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## “ONCE SAVED - ALWAYS SAVED”

### Is this the security of the believer?

*compiled by Rachel Cory-Kuehl, March 2002  
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Scripture from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.*

James 5:19-20 “Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.”

*The sinner here is NOT someone who has never known the truth. This is one of Christ’s own. The verse says it all. One who knows the truth CAN wander from it, and will die eternally unless he turns back to Christ. The verse does not make clear whether the “multitude of sins” are those of the wanderer, or those of the one who turns him back, or those of both. It is clear from this verse, that free will is left intact following an initial experience of “belief” in Christ Jesus. The believer is left “free” to walk away, if he so chooses.*

### PROMISES AND ASSURANCES

John 10:28, 29 [Jesus speaking] “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.” NIV

John 5:24 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”

Philippians 1:6 “Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;”

Jesus Christ is the only way to God, and to eternal life.  
See our study: "[The Only Way](#)."

You gave your heart to Jesus. You honestly desired to be changed, to have a new heart, to be righteous from the inside out. You were baptized in His name. You are now part of the Body of Christ, His church, His bride. Your name is written in Heaven, in the Book of Life. No one, not even Satan himself, can take you away from your Savior. You're safe. You're secure forever no matter what. Right?

*Well, yes - and no.*

It's easy to see that as long as you want a relationship with Christ, your Savior will allow nothing to sever that relationship. But what happens if you walk away from that relationship? Will Christ allow you to walk away? Will He over-power your will to prevent it? Does Jesus ever have grounds for divorce?

## FREEDOM TO CHOOSE

God created mankind in His own image. Adam and Eve were given free will. Without free will there can be no love, for love by definition must be freely given. Human beings are not androids, programmed to act within narrowly defined parameters. To God, this freedom of choice was so important He was willing to sacrifice His only Son, rather than create mankind without this freedom.

The Father knew of course, that Lucifer would rebel. He knew that Adam and Eve would choose to doubt His love. He knew they would eat of the forbidden tree, rather than trust Him. He knew that only a portion of their descendants would finally be reconciled. He knew what it would cost to win them back. He knew - yet He created sentient intelligent beings with the freedom to choose.

## WILL WE TRUST HIM?

Obedience is an outward sign - of a trust relationship. If we love and trust our Father, we will obey Him because we believe He knows what is best for us. When we disobey God, we are really saying, "I don't believe you. I think you're keeping good things from me. I think you're manipulating me for your own interests." (This is the rationale that Satan used at the tree in the garden.)

You see, being saved is not just a legal or forensic maneuver. Being "saved" means we have come to trust Him. We have entered a relationship. We are asking Him to reveal His character (His heart) to us, and to teach us His ways. We trust, that *when* we have come to understand the "*why*," we will agree. Until then we will do as He commands.

The Hebrew word “aman” (#0539) is translated 44 times through the Old Testament as “believe.” According to Harris-Archer-Waltke, it means: to support, to be firm, to confirm, to be faithful, to uphold, to trust, or to nourish. **All of these definitions convey a sense of continuing action, rather than a state of mind only.** A “believer” is a “faithful one,” or “one who stands firm,” or “one who is established.” Our English word “amen” is derived from “aman.”

Faith means trust. If I say that “I have faith in you,” that’s the same as saying “I believe in you.” I believe you will act in a certain way. And if I have faith in you, I will do as you ask - even if you have not yet fully explained why that would be in my best interest.

The process of salvation begins with a small spark of trust. I step out in faith. Most of us live beyond that first moment of faith. God then works with us (and in us) to build a stronger relationship. We learn a little more day by day, as we study His word, as we see Him working in the events of our lives, as we make mistakes and learn that His way really is the better way. We grow. If our life were to end, at any point in the process - we are assured that we will receive eternal life.

Salvation is not about counting - sins committed vs sins confessed & forgiven. It is about a relationship that begins with a covenant or sacred agreement. And just as in a marriage relationship, one partner can become distracted. One partner can act out of ignorance. One partner can just want what he/she wants, ignoring the consequences. We are weak “through the flesh.”

Have you ever prayed, “LORD don’t let me mess this up. Hang on to me! Throw whatever you need to throw in my path to keep me going Your way. I don’t trust myself. I trust You.”

*I certainly have!*

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE “SAVED?”

