

# Once Saved, Always Saved?<sup>1</sup>

## *A Scripture Study of relevant passages on the topic.*

Many Christians these days have embraced the notion that once a person becomes a Christian, it is impossible for them to ever lose their salvation. This belief has become so widely accepted and so deeply in-grained – among North American Evangelicals especially – that phrases like ‘Once Saved, Always Saved’ and ‘Eternal Security’ have achieved the status, in many Christians’ minds, of one of the more foundational creeds of the Christian faith. For these people, a believer’s eternal security can no more be questioned than such unassailable doctrines as the atoning work of Christ on the cross, or the existence of the Trinity.

- **But is ‘Once Saved, Always Saved’ actually in the Bible?** The true test of every doctrine’s truthfulness, however, is not, “Is it widely accepted by other believers?” but rather, “Is it actually taught in the Bible?” This is a very important point, and it should be noted here, that neither the phrase ‘Once Saved, Always Saved’ nor ‘Eternal Security’ appear anywhere in Scripture (this, perhaps, to the surprise of some).
  - Of course, the fact that these phrases do not explicitly appear in Scripture does not necessarily mean that they are unscriptural. They could be biblical ideas, affirmed by the consistent teaching of Scripture, condensed into a phrase or word not explicitly found in Scripture. An example of this would be the previously mentioned doctrine of the Trinity: nowhere in Scripture is the word ‘Trinity’ found, and yet the fact of God’s Trinitarian nature is clearly described and alluded to throughout the biblical writings.
  - The question then comes down to this; does the consistent teaching of Scripture clearly attest to the truth of eternal security and the doctrine of ‘Once Saved, Always Saved?’ Our belief, here at Southland Church, is that it does not.
- **Our belief about Eternal Security at Southland Church:** We believe that Scripture clearly teaches that people *can*, in fact, forfeit their salvation after being saved. We do not believe that people can ‘lose’ their salvation in the sense that a person can lose their car keys or their wallet, nor do we believe that a person’s salvation can be stolen (ie. by the Devil, or demons, or other people); however, we believe that a person who – by their own choice – persists in sin and worldliness, with no brokenness or repentance before God, can eventually so harden their hearts towards Jesus that they eventually forfeit the salvation they once walked in. The next sections will outline from Scripture, why we believe this to be so.
- **Outline of the rest of this paper:**
  - Section A. Scripture passages which testify to the fact that people can lose their salvation.
  - Section B. Quotes from early church fathers showing that they did not believe in ‘Once Saved, Always Saved.’
  - Section C. A closer look at the main passages which people have used to argue in favor of ‘Once Saved, Always Saved.’
  - Section D. Salvation is based on perseverance (how you finish your life) – not on a one-time prayer that you prayed.
  - Section E. Conclusion
  - Section F. APPENDIX: Assurance of salvation does NOT depend on holding to the ‘Once Saved, Always Saved’ doctrine.

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<sup>1</sup> Acknowledgement: This paper was born out of the excellent work done by theologian and author David Pawson in his book of the same title, and borrows the first several sections from what he has written. We highly recommend his work.

## A. The Bible clearly testifies that people can forfeit their Salvation.

- The consistent teaching of all of Scripture is that people can lose their salvation. Below are a list of just 11 passages which confirm this fact:
  1. **2 Timothy 2:11-13 (NIV)** – *Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; <sup>12</sup> if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; <sup>13</sup> if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.*
    - ◇ People who believe in ‘Once Saved, Always Saved’ often avoid last part of verse 12. They believe that there is nothing a Christian can do, once they’ve been saved, which would cause God to break off the relationship. But that is not what this passage teaches; this passage teaches that if a person disowns God, God will return the favor.
    - ◇ Two important things to notice about this:
      - a) A person cannot be disowned from a family if he was never a legitimate part of that family in the first place. For God to be able to disown a person, they would actually have to have been one of His children at some point. It would not be possible for God to disown an unbeliever, since unbelievers have never been a part of His family!
      - b) To be disowned by God is to lose your salvation. What would it mean for God to disown a person, but for them to still be saved? This passage would cease to have any meaning whatsoever, in such a situation. If a person has been disowned by God, it means they cease to be a part of His family; which means they cease to be a child of God; which means they cease to enjoy the benefits given only to the children of God, which would include the benefit of eternal life.
  2. **Hebrews 6:4-6 (ESV)** – *For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.*
    - ◇ The first point to notice here is that this passage is unmistakably addressed to believers: it is written to people who have ‘been enlightened,’ have ‘tasted the heavenly gift,’ have ‘shared in the Holy Spirit’ and ‘tasted the word of God.’
    - ◇ The passage goes on to say, ‘and then have fallen away.’ There can be no debate about this: the writer of Hebrews clearly believes that believers can fall away from the faith. And the end result of this falling away can be found in verse 8, which alludes to their judgment in hell, “and [their] end is to be burned.”
  3. **Hebrews 10:19, 26-31(NIV)** – *“Therefore brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus . . . If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, <sup>27</sup> but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. <sup>28</sup> Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. <sup>29</sup> How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? <sup>30</sup> For we know him who said, “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” and again, “The Lord will judge his people.” <sup>31</sup> It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*
    - ◇ This passage is clearly addressed to Christians, as evidenced by the use of the term ‘brothers’ at the beginning of verse 19 and the continual use of the pronoun ‘we’ throughout the passage.
    - ◇ Verse 26 brings the warning; if a believer deliberately keeps on sinning after he has been saved, his sins will cease to be covered by the blood of Jesus (‘no sacrifice for sin is left’) – in other words, he will lose his salvation! Such people can have nothing left but a ‘fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire [hell] that will consume the enemies of God’ (v. 27).

