

Losing Your Salvation Part 1



1. What (so-called) biblically-based, Evangelical churches believe and teach = The false doctrines of Eternal Security, Perseverance of the Saints or "Once Saved, Always Saved": Those who are truly saved (the elect), can/will never lose their salvation.

"They whom God has accepted in His beloved Son, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from a state of grace, but shall certainly persevere in that state to the end and be eternally saved." – Westminster Confession of Faith: Perseverance of the Saints

"The bottom line in this doctrine is that when the Lord saves someone, that salvation is forever, never to be reversed. The Bible is clear on that basic truth and the basic truth is that salvation by its very nature is irrevocable." – John MacArthur

"Those passages that seem to teach you can lose your salvation are actually talking about people who were never truly saved (false Christians), people who think they are saved but by their actions show they never were." - What Pastor used to believe (the common Evangelical explanation)

2. What Moses, Jesus, Paul, the author of Hebrews, Peter, James, Jude and John believed and taught = Legitimately saved people or true Christians can (and will) lose their salvation if they do not continue in faith and faithful obedience. Support¹:

2.1. Moses: (Deu 29:18-20) = These verses are addressed to people who are entering into a covenant - or legitimate saving relationship, w/God (See verses 10-13). That salvation however was predicated on them continuing in faith and faithfulness. If they chose to turn away from the Lord or "go and serve the gods of (the other) nations" or even (falsely) believe their salvation was secure and continue to "walk in the stubbornness of (their) heart", God would no longer be "willing to forgive (them)". The Lord would instead "blot out (their) name from under heaven." – a reference to the Book of Life, the place where God writes down the names of saved people (Rev 20:12-15). As such, those guilty would go from saved to un-saved. They would lose their salvation.

2.2. (Deu 32:5) = This verse is in reference to the first generation of Jews God brought out of Egypt during the Exodus. These are the same people who made covenant w/God at Mt. Sinai and became His saved people or "children". However, because they did not continue in faith and faithfulness, God not only destroyed them but disowned them ("they are no longer my children") – i.e. they lost their salvation.

2.3. Jesus: (Mat 6:14-15) = If God is my "heavenly Father" then I must be legitimately saved – or a true Christian, since these are the only people whose sins are forgiven by God. Being disobedient to forgive others however, will lead to God no longer forgiving me. If God no longer forgives me, then I must no longer be saved (see Mat 18:32-35).

2.4. (Mat 8:11-12) = Jesus used the phrase "sons of the kingdom" to identify legitimately saved people (see Mat 13:38). These individuals however end up being "thrown into the place of outer darkness", the place where "there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" – i.e. they go to Hell. The only way these verses make any sense is if these individuals lost their former salvation since God doesn't send saved people to Hell.

2.5. Paul: (Rom 11:17-22) = Being "grafted in" to God's "olive tree" means being saved and placed among God's covenant people. Such grafting however does not guarantee future salvation. Like the Jews, God will not "spare us" but "cut (us) off" from such salvation if we too walk in disobedience or unbelief.

2.6. (1Co 9:24-10:12) = The Apostle Paul was a legitimately saved man – a true Christian. So were those in Corinth as confirmed by his reference to them as "brothers" (10:1). Yet Paul saw himself (and those in Corinth) in danger of losing this salvation if they did not continue in faith and faithful obedience.

2.7. (Gal 5:4) = It is impossible to be "severed from Christ" if you were never a part of Him – i.e. a legitimately saved individual. Being "severed" therefore refers to the loss of salvation. Since the phrase "fallen from grace" is tied to this previous statement, what Paul is inferring (by it) is also the loss of salvation (See 4:11).

2.8. (Phi 2:12-16) = The commands to obey "much more", "do all things without grumbling and complaining", to be "blameless and innocent" and to hold "fast the word of life" are meant to define what Paul means by "work out your salvation with fear and trembling". As such it reveals that even though these individuals were legitimately saved (since how can you work out something you don't possess?), they still needed to continue in faith and faithfulness. And if they did not, Paul would view his evangelistic and pastoral efforts as "in vain" or without benefit. Hardly could those words be used unless what was at stake was their salvation. So then, failing to "work out" through obedient living what God had initially "worked in them" – i.e. His salvation, would result in its forfeiture.

2.9. (Col 1:21-23) = Those being addressed have been "reconciled" by the death of Christ from their former alienation and hostility to God. Because of Christ's cross-work, they now stand before God as "holy and blameless and above reproach". They are in every respect of the term, saved individuals. This salvation is however, conditional. To maintain their current status and state, they must

¹ These are not the only verses supporting the loss of salvation. Additional verses would include (Psa 50:14-23, 51:11-12; Eze 33:13; Amo 5:21-27; Mat 25:24-27; Luk 19:24-26; Gal 5:16-21; Eph 5:1-10; Heb 3:12-4:11; Jam 2:14-26; 2Pe 3:14-17; 2Jo 1:8).

“continue in the faith (or in faithfulness), stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel.” If they don’t, their salvation will be lost. Is there any other way to understand Paul’s words?

2.10. (1Th 1:4 w/3:1-5) = The fact that Paul claims God had “chosen” these individuals means that they were legitimately saved. It also means they are the “elect” (ἐκλογὴ = Selected by God; Rom 9:11, 11:5, 28; 2Pe 1:10). Yet there is still “fear” on the part of Paul that current sufferings and “affliction” might cause them to succumb to the “tempter” (i.e. Satan), and his “labor” among them be “in vain” (again, without benefit). Once more, the only interpretation that makes sense, is the loss of salvation. Paul worried that their “faith” will fail and their salvation be lost.