“I’m saved,” He says. “I will live forever. Someday I will live in a beautiful city with streets made of gold.” Yes, that can all be true. But there is much more to salvation than the promise of Heaven.

We are saved from sin - not just from death and unpleasantness (the consequence of sin). **We are being saved from the selfishness within our own hearts.** Christ Himself communicates with us. We can live mind to mind with our Savior. He will teach us His ways. Through us He can then pour out His gentleness, His kindness, His patience, His unselfishness, and His truth. We enter into a living, dynamic relationship with a living person - our LORD.

Some people very much want to live forever in Heaven, but they are not so concerned with day to day righteousness. They want the rewards later, but not the relationship today. Yet it is that relationship which leads to the final reward. We cannot have one without the other.

John 10:27 [Jesus said] “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”

## CAN A “SAVED” MAN - CHOOSE TO LEAVE CHRIST?

Hebrews 3:12-14 “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,”

There’s that word again - “unbelief.” Jesus said, “**If** you believe.” The above text suggests that one can believe in Christ, and then be deceived into unbelief. The Israelites who died in the wilderness, could not enter into the promised land because of “unbelief.” Their dis-obedience was proof of their dis-belief (*Hebrews 3:19*). Obedience flows from belief. If we believe, we will obey. **If we refuse to obey, it is because we do not truly believe** that His way is in our best interest - both now and forever.

Matthew 24:13 “But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”

1 John 1:7 “**If** we walk in the light ... the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

Romans 11:22 “Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, **if** you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.”

1 John 2:24 “As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. **If** what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.” (NAS)

The words HOLD, WALK, CONTINUE, ABIDE, and REMAIN, all suggest an ongoing relationship, rather than a one time decision. The word “if” stresses ongoing or repeated choice.

2 Timothy 2:12 “**If** we endure, we shall also reign with Him. **If** we deny Him, He also will deny us.”

John 15:4-5 [Jesus speaking to His disciples] “Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.” (ESV)

Here clearly are believers. They have been forgiven of their sins. They are clean. They are “in” Christ. Yet Jesus tells them that they will be “cut off” like a withered branch, and “cast into the fire,” unless they abide in Him. The Greek word here translated as “abide” is “meno (#3306), meaning: to remain, to sojourn or continue with, and to dwell with.

The words ENDURE, and ABIDE are commands to continue. Again the word “if” suggests alternatives, and free choice.

1 Corinthians 9:27 “But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.” (ESV)

If anyone was in a “saved” condition, it was Paul - the apostle to the Gentiles. Stoned, imprisoned, whipped, shipwrecked - all for the cause of Christ. Yet here Paul says that he too, could be “a cast away,” if He does not continue to abide in Christ.

I know you’re thinking, “Good grief! If even Paul did not feel assured of salvation, what chance do I have?” Just remember that Paul also wrote, “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (*Rom. 8:38-39*).

Jesus said, “I will never leave you or forsake you” (*Heb. 13:5*) and “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever” (*Heb. 13:8*). He will never leave us, but **He will not stop us if we truly wish to leave the relationship.**

Romans 11:17-20,21,22 [Speaking to a Gentile convert, Paul said] “. . .some of the branches were broken off, and you [Gentile believer] . . . were grafted in. . . Do not be haughty but fear, for if God did not spare the natural branches He may not spare you either.” “. . . toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.”

First please notice that “some,” not all, of the “natural branches” (descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob) were “cut off” “because of unbelief.” Paul here tells the Gentile convert that He has been grafted into the tree (the Olive Tree - representing Israel - the believing descendants of Abraham). He has become part of the congregation (church). He is blessed of God. His name has been written in Heaven. Yet just like the unbelieving Jews, he can and will be cut off if he does not continue in faith.

Colossians 1:21 “And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled . . . if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard.”

### SOME WILL DEPART

1 Timothy 4:1 “. . . some will depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits”

1 Timothy 5:15 “some have already turned aside after Satan.”

Revelation 2:4 [Speaking to the Church of Ephesus] “you have left your first love.” “Repent.”

2 Peter 2:20 “For if, after they have escaped the pollution of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.”

Hebrews 10:26 “For if we sin [continue to sin] willfully [with a rebellious attitude] after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.” KJV

This verse was improperly translated from the Greek because there is no present participle in the Greek. This verse describes the condition of the rebellious and callous individual, who goes on sinning without even trying to stop. There is nothing that God can do for this person, because he does not hate his sin. **He wants the reward, but not the relationship.**

Ezekiel 33:13 “When I say to the righteous he will surely live [eternally], and he so trusts in his righteousness that he commits iniquity, none of his righteous deeds will be remembered; but in that same iniquity of his which he has committed, he will die [eternal death].”

