

CAN A BELIEVER LOSE THEIR SALVATION?

FIVE VIEWS

View #1) Salvation is gained by works; it is kept by works. Net result: Salvation can be easily lost.

This view says salvation is dependent on what we do. If we do enough good and avoid enough bad, then God gives us a ticket to heaven. This view is popular among some Catholics, some Orthodox, some Protestants, and many pseudo-Christian groups like Jehovah's Witnesses, LDS, and Seventh Day Adventists.

View #2) Salvation is gained by faith in Jesus; it is kept by good works. Net result: Salvation can be easily lost.

One can become a true Christian, but if he sins once, he loses his salvation and must repent again to get it back. One must be in a "state of grace" to get to heaven. This view is common among Catholics and also many Protestants (Some Baptists, Lutherans, Methodists, Assemblies of God, Nazarene, Orthodox, Church of Christ)

View #3) Salvation is gained by faith in Jesus; It is kept by faith in Jesus. Net result: Salvation cannot be "lost", but it can be forfeited.

In this view, losing salvation is a possibility, but it only comes about by a deliberate choice and doesn't happen by accident. A believer must walk away; a person must stop believing to forfeit their salvation. This is the view of many Protestants (Some Baptists, some Lutherans, some Methodists, some Calvary Chapel, many CMA, many Evangelical Free)

View #4) Salvation is gained by faith in Jesus; It is kept by decree of God. Net result: Salvation cannot be lost (or forfeited) once one has believed.

In this view, we must believe to be saved, but once we have believed, we are "sealed" by God, and there is no longer a possibility that salvation can be lost. This view is popular among most Conventional Baptists, Calvary Chapel, Brethren, Non-Denominational Bible, some Evangelical Free, and a few CMA.

View #5) Salvation is gained by decree of God; It is kept by decree of God. Net result: Salvation cannot be lost or forfeited.

In this view, regeneration precedes the person believing in Jesus Christ. The act of believing is not the act of the believer but by the sovereignty and will of God. Faith in Jesus is an inevitable result of God's eternal decrees. It does not come from anything in the believer. Those whom Jesus died for will certainly be saved. This view is often called "monergism" and is the predominant view among self-described Calvinists (Presbyterian, Reformed Baptist, some Non-Denominational Bible, some Calvary Chapel).

Note on Saving Faith

Most who believe that salvation cannot be lost or forfeited also hold to the belief that true believers will demonstrate that they are truly regenerate by their works. If works (evident by a change of life) are not present, then the person never believed. Also, if a person falls away from the faith, then this is also evidence

that they were never a real believer. In either scenario, this person does not lose their salvation; they never had salvation.

BIBLICAL DATA

In 1 Corinthians 4:6, Paul expresses his desire that the Corinthians “learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant on behalf of one against the other.” In order to maintain the proper humility (and to ensure the highest degree of accuracy), it is best when dealing with the mysteries of God (1 Cor 4:1) not to expand their definitions beyond what God has revealed. This is an important principle broadly applicable throughout the Christian life, and certainly in resolving any theological difficulty.

- i. John 3:15-18, 36
- ii. John 5:24
- iii. John 10:27-30
- iv. John 11:25-26

Point 1: The verses in John indicate that Eternal Life is not provided at death but is a current possession to believers:

- i. Romans 6:3-5
- ii. Romans 11:29
- iii. Philippians 1:6

Point 2: God will fulfill what He has started:

- i. John 1:12-13
- ii. John 3:1-8
- iii. Romans 8:14-17
- iv. Galatians 4:3-6
- v. Ephesians 1:5-6

Point 3: The analogy of birth and adoption has permanent implications

- i. 1 Corinthians 3:16
- ii. 1 Corinthians 6:11
- iii. 2 Corinthians 1:21-22
- iv. 2 Corinthians 5:5
- v. Ephesians 1:13
- vi. Ephesians 4:30

Point 4: The indwelling and sealing Holy Spirit also guarantees the believers’ position eternally.

Bonus verse: 1 Peter 1:3-5 – This passage has no less than eight assurances of eternal life.

The knowability that you have eternal life is impossible if there is no assurance, yet in 1 John 5:13, a believer can know they have eternal life.

Finally, even if one becomes an unbeliever, there is assurance in 2 Timothy 2:13: if we are unbelieving, He remains faithful.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Since the only requirement is to believe in Jesus Christ, and once that person is a believer, they are sealed as a son of God. We must be careful not to determine a person's position with God based on their works or fidelity. If a person is claiming to no longer be a believer, we will inevitably wonder, were they ever a believer? But God is not limited by our lack of understanding. "Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands in this seal, 'The Lord knows who are His,'" (2 Timothy 2:19a).