- ◇ That a believer could end up as an enemy of God in hell is re-emphasized in verse 29 where the writer says that a believer who deliberately continues sinning after they have been saved deserves the most severe punishment. This because such a person ‘tramples’ on the Son of God and ‘insults the Spirit of grace.’
- ◇ Who is able to trample on the Son of God? Who is able to insult the Spirit of grace? Not unbelievers. According to the writer of Hebrews, only a person who has at some point been ‘sanctified’ by the ‘blood of the covenant’ (v.29) is in a position to inflict such deep hurt and insult on God. How can this be? Because intimacy brings vulnerability. Take, for example, the relationship between a husband and wife. The person capable of inflicting the most amount of hurt and humiliation on a married person is that person’s spouse – not someone from outside the marriage. In the same way, this passage teaches that a person who joins themselves to Jesus but then deliberately leaves Him for the pleasures of sin, does something akin to breaking a marriage covenant (‘treats as an unholy thing . . . the covenant’ v.29). This covenant-breaking insults Jesus in the deepest way possible and sets up the covenant-breaker for punishment that is more severe than the punishment meted out to unbelievers.
- 4. **Hebrews 10:38-39 (NIV)** – *But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I [God] will not be pleased with him.* *But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.*
  - ◇ This passage, too, is addressed to people who are believers, as evidenced by the line at the beginning ‘my righteous one will live by faith.’ The Scriptures are clear that no unbeliever can be called righteous, because only Jesus’ blood can make a person righteous.
  - ◇ The passage goes on to say that if ‘he’ (a righteous one living by faith) ‘shrinks back,’ God will not be pleased with him. This is elaborated on in the next sentence where it is clearly stated that those who ‘shrink back’ will be ‘destroyed,’ a clear contrast to those who do not shrink back and ‘are saved.’ So again we see the possibility that a person can be saved, but then walk away from their salvation and become un-saved (‘destroyed’).
- 5. **James 5:19-20 (ESV)** – *My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.*
  - ◇ The first point to notice here is the phrase “My brothers, if anyone among *you*.” James is not talking to unbelievers here, he is talking to His ‘brothers’ in Christ – believers! He then makes it clear that it is possible for fellow believers to wander from the truth.
  - ◇ This ‘wandering from the truth’ is not some harmless thing, either. It is a wandering away from salvation itself and eternal life, as evidenced by the fact that James goes on to say that anyone who brings such a wanderer back has actually saved that person’s soul from death.
- 6. **2 Peter 2:20-21 (NIV)** – *If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and 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. Of them the proverbs are true: "A dog returns to its vomit," and, "A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud."*
  - ◇ Once again, this passage is written to people who are saved, as evidenced in the first line by the statement ‘they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.’ No unbeliever could ever be said to have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing Jesus.
  - ◇ Peter goes on to say that if such people (believers) become entangled in the world again, ‘they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.’ If a person cannot lose their salvation, how could it be worse for them at the end than at the beginning?
  - ◇ Some people think that this passage merely warns believers that if they get entangled in the world they could lose their reward from Jesus (or could be disciplined by Him), though they would still end up in heaven. But this doesn’t make any sense: a person who ends up in heaven, even if he loses all of his reward, is still a lot better off than anyone in hell! In this passage, however, Peter says that if a believer is ‘again entangled’ in the world it

would have been better for them to never ‘have known the way of righteousness’ – in other words it would have been better for them if they had never become a Christian in the first place! The only possible way this statement could be true is if the person who was once a believer and on his way to heaven, has now lost his salvation and is once again headed for hell. So much for ‘Once Saved, Always Saved.’

7. **Romans 11:17-23 (ESV)** – *<sup>17</sup> But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, <sup>18</sup> do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. <sup>19</sup> Then you will say, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” <sup>20</sup> That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. <sup>21</sup> For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. <sup>22</sup> Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God’s kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. <sup>23</sup> And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again.*
- ◇ This passage is enough, by itself, to refute the idea of Once Saved, Always Saved. In it Paul writes to Roman believers explaining how some of the Jewish people lost their salvation under the Old Covenant – they were unfaithful to God, so He ‘broke them off’ from Himself (‘the olive tree,’ v. 17a). Earlier in the chapter (v. 11) Paul said that this ‘stumbling’ by the Jews is what made it possible for Gentiles to finally receive salvation because God decided to ‘graft’ ‘wild olive shoots’ (Gentile believers) into the tree to replace the ‘natural branches’ (Jews) who had been broken off (v. 17b, 19-20).
  - ◇ But then Paul goes on to give Gentile believers a very sobering warning. He says that the fact that they have been grafted into the tree should not become an excuse for over-confidence or self-satisfied complacency because their position in God (‘the olive tree’) is no more secure under the New Covenant, than the Jews’ was under the Old. Verse 21 says, ‘If God did not spare the natural branches (the Jews), neither will he spare you (Christians)’!
  - ◇ Paul goes on to emphasize this point that Gentile believers can lose their salvation, just as some of the Jews had, by saying that a Gentile believer’s salvation rests on them ‘continuing’ in God’s kindness, ‘Otherwise you too will be cut off’ (v. 22).
8. **Jude 12-13 (ESV)** – *These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.*
- ◇ Referring to certain people who had crept into the church and who had ‘perverted the grace of our God into sensuality’ (v. 4) Jude says they are ‘twice dead.’ How can you die twice? What else could it mean other than that you were once dead in sin, then received eternal life through new birth, but tragically died again through persistent unrepentant sin? Remember James stated that the Christian who wanders from the truth and remains in that state, his soul shall die. John says there is a sin which ‘leads to death’ for believers (1 John 5:16). Both refer to one who is *twice dead*.
9. **Revelation 3:5 (ESV)** – *The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I [Jesus] will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.*
- ◇ In this passage, part of His letter to the Church in Sardis, Jesus promises that anyone who overcomes will not be blotted out of the book of life. This is a wonderful promise, but the implication is sobering: those who do not overcome *may* be blotted out of the book of life.
  - ◇ It is important to notice again that this passage is written to believers, not unbelievers. Unbelievers have never had their name written into the book of life, so they could never have their name blotted out. Also, unbelievers aren’t called to ‘overcome;’ only believers are called to overcome. What this passage makes clear (and many others as well, see also Rev 2:7, 2:11, 2:17, 2:26, 3:5, 3:12, 3:21) is that there is no guarantee that every person

who becomes a believer will automatically end up as an over-comer. In fact it is assumed, throughout the letters to the seven churches (Rev 2 – 3), that some believers will overcome and some won't.