Here is the man who believes that his salvation is a fact, which nothing can alter. (This was the condition of the Jewish leaders of Christ’ day.) Because he believes that his reward is certain, he becomes careless. He does not feel his need of continued heavenly support. He does not stay close to Christ, or pray for victory.

And what happens? He “commits iniquity” - of course. Without repentance the relationship is lost. The text is clear - he will die in his iniquity, with his sin unforgiven. This is the danger of the Once Saved - Always Saved doctrine.

WHAT IF WE LOOSE OUR WAY?  
CAN WE COME BACK INTO COVENANT?  
CAN WE RETURN TO THE RELATIONSHIP?

Malachi 3:7 “Return to Me, and I will return to you, Says the LORD of hosts.”

*The danger of course, is that the longer one is “away,” the less likely she will return.*

## THE MESSAGES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

Revelation 1:1 - 3:22 John the apostle was given a message for each of seven churches. Each message was given by Christ Himself. Each message gives a command, and each message gives a promise of reward.

**To Ephesus:** “You have left your first love.” ... “Repent and do the first works...” (Rev. 2:4-5).  
“Repent” means to turn back.

The promise: “To him who overcomes, I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7).

**To Smyrna:** “Be faithful until death.”

The promise: “I will give you the crown of life” (Rev. 2:10).

“He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death” (Rev. 2:11).

*NOTE: These messages were sent to believers. They were given to the churches.*

**To Pergamum:** You have people in your church who hold to false and pagan doctrines.  
“Repent...”

The promise:

“To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. (Christ is the manna from Heaven.) I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it” (Rev. 2:12-17 NIV). The “white stone” meant life and/or freedom. Freed Roman slaves often took new names.

**To Thyatira:** “You tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray, so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols” (Rev 2:20 NAS). *They were mixing pagan teaching with Christ’s teaching.*

The instruction: “To those who do not hold this teaching, who have *not* known the deep things of Satan, as they call them-- I place no other burden on you.  
Just hold on to what you have” (Rev 2:24 NAS).

The promise: “And he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; (Rev 2:26 NAS). *He will rule the nations with Christ.*

**To Sardis:** “You are alive, but you are dead.” “Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.” “Remember how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent.”

The promise: “He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels” (Rev. 3:4-5).

*NOTE: We are commanded to “overcome.” Overcome the temptation to doubt, to sin, to walk away. No one will enter the New Jerusalem who’s name is not found written in the Book of Life (Rev. 21:27).*

**To Philadelphia:** “Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown” (Rev. 3:11).

The promise: “He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out not more” (Rev. 3:12).

*The “crown” here referred to is the “crown of life.” To receive this crown is to receive eternal life. The “key of David” is the key to life eternal (Rev. 1:18). How could someone “take” our crown of life. Answer: Through deception or temptation. So long as we “hold fast” to our faith, no one can take our promised crown. **The verse makes clear that we can loose the crown IF we do not “hold fast” to Christ.***

**To Laodicea:** Christ says, “. . . buy from Me gold,” and “white garments,” and “eye salve.” Hear my voice and open the door” (Rev. 3:18-21).

The promise: “and I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me” (Rev. 3:21).  
*(This is the relationship!)*

“To him who overcomes, I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcome and sat down with My Father on His throne” (Rev. 3:21).

**What is it that we must “overcome?”** Answer: We must overcome our own doubts, our selfishness, our laziness and our carnal nature. We can do this only if Christ dwells “in” us, because we have a growing and ongoing trust relationship with Him.

But the **Church of Laodicea** says, “I am rich.” I have need of nothing. Maybe she believes she is already saved, so she needs nothing more. **The Laodiceans** do not realize they are “poor, blind, and naked” and will be “blotted” out of the Book of Life, if they do not wise up, and repent of their attitude.

## THE LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE

Revelation 21:27 “But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.”

Revelation 3:5 “He who overcomes ... I will **not** blot out his name out of the Book of Life.”