2.11. (1Ti 1:18-20) = The warning against making “shipwreck” of one’s “faith” is clearly in reference to the kind of faith that saves since destroying (or shipwrecking) that which was false (or un-saving) would be encouraged! The parties guilty of such actions (“Hymenaeus and Alexander”), must therefore be viewed as having lost their former salvation. Hence the reason Paul can speak of them as being “handed over to Satan”.

2.12. Author of Hebrews: (Heb 6:4-9) = These verses are about the danger of apostasy (or permanent loss of salvation). As such, they are addressed to legitimately saved people – or true Christians. They are those who have “tasted of the heavenly gift” – i.e. Jesus (Joh 4:10) and “shared in the Holy Spirit” – i.e. been regenerated (Tit 3:5). According to the author, these individuals are expected to continue in faith and faithfulness – or bear fruit, as they continue to be “enlightened” and receive “the word of God”. This is what the author is referring to when speaking of “land” receiving the “rain that often falls on it” and producing a “crop useful to those for whose sake it was cultivated” versus producing “thorns and thistles” – things which are “worthless” and “cursed” and whose “end is to be burned”. When however that is the case, these individuals are said to have “fallen away” and unable to be restored “again to repentance since they are (by their actions) crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt”. If it is not the loss of salvation that the author is referring to by such strong words, then what else could it be? What exactly are they falling away from if not salvation? Prohibitions against restoration, the danger of re-crucifying Christ and statements about falling away are only relevant if the individuals in question were at one time saved, but now have lost it.

2.13. (Heb 10:19-30) = These verses represent another place in the book of Hebrews teaching the danger of apostasy (or permanent loss of salvation). As before, those to whom the warning is being addressed are legitimately saved people – or true Christians. They are identified as “brothers”. Yet without the continuation of faith (they are “to hold fast the confession of [their] hope without wavering”), or faithfulness (they are not to “go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth”), the end result will be the forfeiture of their salvation (there “will no longer” remain “a sacrifice for sins but a fearful expectation of judgment and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries”). That these adversaries were at one time saved individuals, is further emphasized by the author’s description of them as “those who (have) trampled underfoot the Son of God, and (have) profaned the blood of the covenant by which (they) were sanctified” - and his final statement, “The Lord will judge *His people*.” Scarcely the words one would use to describe unsaved people.

2.14. James: (Jam 5:19-20) = According to James, those wandering “from the truth” in need of being “brought back” are among those identified as “brothers”. They are legitimately saved individuals. Yet the danger of going to Hell - or losing their salvation, is still very real. Hence the reason, James can say that those who carry out such ministry on their behalf will “save their soul from death”. As before, this statement makes no sense unless the salvation of that person can – or has been - lost since people who can’t lose their salvation are never in such jeopardy.

2.15. Peter: (2Pe 2:20-21) = A person who has “escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” is a saved individual (See 1:1-4). Their choice however to be “again entangled” in such things – i.e. to not continue in faith and faithfulness, will mean their “state has become worse for them than the first”. They will go not merely from saved to unsaved (their “state” at “first” – meaning before coming to Christ), but to apostate (the permanent loss of salvation). As a result, Peter concludes “it would be better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back”. Such words also support that what is in view is loss of salvation since when would it be better for those who were never truly saved to have never heard – or known the way? If that is ever the case, then we should avoid evangelizing the lost!

2.16. Jude: (Jud 1:3-5) = We are not eternally saved by grace alone. Faith and faithful obedience must continue in submission to Jesus as our “Master and Lord” otherwise we like the Exodus generation will be “destroyed” – i.e. be damned to Hell. Notice, Jude makes this truth key to contending for and possessing the right Christian Faith!

2.17. John (via Jesus): (Rev 3:5) = Jesus’ promise to “never blot (this person’s) name out of the book of life” is a direct allusion to Deuteronomy 29:18-20 and therefore a warning of the loss of salvation to those who do not continue in faith and faithfulness. The fact that Jesus promises to not take such action – but instead allow the names of those who are faithful to remain, also tells us that those He is addressing are legitimately saved people or true Christians.

2.18. (Rev 22:19) = Do unsaved people have a “share in the tree of life and in the holy city?” According to the Bible, they do not. Jesus is once more warning legitimately saved people or true Christians of the danger of losing their salvation. In this case, if they take “away from the words of the book of this prophecy”.

CLOSING CONTEMPLATION = Moses, Jesus, Paul, the author of Hebrews, James, Peter and John all clearly taught and believed that legitimately saved people – or true Christians, could (and would) lose their salvation if they did not continue in faith and faithfulness. Yet most of those claiming to be biblical Christians today reject this truth. It is therefore up to us, to contend for this important doctrine of the Christian Faith by showing and explaining these verses to others (claiming to be Christian).

CLOSING CHALLENGE = Reach out this week (via phone, email or in person) to the pastor of an Evangelical church or your friendly neighborhood Evangelical and ask them if they believe a saved person can lose their salvation. When they respond “No”, select a handful of the verses we have discussed and ask them to explain how they are not teaching this truth. Important point not to miss: they are to explain the selected verses – NOT use other verses or doctrine in an attempt to distract you away from dealing w/them.