- ◇ This is an important point to make because Jesus only promises salvation to the believers who overcome (endure) to the end of their lives: *“But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”* – Matt 24:13 (ESV) [for more on this verse, see next point]

**10. The Falling Away** – Not only does Scripture teach that people *can* lose their salvation, it actually prophesies that many believers *will* lose their salvation. This will occur with increasing frequency during the period of time leading up to the End Times, and is called the ‘falling away.’ Below are a list of passages, from both Paul and Jesus, which prophesy this future falling away of many Christians from their faith:

- a) **Matt 24:9-13 (ESV)** *“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake. <sup>10</sup> And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. <sup>11</sup> And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. <sup>12</sup> And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. <sup>13</sup> But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”*

- ◆ Jesus actually prophesies that in the End Times many believers will ‘fall away’ from Him. Someone who is desperate to defend the doctrine of Once Saved, Always Saved may argue that these people are going to fall away from the faith, but still retain their salvation. Huh? Such a desperate assertion can be nowhere justified in the passage. And Jesus Himself ensured in verse 13 that no such interpretation would be allowed; He said that only ‘the one who endures to the end will be saved’ – expressly excluding all those who fall away!

- b) **2 Thess 2:3 (KJV)** *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [Jesus’ Return] shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;*

- ◆ The word translated ‘falling away’ comes from the Greek word *apostasia*, from which we get our word ‘apostasy.’ It means ‘defection,’ and is always used with respect to people who defect from a particular religion – in this case Christianity. The important thing to note is that in order for someone to be able to commit apostasy, as described by Paul in the passage above, they truly must have believed in Jesus at some point in their lives – otherwise they’d have no faith from which to commit apostasy. It simply isn’t possible for unbelievers to defect from a faith they never had.

- c) **1 Tim 4:1-3 (ESV)** *Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, <sup>2</sup> through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, <sup>3</sup> who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.*

- ◆ The ‘Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith.’ The faith Paul speaks of in these passages is not an imaginary faith; it is the true faith in Jesus Christ. So for Paul to say that they will depart from the faith, means they would have to realistically have been a part of the faith at one time.

**11. Jesus’ Parable about the fate of the Unforgiving Servant.**

- ◇ **Matt 18:23-35 (ESV)** – *“Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. <sup>24</sup> When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. <sup>25</sup> And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. <sup>26</sup> So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ <sup>27</sup> And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. <sup>28</sup> But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ <sup>29</sup> So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ <sup>30</sup> He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. <sup>31</sup> When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. <sup>32</sup> Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. <sup>33</sup> And should not you have had mercy on your*



*fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’<sup>34</sup> And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt.<sup>35</sup> So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”*

- ◇ In this parable Jesus Himself refutes the whole idea of ‘Once Saved, Always Saved.’ In the parable, a servant who owes an impossibly large amount of money goes to the king and begs for more time to repay his debt (v.24-26). The king responds by taking pity on the poor servant, and, in a fit of generosity, goes far beyond the servant’s request by actually forgiving the entire debt (v.27); no need to repay – ever! This, of course, is a beautiful picture of what God does for each believer at the first moment of salvation: He forgives us the overwhelming debt of our sins (which would be impossible for anyone to ‘pay off’) by placing them under the payment of Jesus’ blood!
- ◇ But then the parable takes a twist; starting in verse 28, the forgiven servant (the ‘saved’ servant) leaves the presence of the king and seeks out another servant who owes him a tiny amount of money. This fellow servant falls down and pleads with the forgiven servant to be given more time in which to repay the tiny debt which he owes (v.29). But, in a stunning display of ingratitude, the servant who has been forgiven much refuses to forgive the one who owes little, and actually has the indebted servant thrown into prison (v.30). News of this despicable act soon reaches the king (v.31) and furious, he recalls the servant whom he had so recently forgiven (v.32).
- ◇ It is at this critical juncture that many Christians wish to ignore (deny?) the obvious intent of the parable. People who believe in ‘Once Saved, Always Saved’ believe that once God has forgiven a person, He would never *un*-forgive them, no matter what they do. But that is not what this parable teaches; in the parable, the enraged king recalls the forgiven servant and explicitly reverses his previous forgiveness, throwing him into prison until he should be able to pay back all of his previous debts (v.34) – which, remember, are too big for him to repay. In other words, Jesus is saying, ‘Forgiveness can be lost!’ A person may receive total forgiveness from God (be saved) at one point in their life but then lose that forgiveness when they refuse to forgive others.
- ◇ Jesus goes on to add an emphatic exclamation point to the end of the parable, finishing with this line, “So also my heavenly Father will do to *every one of you*, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”(v.35)
- Section A of this paper contains merely a sampling of the passages in Scripture which clearly teach that a person can lose their salvation; there are many others which could also have been used (approximately 80 by some estimates<sup>2</sup>). However, if the overwhelming testimony of the large body of passages just listed isn’t enough to convince a person that ‘Once Saved, Always Saved’ is unbiblical, then no amount of Scripture will suffice.
- And so we conclude section A and move on to section B, which contains quotes from some of the most respected early Church Fathers, showing that the early church also believed that people could lose their salvation.