*One's name is **written into** “the Lamb's book of life” when he enters into covenant relationship with God through Christ. He receives forgiveness. The words “blot out his name” and “take away his part,” tell us that **it is possible for this person**, to turn away from the covenant with God the Father, and to be “blotted out” of the Lamb's Book.*

*Once saved - always saved is not taught here.  
See our study: “[The Book of Life](#).”*

## “LAST RITES” - LAST MINUTE SALVATION?

A mafia don keeps a priest close by for “emergencies.” Can the mass, administered by a priest just before, or even just after death, gain a place in Heaven for one who committed murder, graft, perjury, theft, and assault after assault with no thought of reform?

The thief on the cross asked for and received assurance of a place in Christ's kingdom (*Luke 23:42,43*). Does this mean that any one of us may ask for and receive forgiveness and salvation in the last moments of our life?

Only God knows the heart. If the dying person is asking for absolution just so that he/she will go to “the good place” rather than “the bad place” - then the answer is no. Last moment confession is not “fire insurance.” On the other hand, if that person is genuinely sorry for his sin - if he has truly caught a glimpse of the great love of God, if he greatly desires a relationship with God and with His Son for all eternity, then the answer is yes.

## REASSURANCE

The human mind cannot live with the thought of burning torment without end. The individual seeks reassurance that, no matter what happens, no matter what he does, or does not do in the future, he will NEVER GO TO “HELL.” This is why the “Once Saved - Always Saved” doctrine is so important to those who believe there is a place called “Hell” where the lost will experience conscious torment for all eternity. For the one who believes that God our Father will send His own lost children to unending conscious torment, a trust relationship is impossible. The best they can do is believe they themselves are “saved,” and try not to think about the “lost.” Salvation then often becomes a forensic legal maneuver, rather than a transformation of the heart. And without a trust relationship there can be no true victory.

Other studies at this web site will explain that “Hell” is not a place. It is an event. God will not send anyone to suffer torment for eternity. Please be assured - God does not believe in cruel or unusual punishment, any more than you do.

See our studies: “[Where are the Dead?](#)” and “[Hell - What It’s Not!](#)”

### CONSIDER A FEW EXAMPLES OF PERSONS WHO WERE IN A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD - THEN FELL AWAY.

Those who later repented were forgiven and restored.

#### **David:**

He took the married Bathsheba to his palace, and then sent her husband to the front line of the war, hoping he would be killed. Bathsheba’s child died shortly after birth. David later repented, but the damage inflicted on his family and children proved deadly. He prayed, “Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me” ... “Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation” (*Psalms 51:11-12*).

#### **King Saul:**

Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit and even prophesied (*1 Samuel 10:6,9*). “God gave him another heart.” Then Saul refused to obey the LORD’s direct command, and he even consulted with a witch. He finally committed suicide rather than be captured by the enemy. (*1 Samuel 31:1-6*)

#### **Judas:**

He walked with Jesus for three years, and accepted him as the Messiah - then betrayed Him.

#### **Mary Magdalene:**

Saved seven times, from demon possession (*Mark 16:9*).

#### **The parable of the Prodigal Son:**

He was free to leave again if he chose (*Luke 15:11-32*).

## IT'S A DAILY CHOICE.

Luke 9:23 "Then He said to them all, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.'"

1 Corinthians 15:31 [Paul wrote] "I die daily."

## THE PARABLE OF THE DEBTOR

Matthew 18:23-35

Sins are forgiven and covered when confessed and forsaken, through the indwelling Spirit of Christ in the heart. So long as the sinner remains in Christ, his past sins remain covered and forgiven. If however, this person returns to his former life without Christ, his sins will convict him at the Day of Judgment. He will receive death - "the wages of sin."

This lesson is taught in the parable of the unmerciful servant, who after he had been forgiven his entire debt, (had been saved) then dealt harshly with one who owed money to him. The King then required the man to pay all that had once been forgiven him."

If forgiveness were obtained by doing something to coax God into forgiving us, then it would also be true that we can do things that would cause God to change His mind. **But if forgiveness is discovered as an unchanging quality in the heart of God, then the way to lose forgiveness is to separate oneself from this relationship.**

- (1) I can begin to love my sins, more than I love Jesus.
- (2) I can become so self-righteous, so impressed with my good works, that I don't think I need forgiveness.
- (3) I can be so consumed by guilt that Satan blinds me. I begin to think that God could never forgive someone like me. I doubt God's infinite love - for me.
- (4) I can become absorbed in the cares of this life, and become so busy that I forget about God and my relationship with HIM.

