge against those who God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? 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. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?" Romans 8:33-35

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 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." Romans 8:37-39

"He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful." 1 Corinthians 1:8-9

"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." 2 Corinthians 1:21-22

"Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out "Abba, Father." Galatians 4:6

"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure and will." Ephesians 1:4-5

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." Ephesians 4:30

"Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Philippians 1:6

"Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed – not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence – continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to do according to his good purpose." Philippians 2:12-13

"My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ." Colossians 2:2

"May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it." 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

"That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day." 2 Timothy 1:12

"The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen." 2 Timothy 4:18

"We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure." Hebrews 6:11

"But because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them." Hebrews 7:24-25

"Because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy." Hebrews 10:14

"Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess for he who promised is faithful." Hebrews 10:22-23

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Hebrews 11:1

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, fade – kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time." 1 Peter 1:3-5

"And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast." 1 Peter 5:10

"My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – 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." 1 John 2:1-2

"No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning because he has been born of God." 1 John 3:9

"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death." 1 John 3:14

"Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything." 1 John 3:18-19

"We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit."
1 John 4:13

"Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has 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." 1 John 5:10-11

"I write these things 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

"We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him." 1 John 5:18

"Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, to those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father, and kept by Jesus Christ." Jude 1

"To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy." Jude 24

I hope this preliminary review of the scriptures will help in your understanding. Clearly God does not call us to be saved only to give up on us later on. Also note where it says that God saved us from before the foundations of the world – he knew before we were born who we would be and how we will turn out – so there is nothing you can do that is a surprise to Him, therefore if he saved you knowing all about your past, present and future, how could you possibly do anything which would result in losing your salvation?

That would be like saying that you could do something that would cause God to change His mind about having saved you. This of course is simply foolishness. We can and should trust in the Lord and be assured that our salvation is real and is eternal – nothing, no power, no person, no act, no situation can take you from the Lord. Your name has been written in the Lamb's book of life, and we'll live and rule with Christ our redeemer – no question, no doubt, no shadow of turning – saved and saved forever! Hope this has been some help. If you still have questions don't hesitate to ask.

Wes