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<sup>2</sup> David Pawson, *Once Saved, Always Saved?* p. 156; Hodder & Stoughton, Ltd. 1996.

**B. The early church fathers also taught that people can lose their salvation.** [\[back to top\]](#)

- Below are just a sampling of quotes from some of the most noted early church fathers, several of whom were companions of the apostles, clearly showing that they too believed that a person could lose their salvation:
  1. **Clement of Rome** – Let us then practice righteousness so that we may be saved unto the end.<sup>3</sup>
  2. **Clement of Alexandria** – Even in the case of one who has done the greatest good deeds in his life, but at the end has run headlong into wickedness, all his former pains are profitless to him. For at the climax of the drama, he has given up his part.<sup>4</sup>
  3. **Tertullian** – Some think that God is under a necessity of bestowing even on the unworthy what He has promised [to give]. So they turn His liberality into His slavery . . . For do not many afterwards fall out of [grace]? Is not this gift taken away from many?<sup>5</sup>
  4. **Irenaeus** – Those who do not obey Him, being disinherited by Him, have ceased to be His sons.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> David W. Bercot, ed. *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*. Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

### C. A closer look at the passages used to defend ‘Once Saved, Always Saved.’ [\[back to top\]](#)

- It is a sad fact of human nature that when we open up the Bible we tend to *read what we believe*, rather than *believing what we read*. This explains why some may yet remain loyal to the doctrine of ‘Once Saved, Always Saved,’ even in the face of such a vast body of Scripture testifying to the contrary ([see Section A](#)). For these people there are a couple of Scripture passages which overrule all of the others, negating any passages which teach that believers can lose their salvation. It is to those passages that we will now turn our attention, and to which section C of this paper is devoted.
- Before getting started, however, a word needs to be said about this practice of using certain passages of Scripture to negate other passages of Scripture. Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:16, “*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness;*” in other words, every bit of Scripture is from God, therefore it’s all truth. And if every bit of Scripture is God-breathed and truthful, then no bit of Scripture can be negated or ignored. We must never allow ourselves to use the passages we like to disprove the passages we don’t like.
- What this also means is that Scripture will never contradict itself. And the case of the ‘Once Saved, Always Saved’ debate is no exception: in section A we saw that many Scriptures clearly teach that a believer may lose their salvation; there are, in fact, no opposing passages of Scripture which teach the contrary. So where, then, do the proponents of ‘Once Saved, Always Saved’ find their foundation in Scripture? Primarily through some combination of one or more of the following four errors:
  1. the incomplete quoting of smaller passages (taken out of context);
  2. the appropriation of qualified statements as if they were unconditional promises;
  3. failing to make a distinction between having one’s salvation stolen – by someone or something else (not possible); and an act of the will whereby a person deliberately relinquishes their salvation (absolutely possible, as seen in [Section A, above](#));
  4. misunderstanding what it is the Holy Spirit ‘guarantees.’
- Let’s take a brief look at some of the passages in question:
  1. **Problem 1: Incomplete Quotes (Philippians 1:6 & 2 Timothy 2:13)** – Some of the most popular texts used to support ‘Once Saved, Always Saved’ are nothing more than incomplete quotes, completely removed from the original context in which they were written. Once placed in context it becomes clear that they do not support the doctrine of ‘Once Saved, Always Saved.’ Below are 2 such passages commonly used by proponents of ‘Once Saved, Always Saved.’
    - a) **Incomplete Quote #1: ‘. . . he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus’** (taken from Phil 1:6). This phrase is a popular one with advocates of ‘Once Saved, Always Saved,’ but it’s not even a complete sentence! The whole sentence (including the missing pieces) goes like this; *In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy<sup>5</sup> because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, <sup>6</sup>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 1:4-6 (NIV)**
      - ◆ First of all, the word translated ‘confident’ comes from the Greek word *pepoithos* which has the meaning ‘very optimistic,’ but not ‘absolutely certain.’ Paul uses the exact same word later in the chapter when talking of his upcoming trial and its outcome (v.25); he considers his acquittal highly probably but is prepared for the unlikely possibility of execution. His ‘confidence’ is remarkably similar to the confidence of the author of the Hebrews, when speaking to his readers, ‘we are confident of better things in *your case*’ (Heb 6:9).
    - b) **Incomplete Quote #2: ‘. . . if we are faithless, he will remain faithful’** (taken from 1 Tim 2:13). Taken by itself, this line could be taken to mean that no matter what we do, God will not break off the relationship with us. But again, the whole verse is not being quoted. When the whole passage is quoted, it in fact teaches the exact opposite of such a thing! Here is the full quote: *Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; <sup>12</sup>if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; <sup>13</sup>if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.* – **2 Tim 2:11-13 (NIV)**



- ◆ The context for the line ‘if we are faithless, he will remain faithful,’ comes from the beginning of the sentence, which says, ‘If we disown him, he will also disown us.’ People who believe in ‘Once Saved, Always Saved’ don’t like to quote that first part! So, in fact, it is *not* true that there is nothing a Christian can do to lose their salvation after they are saved – according to this passage any Christian who disowns God will likewise be disowned (for more on this passage, [see Section A.1. above](#)).

2. **Problem 2: Turning qualified statements into unconditional promises** – Another mistake often made by proponents of ‘Once Saved, Always Saved’ is to take qualified statements – statements which are predicated on a pre-condition of some kind being met – and then to apply those statements as if they were unconditional promises made to all Christians, everywhere, at all times, regardless of behavior or choices. Below are 2 passages which are sometimes misused in this way:

a) **Jude 24-25 (ESV)** – *Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, <sup>25</sup> 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.*

- ◆ Some Christians quote the first part of verse 24 as if it is an unconditional promise that God will not allow any Christians to stumble and fall away from Him. But this passage isn’t a universal promise for all Christians because it does not say that God *will* keep every Christian from stumbling; it only says that He ‘is able’ to. Significantly, just a few verses before, readers are told to ‘keep yourselves in the love of God’ (v.21). So there are two sides to ‘keeping;’ God is able to keep us (v.24) *if* we keep within His reach (v.21)!