In each case I am the one who has changed. The LORD has not changed.

This of course, is the weakness of the "once saved, always saved" doctrine. It is based on the premise that once Christ has *decided* to forgive a sinner, He will never change His mind. But Christ does not change. We do!

Christ's forgiveness is always there, waiting for us to return like the father of the prodigal. But the wayward son had to return home, to partake of it. And even after he returned home, he could choose to leave again. There was no lock on the door.

God is forgiveness. He cannot be untrue to Himself. There was never a point in time when God decided to forgive sinners. "For I am the Lord, I change not" (*Malachi 3:6*). He forgave before mankind was created. Before the creation, He beget a Son (to win us back). But each human being must accept that forgiveness, personally and individually - One to one. Each one must "open his heart and mind," before he can receive the healing power. Each one must commit to a life of trusting obedience.

## PRESUMPTION

Many come to believe that God is so forgiving that He will continue to forgive, no matter the behavior of the believer. So long as they ask for forgiveness over and over - they can sin, over and over. This deception is deadly, because they have ignored the need for repentance. David said, "If I regard sin in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (*Psalms 66:18*).

Confession is not a saving exercise, **if** it does not lead to healing, and growth, and new behavior. Those who believe that confession is enough, never really plan to change. They may not understand that God has commanded repentance - not just confession. They may lack the faith to believe that change - for them - is possible. Such lack of faith, denies the power and the promises of God. Theirs is not a trust relationship. **They never ask God for the power to change.**

Romans 6:16 "You are the slaves of the one you obey."

If I willfully, blatantly sin then I am Satan's slave. If I say, "forgive me," but then I refuse the saving power of God, which would change my life - I have refused the essence of forgiveness, which is the restoration of a healing relationship. Without the relationship, I am lost.

BY (His) GRACE YOU ARE SAVED, THROUGH (your) FAITH

Grace is His part. Action based upon faith is our part.

Mark 9:23-24 "Jesus said to him, **'if** you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.' Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!'"

*This was a completely legitimate prayer - one we may all repeat.*

Hebrews 3:12-14 “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ **if** we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.”

Think of a friendship. If two friends part ways, if they no longer speak to each other, if one avoids the other or worse - actually harms the other by causing pain to someone the other loves, would the other still call the one “a friend?” Probably not. **Like friendship - salvation is an ongoing relationship, not a one time “Get-in-to-Heaven” entry stamp.**

Hebrews 11:6 “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

If you do not believe that Jesus can help you, and very much wants to help you, then you will not reach out to Him. You will not pray. You will not ask.

Jeremiah 29:13 “You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.”

We must believe that Jesus is indeed the Son of God. We must believe that He can and will forgive our sins. We must believe that He can and will live in us, and give us power to overcome any sinful thinking or behavior. This faith opens the door to God’s healing forgiveness.

If I deny the power of God to overcome every sin, I am saying that God’s power in my life is insufficient. I have closed the door.

There is no need to be lost. Paul wrote, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (*Philippians 4:13*). “With God nothing is impossible” (*Luke 1:37*). “What He has promised, He is able to perform” (*Romans 4:21*).

Forgiveness is more than a legal maneuver. Salvation is more than a ticket to the city with golden streets. God can and will change your life. But you must respond. You must open the door to Him. If you once had faith and somehow lost that confidence in God, go and find it again. Search, read, pray until you find it - until you find Him.

**Faith too is promised (*1Cor. 12:9*) and faith grows as it is exercised.**

ONLY BELIEVE

James 2:19 “You believe that there is one God. You do well.  
Even the demons believe -- and tremble!” NKJV

In what way does the belief of a child of God, differ from that of a demon? Demons will not be saved in the kingdom of God - yet we read that they “believe.” Demons know who God is. They know He exists. They know He is all powerful. They also know they have lost the battle for this world. The belief held by the child of God, goes beyond *knowing* what is, and what will be.

First: The child of God believes certain things about the character of God. She believes that God loves her - personally. She believes that God is kind, patient, and merciful. If she is suffering, she believes that God has allowed that suffering for a good reason. She believes that God is aware of her pain, and feels her pain.

Second: Her belief leads to obedience. She trusts the LORD. Her obedience says, I believe that God is just, and holy, and good, and that He knows what is best for me. The child of God has surrendered, because she believes in the goodness of God.