- ◆ It is surprising how many texts like this have what might be called a ‘matching pair’ in the context, whereby one text qualifies a promise made in another text with a necessary pre-condition for fulfillment. Another example of this comes in the next passage, 2 Corinthians 1:21 . . .

b) **2 Corinthians 1:21 (NIV)** – *Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ.*

- ◆ This verse is sometimes taken as a promise that God *will* make every believer stand firm in Christ, with or without any collaboration on the part of the believer. But just 3 short verses later, Paul makes it evident that such an interpretation is wrong when he says ‘because it is *by faith* that *you* stand firm.’ So we see that there are two sides to this business of ‘standing firm:’ God is able to make us stand firm, but only *if* we are living by faith.

3. **Problem 3: Failure to distinguish between ‘losing’ and ‘giving up’ salvation.** – There are several wonderful passages in Scripture which promise that nothing can snatch a person out of God’s hand. The problem is that proponents of ‘Once Saved, Always Saved’ have extended this promise to mean that people are also not allowed to deliberately jump out of His hand. While it is true that God will not allow anyone or anything to snatch you out of His hand, it is not true that you are trapped there against your will. As seen in [section A](#) of this document, God will not continue holding you in His hand if you do not want Him to (as exhibited by persistent, deliberate sinning). Below are the 2 most famous passages cited by proponents of ‘Once Saved, Always Saved’ which promise that nothing can snatch a person out of God’s hand:

a) **John 10:27-29 (ESV)** – *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> 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.*

◆ The phrase ‘snatch them out of my hand’ is hardly an action that can be applied to one’s self (ever tried ‘plucking’ yourself?). This is not a quibble. The statement does not cover those who jump or fall out of that hand by their own volition. Were this verse to be taken as an absolute statement of eternal security, it would make absolute nonsense out of Jesus’ threat, found just 5 chapters later, that those who fail to abide (remain, stay) in Him as the True Vine will be cut off and burned (John 15:1-6)!<sup>7</sup>

◆ The only way in which *both* John 10:27-29 and John 15:1-6 can be true is if Jesus’ promise in John 10 applies only to outside forces and not to an individual’s free will. Jesus will not allow anyone else to steal your salvation from you, but He will allow you to give it up.

b) **Romans 8:31-39 (ESV)** – *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised— who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. <sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” <sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

◆ In this wonderful passage, Paul makes quite a list of things which cannot separate us from Christ’s love (v.38-39); there is, however, one startling omission from the list – ourselves! Just like the John 10:27-29 passage, Romans 8 only promises that Jesus will not allow any outside forces or people to steal your salvation. As a result, it cannot be used to build a doctrine of ‘Once Saved, Always Saved’ because it does not anywhere address the issue of Christians willfully giving up their salvation.

◆ In fact, the moment this passage is taken as an unconditional statement of eternal security it immediately comes into conflict with other clear statements to the contrary found in the book of Romans (for example [Romans 11:22, see above](#)). The only way Romans 8 can be properly reconciled with these other statements, including Romans 11, is if the promise of Romans 8 only applies to outside forces and not to a person’s free will. As was noted earlier, Jesus will not allow anyone else to steal your salvation from you, but He will allow you to give it up.

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<sup>7</sup> Taken from David Pawson’s commentary on John 10 found in *Once Saved, Always Saved?* p. 158; Hodder & Stoughton, Ltd. 1996.

#### 4. Problem 4: Misunderstanding what it is the Holy Spirit 'guarantees.' [Eph 1:13-14]

- a) **Ephesians 1:13-14 (ESV)** – *In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,<sup>14</sup> who is the quarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*
- ◆ This is probably one of the primary texts upon which the advocates of 'Once Saved, Always Saved' build their doctrine. They interpret the passage to mean that the moment a person receives the Holy Spirit (which happens at salvation) that person immediately receives an absolute guarantee of eternal life, which is good until the end of their life – regardless of all subsequent choices and behavior. In other words, the advocates of 'Once Saved, Always Saved' do not believe that a person who has ever received the Holy Spirit can lose eternal life.
  - ◆ But, as we have already seen, this cannot be what the passage means because Hebrews 6:4-6 clearly says that some who have 'shared in the Holy Spirit' will 'fall away' and be 'burned' (for more on [Hebrews 6:4-6, see above](#)). No interpretation of Ephesians 1:13-14 which negates Hebrews 6:4-6 (and other like passages) can be allowed; both must be true, because both are God's Word.
    - ◇ **So what is it, then, that the Holy Spirit guarantees?** Perhaps an illustration will help to explain. When a couple gets engaged to be married, the man usually gives a ring to his betrothed. What does the ring signify? The ring is a pledge, or guarantee, that the couple *intends* to someday be married. Does the ring guarantee that the couple absolutely *will* get married? No. At any point during the engagement period, the person with the ring is fully within their rights to break off the engagement. What the presence of the ring guarantees is not that the wedding absolutely will happen, at some point in the *future*, but rather, the reality of where the relationship is at in the *present*; so long as the ring remains on the finger of the betrothed, the couple remains on track to be married. And *if* the ring remains on her finger until the wedding day arrives, then the wedding will go through and the marriage will be consummated. Only after the wedding is over does the relationship become absolutely permanent; but if the ring should be taken off during the engagement period (before the wedding day), then the marriage itself will be called off.
    - ◇ In the same way, the Holy Spirit is our guarantee of marriage for the upcoming 'Wedding supper of the Lamb,' which is to take place when Jesus returns to marry His bride at His 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming (Matt 22:1-14, Lk 12:35-40, Rev 19:7-9). So long as I walk in fellowship with the Holy Spirit, my engagement to Jesus is guaranteed and my spot in the wedding supper is assured. But should I willfully depart from the Holy Spirit through conscious choice and deliberate sin (see passages in [Section A, above](#)) during the engagement period, I effectively remove the ring from my finger, after which, the only guarantee left to me is the 'fearful expectation' of '*judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God*' (Heb 10:27).
    - ◆ And this is exactly what the rest of Scripture testifies to – the consistent teaching of Scripture is that only those who overcome *to the end of their lives* will be saved & allowed to participate in the Wedding Supper with Jesus (see below, [section D](#) 'Salvation is based on perseverance').
- b) **More proof from Jesus that people can lose their salvation (Parable of the Ten Virgins).** A sobering wedding parable that Jesus told which illustrates this truth exactly is the parable of the Ten Virgins: *"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup> Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. <sup>3</sup> For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, <sup>4</sup> but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. <sup>5</sup> As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. <sup>6</sup> But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' <sup>7</sup> Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup> And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'*<sup>9</sup>

*But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.'*<sup>10</sup> *And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut.*<sup>11</sup> *Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.'*<sup>12</sup> *But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.'*<sup>13</sup> *Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. – Matt 25:1-13 (ESV)*

- ◆ The first thing to notice about this parable is that ALL 10 of the virgins were waiting for the bridegroom's return. This is important, because it means that the parable is speaking only to believers. Certainly no non-believers are waiting for Jesus' (the bridegroom) return! This fact is confirmed in verse 11 when the five foolish virgins call Jesus 'Lord, lord.'
- ◆ So all 10 of the virgins are believers and all 10 of them were waiting for Jesus' return. But only 5 of them got to go in with Jesus to the marriage feast (verse 10)! Why? Because 5 of them (the 'foolish virgins') weren't ready when the bridegroom returned; specifically, they had no oil in their lamps. Later, when the foolish virgins call out to Jesus He shuts them out and tells them he doesn't know them (which is a prelude to them being sent to hell, see Matt 7:23).
  - ◇ What is this oil? In Scripture, oil is often used to represent the Holy Spirit (as evidenced by the use of the word 'anoint(ed)' – a term that is normally used only in conjunction with oil – but in Scripture is also often used in conjunction with the work of the Holy Spirit. See Lk 4:18, Acts 10:38, 2 Cor 1:21-22, 1 John 2:20.).
  - ◇ Thus, the foolish virgins were believers who stopped fellowshiping with the Holy Spirit, as evidenced by the fact that they were not full of oil when the bridegroom returned.
- ◆ Jesus sums up the parable in verse 13 by saying, 'Watch therefore.' In the context of this parable, it is a sober warning – those who do not *continue watching* will not be ready when He returns, and may be shut out of the Wedding Supper.

##### 5. Question: But hasn't God adopted us into His family? Aren't we sons and daughters of the King?

- a) The answer to this question is, of course, a resounding YES! Romans 8:14-17 clearly says that all those who are led by the Spirit of God' are 'sons of God.' Verse 15 says that those who are in Christ Jesus get adopted by God. This is a wonderful truth!
- b) The problem is that advocates of 'Once Saved, Always Saved' have inferred this to mean that a person cannot lose their salvation. But nowhere in Romans 8:14-17, or any of the other adoption passages in Scripture, does Paul say that once adopted a person cannot lose their adoption (ie. salvation)!
- c) In fact, as [we saw before already](#), 2 Timothy 2:12 clearly says that if we disown God – He will disown us (ie. remove us from His family)! **2 Timothy 2:11-13 (NIV)** –*Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; <sup>12</sup> if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; <sup>13</sup> if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.*
  - ◆ So, clearly, a person who has been adopted can lose their adoption by willfully disowning God.
  - ◆ This point is also explicitly made by Jesus, *So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.* – **Matt 10:32-33 (ESV)**
- d) Revelation affirms that, ultimately, your adoption isn't permanently, eternally finalized until you finish persevering to the end of your life: *He who OVERCOMES will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.* – **Rev 21:7 (NIV)**
  - ◆ Who are the sons of God? Only those who overcome to the end of their lives (see section 'D' below)!

6. **Final Objection: People who seem to have lost their salvation never really had it.**

- a) **1 John 2:19.** People who believe in 'Once Saved, Always Saved' sometimes quote 1 John 2:19 to 'prove' that no one can lose their salvation. Their argument, based on this text, is that anyone who appears to lose their salvation never really had it in the first place.
- ◆ Here is the passage in question: *Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.* <sup>19</sup> *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.* – **1 John 2:18-19 (ESV).**
  - ◆ Context, however, is everything. In this passage the apostle John is making reference to a specific group of people who were leaving the church he was writing to, in order to follow heresy (most likely one of the Gnostic heresies which were rampant in the first couple centuries AD). John says that these particular people were never Christians in the first place.
  - ◆ But it is faulty logic to say that this passage proves that *everyone* who walks away from the faith was *never* saved in the first place. The only thing we can conclude from this passage is that there do exist *some* people who may appear for awhile to be Christians, but later, when they walk away from the faith, it becomes obvious that they were never truly Christians in the first place. True statement – not everyone who appears to be saved, really is.
  - ◆ This passage was written about a particular group of people, not about all people in general. If it were an absolute statement of fact about all people who have ever walked away from the faith it would automatically come into contradiction with the many Scripture passages we cited earlier (see Section A, above), which clearly state that people *can* be genuinely saved and then lose their salvation. It would also come into direct contradiction with several other passages John wrote later in this same epistle and in his other epistles:
- b) **Reading OSAS into 1 John 2:19 causes contradictions elsewhere in John's epistles, like 2 John 8-9** – *Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.* <sup>9</sup> *Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son (ESV).*
- ◆ In this passage John tells 'the elect lady whom he loves' (v.1) to 'Watch herself' so that she does not 'LOSE what she had worked for' (v.8). He goes on to say that anyone who goes 'ahead' and does not 'abide in the teaching of Christ' (ie. they accepted the teaching of Christ, but they do not continue in it), 'DOES NOT have God' (v.9). This passage is clear – a person can lose the reward they have stored up in heaven and, worse, that person can even leave the teaching of Christ and lose God altogether. Certainly anyone who is 'without God' is also without salvation, thus, a person can lose their salvation.