#### “NEVER REALLY SAVED”

Let’s face it, because of temperament or training, some folks just find it easier to act like Christians. Suppose I am 2 years beyond my baptism, and I’m still sinning. Many Christians would say that my continuing sinful behavior is proof that I was never “really” saved. They believe that when a person is saved, she IS changed forever, and she will instantly stop sinning. Is that true?

What does this mean to me, if I’m still convicted of sin in my life? What if I’m injured, and then I become addicted to pain meds? What if I begin to steal - so I can buy drugs? Was I never really saved? What if I am envious of a coworker? What if I gossip frequently? What if I fail to give, when the LORD has convicted me? What if I continue to smoke, or overeat? What if I have an affair? At what point do I know that I was never “really” saved, so I’d better go back and do it right this time?

I do NOT believe in instant transformation of mind and character. To instantly take away every sinful desire or thought, would be to **manipulate** the human mind and will. I do NOT believe our God does that - ever. If He would ever use manipulation, then He should have done it in the first place - with Adam and Eve, and skipped this whole mess.

I do believe he will give us immortal bodies at the Glorious Return. Our mortal flesh is often a source of temptations. But Satan sinned in a spiritual body, so mortal flesh is not the only cause of our sins. I believe the LORD leads us and teaches us, day by day. He convicts us when we sin, and forgives us when we humbly ask - if our intention is to forsake the sin. It is an ongoing parent-child relationship. Anyone who says he’s no longer sinning, is just fooling himself. And yes - you can ask the Lord to show why something is wrong, if you’re not convinced that it is. I’ve done that.

I remember asking a preacher friend once, “Why am I still sinning? I thought Christ promised to put His spirit in me, so I would keep His laws.” My friend smiled and said simply, “Read the context Rachel.” He knew I was quoting the New Covenant promise from Hebrews 8:10, Jeremiah 31:33, and Ezekiel 36:27.

Ezekiel 36:27 “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.”

If you go to Ezekiel, **the context** places Israel redeemed back in “the land.” So does Jeremiah 31:33. I will quote from the NET because it best describes the time frame.

Jeremiah 31:33 “But I will make a new covenant with the whole nation of Israel **after I plant them back in the land,**’ says the LORD. **‘I will put my law within them and write it on their hearts and minds. I will be their God and they will be my people’**” (NET).

THIS IS THE NEW COVENANT PROMISE!!

Israel redeemed (which includes all Gentile believers - grafted in) will not reach perfected spiritual maturity UNTIL they have been gathered back to “the land.” To believe in perfection of thought and behavior, here in this sin cursed world, will lead to arrogance and carelessness, or to terrible disappointment and loss of faith (thinking that God’s promise was just a fairy tale).

I would just mention here, that we must keep our eyes on Christ - NOT on our own progress. My perfection is HIS PROBLEM - not mine. He promised. I believe Him.

I have said that I consider myself to be in a saved condition - now, because I have entered into a saving relationship with Christ. No. I’m not perfect - yet. But I believe I will be - someday. My Savior has promised to “save” me (from myself, from my selfish thinking, from my selfish desires, from Satan, from this dying world, and from this mortal body).

I am being saved, and I am promised salvation - **so long as I remain in the relationship. I do not, however, believe that my God is obligated to save me, regardless of any future behavior or attitude on my part.**

Just as marriages sometimes die through neglect, so my relationship with Christ could die if severely neglected. Suppose I spend all my time on worldly concerns, and worldly pleasures. I’m not openly rebellious towards God. I haven’t consciously turned away from Him. I just neglect anything of a spiritual nature, and avoid meetings or contacts with believers. Doubts will creep in, slowly - almost imperceptibly. One day I realize my faith (or love) is gone.

I can choose to go in search of evidence to restore my faith. Like the prodigal son I can return to the Father's house. But the longer I stay away, the greater the likelihood that I will never return.

Was I "saved" when I was baptized? Yes. I was in a saving relationship. Did I then walk away? Yes. Will Christ "save" me - without my consent and cooperation? No. I must consciously "return to the Father." If I do not, then I will not spend eternity with Him.

**Every person** who is granted eternal life in the Kingdom of God, **will have been tested**. Temptation does not magically stop with baptism. It often grows much stronger. Only by clinging more tightly to His robe, can we hope to overcome. **The battle is for our faith**. Just before his death at the hand of a Roman executioner, Paul wrote, "I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith" (2Timothy 4:7). **This is the challenge - to keep the faith, and leave the perfecting to Jesus**. "He who began a good work in you, will complete it" (Phil. 1:6).