## D. Salvation is based on perseverance (how you finish your life) – not on a prayer that you once prayed in the past. [\[back to top\]](#)

- The mistake that many Christians often make is in thinking of salvation as a one-time transaction which took place when they ‘asked Jesus into their heart.’ This type of thinking causes Christians to think of salvation as something they possess in the present – it’s done, it’s finished – rather than something Jesus is going to do for them in the FUTURE (at the Judgment) based on how they FINISH their life.
  - ◇ Note: of course, we affirm that praying to receive Jesus IS an important and wonderful FIRST STEP. But that’s exactly what it is – a step. If it is followed by genuine repentance and a life of loving Jesus then the person who prayed the prayer is saved (see Rom 10:9-10 & James 2:18-24).
- Scripture continually teaches that our salvation is an ongoing process, and that only those who endure to the end of their lives will receive the prize of eternal life:
  1. *For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are **being** saved it is the power of God. – 1 Cor 1:18 (ESV)*
    - ◇ Note that Paul does not say ‘to those of us who ARE saved,’ but rather, ‘to those of us who are BEING saved.’ Why? Because he did not consider his salvation to be an accomplished fact. It was an ongoing process, to be fulfilled at the end of his life. The next two examples show Paul’s consistency in this way of thinking:
      - a) *Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are **being** saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you— unless you believed in vain. – 1 Cor 15:1-2 (ESV)*
      - b) *But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are **being** saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. – 2 Cor 2:14-16 (ESV)*
  2. *Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that **you will be saved**—and that by God. – Phil 1:27-28 (NIV)*
    - ◇ Note here that Paul says at the end of verse 28 that the Philippians WILL be saved – their salvation is not something in the past, it refers to something that will happen to them in the future. Why? Because we are being saved from hell and judgment; two things which won’t happen until the future. Salvation is not something any believer possesses, in its fullness, during this lifetime; it is an ongoing process in our lives, at the end of which – IF we persevere – we will be saved from hell and judgment.
  3. *You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. – Heb 10:36 (NIV)*
    - ◇ Why do we need to persevere? Because if we don’t persevere, we will NOT receive what God has promised (eternal life, salvation, etc. etc.). Again, salvation is something in the future – based on our perseverance.
  4. Consider also the words of the apostle Peter in his epistle: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who by God’s power are **being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.** . . . <sup>8</sup> Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, <sup>9</sup> **obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.**” – 1 Pet 1:3-5, 8-9 (ESV)*
    - ◇ In this passage Peter twice clearly states that a person’s salvation is a both a future event and an ongoing process – not a past, finished event based on a prayer a person one time prayed. First, in verse 4, he tells the believers



that they are 'BEING guarded (present-continuous) through faith' for a salvation that will be revealed 'in the last time.' In other words, people aren't saved right now – we will be saved, in the future, if we continue in the faith! Then in verse 9 he tells the believers that they are 'obtaining' (present-ongoing-continuous) the 'salvation of your souls.' Note, again, that he does NOT say that the believers have already obtained (past-tense) their salvation – it is an ongoing process.

- That there is an 'IF' in our ongoing process of being saved is without question:
  1. *And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, **IF indeed you CONTINUE** in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. – Col 1:21-23 (ESV)*
  2. *But women will be saved through childbearing--**IF they CONTINUE** in faith, love and holiness with propriety. – 1 Tim 2:15 (NIV)*
  3. *Watch your life and doctrine closely. **PERSEVERE** in them, because **IF you do**, you will save both yourself and your hearers. – 1 Tim 4:16 (NIV)*
  4. *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling**, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. – Phil 2:12-13 (ESV)*
    - ◇ If there was no 'IF' in the process of salvation (ie. we're guaranteed to be saved no matter how we live), why would Paul tell us to work out our salvation with 'fear and trembling?'
  
- 3 times in the Gospels and 8 times in Revelation it is repeated that only those who endure (or overcome) to the end of their lives will be saved. It's not how you START that determines whether or not you are saved, it's how you FINISH:
  1. *Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death,<sup>22</sup> and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who ENDURES TO THE END will be saved. – Matt 10:21-22 (ESV)*
    - ◇ In this passage, Jesus makes it clear that being a Christian at some point in a person's life isn't enough to save that person for eternity – after first becoming a Christian, they must endure to the end of their lives in order to also FINISH as a Christian and then be saved.
    - ◇ Two more examples from the Gospels:
      - a) *But the one who ENDURES TO THE END will be saved. – Matt 24:13 (ESV)*
      - b) *And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who ENDURES TO THE END will be saved. – Mk 13:13 (ESV)*
  2. *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who OVERCOMES, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. – Rev 2:7 (NIV)*
    - ◇ The promise of eating from the tree of life is a clear reference to eternal life, which is the central point most people think of when they think of being saved. According to the Bible, only those who overcome – not necessarily all of those who prayed a prayer and 'got saved' at some point in their life – get to receive eternal life.
  3. *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who OVERCOMES will not be hurt at all by the second death. – Rev 2:11 (NIV)*
    - ◇ The 'second death' refers to hell (see Rev 20:14). So only those believers who overcome – not necessarily those who once started out on the Christian journey – will escape hell.
  4. *To him who OVERCOMES and does my will TO THE END, I will give authority over the nations--'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery'-- just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. – Rev 2:26-29 (NIV)*