## HOW CAN THE UNIVERSE BE SECURE?

How can the universe be secure for eternity, if human beings, or angels for that matter, still have free will and can choose at any time to rebel? **The resolution of the sin problem has taken so long, because God wanted all intelligent beings to see for themselves the results of doing things their own way**. He wanted to answer every possible question which has, or ever will be asked concerning His character, His law, His mercy, and His justice. He wanted to bring those who trust Him, to a place of understanding that will prevent any future rebellion. We are a good way through that process, but we have some way to go.

## TRANSLATION DIFFERENCES

Ephesians 2:8 "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."

The words "you have been saved" in this verse, are used by many Christians to support the doctrine of "once saved - always saved." The words "have been" are translated from the Greek "este" (#2075). The word is translated 82 times as "are." "You are saved - through faith." This is how the verse is translated in several versions. The word "este" is present tense, and does not necessarily point to something which already happened.

Compare other translations:

Phillips: "For it is by grace that you are saved, through faith."

New English: "For it is by his grace you are saved."

Amplified: "For it is by free grace (God's unmerited favor) that you are saved."

King James: "For by grace are ye saved through faith;"

In the parable of the sower, the seed which fell on stony ground, and the seed which fell among thorns did sprout and begin to grow. Christ explained that the person represented by the rocky ground, first "received the word (seed) with joy," but later the young plant of faith died because it could not become rooted (*Matthew 13, Mark 4, Luke 8*). The person represented by the thorny ground, received the word (seed) "with joy," but the sprout of faith was choked out by "thorns" (the cares of life, temptations, and the trials of persecution).

## THE AORIST TENSE

In the English language we have "present tense" (I run.), "past tense" (I ran.), and "future tense" (I will run.) In the Greek there is another tense, which we don't have in the English. It is a difficult tense to translate into English. A verb written in the aorist tense indicates an action or a process has begun, which will result in the completed action or effect, IF the action or the process continues. Let me give a few examples.

Ephesians 1:13 ". . . having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise."

In this verse, the word "sealed" is in the Greek aorist tense. Roughly translated it means, "you were sealing to be sealed." "You began the sealing process, and will be sealed (perfect tense) **if** you continue the process." It does NOT mean that the sealing process is already complete, or was accomplished when the moment you first believed.

In the New Testament, the word translated as "sealed" - when describing believers, is always used in the aorist tense, UNTIL Revelation Chapter Seven. The 144,000 "were sealed" (perfect tense). See *Rom 15:28, 2Cor 1:22, Eph 1:13, Eph 4:30*.

Luke 18:42 To the blind man Jesus said, "Receive your sight. Your faith has saved you." NRS

Here the word "saved" is in the perfect tense. The man was perfectly healed. He was "saved" from blindness.

The Greek for "**made well**" is the SAME WORD that is translated as "**saved**." This should help us understand what it means to be saved. It is to be healed. Certainly no one believes we have all come to a state of perfect healing. That will not happen until we receive our immortal "spiritual body."

Titus 3:5 “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”

Because the verb - “saved” in the English, ends with an “ed,” that does not always signify a completed action. We must allow for the Greek aorist tense.

Here again, the word “saved” was written by Paul in the aorist tense. Christ is “saving us.” The process has begun. It will finally result in a “saved” (perfect tense) condition, for those who continue to “abide” in Christ and in the Father.

## PERFECTION

### IS IT NECESSARY FOR SALVATION?

Yes. We must be “perfect” in the eyes of God. And if we are covered by the perfect robe of Christ’s righteousness, then **we are perfect**, even though we still stumble now and then. So no. Absolute literal present perfection in all behavior and thought, is NOT necessary for salvation. We will not reach absolute, mature perfection until the Kingdom.

If you are abiding in a trust relationship with Christ, then you are indeed in a saving covenant relationship. If you were to die today, you would be called from the grave by Christ, in “the resurrection of the just.” **Because one has not reached full maturity in Christ, does not mean he is not righteous in the eyes of God, through Christ.** A newborn Christian is just as much “covered” by the blood of Christ, as is the long time believer. But each must remain in that covenant relationship, if he would be made immortal at His glorious return.

*We pray this study will prove a blessing.  
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