- ◇ This passage makes it very clear that it doesn't matter whether or not you started out on the Christian path at some point in your life – it's only those who do God's will 'to the END' who will be rewarded (ie. saved).
5. *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who OVERCOMES, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it. – Rev 2:17 (NIV)*
  6. *He who OVERCOMES will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels. – Rev 3:5 (NIV)*
  7. *To Him who OVERCOMES I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. – Rev 3:12 (NIV)*
  8. *To Him who OVERCOMES, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. – Rev 3:21 (NIV)*
  9. *He who OVERCOMES will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. – Rev 21:7 (NIV)*

**E. Conclusion:** The overwhelming testimony of Scripture is that believers can lose their salvation. There are many passages in Scripture which explicitly state this fact ([see section A above](#)). The early church fathers understood this to be true as well ([see section B above](#)). Unfortunately, bad doctrine has crept into the Christian church and many believers today have a false assurance that they can live however they like because it is impossible for them to lose their salvation. This doctrine is not based on Scripture; there is not a single passage in Scripture which explicitly teaches that a believer can never lose their salvation. Rather, this doctrine is based on inference, poor exegesis ([see section C above](#)) and a complete misunderstanding of what salvation is. What is salvation? It is both a future event and an ongoing process; it is an ongoing process continually being worked out in genuine believers in this lifetime, and it is a future gift given at the Judgment to all those who persevere in Christ to *the end of their lives* ([see section D above](#)).

## F. APPENDIX: Assurance of Salvation does NOT depend on holding to the 'Once Saved, Always Saved' doctrine:

- On the surface, it would seem that people who believe 'Once Saved, Always Saved' would have an easy time finding assurance of salvation and that people, who like us, do not believe 'Once Saved, Always Saved' would not be able to ever find Assurance of Salvation.
- In fact, the exact opposite is true. Most people who believe 'Once Saved, Always Saved' will argue that if someone walks away from their faith, that doesn't mean they lost their faith, it means they were never saved in the first place. This creates a huge problem, however, because in that case no one could be certain that they are saved *in the present!*
- Think about this carefully:
  1. Suppose a person believes in Jesus, sincerely prays the sinner's prayer and then shows evidence of their salvation in the way that they live. According to the doctrine of 'Once Saved, Always Saved' that person can never lose their salvation IF they are truly saved.
    - ◇ But what happens if later in that person's life, he/she leaves the faith and clearly exhibits fruit that they are no longer a believer? If 'Once Saved, Always Saved' is correct, then that person was never a believer in the first place. But if that person was never a believer in the first place (in spite of the fact that at one time they truly did believe in Jesus, say the sinner's prayer and exhibit the fruit of salvation), how could ANYONE ELSE ever be assured of their salvation, even if they believe in Jesus, say the sinner's prayer and exhibit the fruit of repentance?! Who knows, because perhaps in the future you, too, will walk away from God proving that you aren't saved right now? If 'Once Saved, Always Saved' is correct then no person can ever be assured of their salvation because no one can know for sure what they will do in the future. As sincere as a person can be in the present, no one can have assurance of salvation because no one knows how they will behave in the future. This fact can and does produce frightened, neurotic Christians!
    - ◇ Here are several quotes from leading Christian theologians, pastors and authors who hold to the Reformed doctrine of 'Perseverance of the Saints' (for the purposes of this discussion Perseverance of the saints, though different from Once Saved, Always Saved in some important ways can be treated as essentially the same since they believe that no one who is truly saved can ever fall away) showing that people who believe in this doctrine cannot, ultimately, find assurance of their salvation:
      - a) John Piper (preacher and author), a Reformed theologian states clearly that no believer can ever be sure that he is a believer. (John Piper and Staff, "TULIP: What we believe about the Five Points of Calvinism: Position Paper of the Pastoral staff" (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God Ministries, 1997) 23.)
      - b) Philip F. Congdon (author and scholar), writes "*Absolute assurance of salvation is impossible in Classical Calvinism . . .*" because they hold that no one who is truly saved could ever fall away. (Philip F. Congdon, "Soteriological implications of Five-Point Calvinism," *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*, Autumn 1995, 8:15, 55-68.)
      - c) The Puritans are the spiritual fathers of many churches and Christians today in North America. They were also staunch defenders of the Perseverance of the Saints and it is known that they struggled for centuries with the issue of Assurance of Salvation. (Joseph C. Dillow, *The reign of the servant kings: a study of eternal security and the final significance of man* (Haysville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Co., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1993), 192-193.)
  2. In contrast to this, a person who does NOT believe in the doctrine of 'Once Saved, Always Saved,' and instead believes (as we do) that a person can genuinely be saved and later walk away from that faith CAN have assurance of salvation. That is because we believe that what a person does in the future has no bearing on whether or not they are saved right now in the present. All a person need do to be assured of their salvation in the present is to ask themselves questions such as the following:
    - a) Do I believe that Jesus is who He said He was . . . right *now*? (John 5:24)
      - ◆ If 'yes,' then you are saved.

- b) Does the Holy Spirit give me confidence that I am His? (Romans 8:15-17)
- ◆ If 'yes' to this and to (a) above, then you are saved. If 'no,' pray and ask Him for assurance, because He wants to give it!
- c) Is my behavior changing (even if very slowly)? Am I becoming more loving towards other people? (1 John 3:17-19) Is there evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in my life (even if I am weak and far from perfect)?
- ◆ If 'yes' to this and to (a) above, then you are saved. If 'no,' repent and ask Him to help you grow in love so that you can be assured of salvation.