

“ONCE SAVED - ALWAYS SAVED”

Is this the security of the believer?

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Compiled by Rachel Cory-Kuehl, October 27, 2012
Scripture is quoted from 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. This verse says it all. One who knows the truth CAN wander from it, and will ultimately die unless he/she 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/her back.

Now that you know where I’m coming from - Let’s start over:

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;”

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 - the name of the Father, and of the Spirit. 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 Him, Christ your Savior will allow nothing to sever that relationship. But what happens if you should turn your back on Christ and go back to a life of rebellious sin without regard for God or fellow man? Does God ever have grounds for divorce?

FREEDOM TO CHOOSE

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

The Father knew of course, that one day Lucifer would rebel against Him. He knew that Adam and Eve would choose to doubt His love. He knew that 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 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 that He wants what is best for us. When we disobey God, we are really saying, "I don't believe you. 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 manipulation. Being saved means that we 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, and until then we will do as He commands.

Faith means trust. If I said, "I have faith in you," it is the same as if I said, "I trust you," or "I believe in you." And if I have faith in you I will do as you ask - even if you have not yet explained WHY. The process of salvation begins with a small spark of trust. I step out in faith. If I were to die just at that moment, I would "be with Him in paradise."

Most of us live beyond that first moment of faith. He then works with us to build that 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. And at any point in the process - if our life were to end - we are assured that we will inherit eternal life.

Salvation is not about counting - sins committed vs sins confessed & forgiven. It is a relationship - a covenant, 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 consequence. That partner is of course the human element. We are weak "thru 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 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. He can live forever in a beautiful place. But there is much more to salvation.

We are saved from sin - not just from death and unpleasantness (the consequence of sin). We are saved from the selfishness within our own hearts. Christ Himself through His Spirit 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 being - 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 but not necessarily the relationship. Yet it is the relationship which leads to the final reward. We cannot have one without the other.

Jesus said, “I know my sheep, and they know me. 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 [trust] steadfast to the end,”

There’s that word again - “unbelief.” What did Jesus say, “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 disobedience was proof of their disbelief (Hebrews 3:19). 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 “Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.”

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

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

John 15:1-6 “You are already clean (saved) because of the word which I have spoken to you. Every

branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; **if** anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.”

Here clearly are believers who have been “saved.” They have been forgiven of their sins. They are clean. Yet Christ tells them that they will be “cut off” like a withered branch, and “cast into the fire,” unless they continue to abide in Him.

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

1 Corinthians 9:27 Paul himself said, “I keep my body in subjection” . . . lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast away.”

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 there is a chance that even He could be “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) NKJ.

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 forsake Him.

Romans 11:17-20,21,22 [Speaking to a Gentile convert, Paul said] “. . .some of the branches were broken off, and you . . . 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” (biological descendants of Abraham) were “cut off” “because of unbelief.” Paul here tells the Gentile convert that He has been grafted into the tree (the true 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 the faith.

SOME WILL DEPART

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

1 Timothy 5:15 “For 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. The relationship is lost. The text is clear - he will die in his iniquity, with his sin unforgiven.

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, if that the longer one is “away” the less likely he 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 for those who follow the command.

“Repent and do the first works...” (Rev. 2:5). 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). The implied message would be “If you do not overcome, you will NOT eat of the tree of life.”

To Smyrna, the message is given: “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev.

2:10). The additional statement is made: “HE WHO OVERCOMES shall not be hurt by the second death” (Rev. 2:11). The implication - that the one who is NOT faithful, and does NOT overcome, will NOT receive the crown of life, and will die the second death (eternal death).

NOTE: These messages were not given to unbelievers. They were given to the churches.

To Sardis, the message: “You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. 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).

If Christ does not confess the name of a sinner before His Father, that sinner will be lost. His name will be blotted from the Book of Life, and he will die the second death. (Rev. 20:15). No one will enter the New Jerusalem who’s name is not found written in the Book of Life (Rev. 21:27).

To Philadelphia, the message: “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 life (Rev. 1:18).

To Laodicea, the message is again given by Christ: “. . . 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?”

We must overcome our own selfishness through an ongoing trust relationship with HIM.

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 in “the Lamb’s book of life” when one enters into covenant relationship with God thru Christ. We receive forgiveness. The words “blot out his name,” and “take away his part” tell us that it is possible for us to loose this salvation and eternal life. Once saved - always saved is not taught here.

“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 after murder 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 person who is dying 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 "THERE." 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 experience continuing conscious torment for eternity. How can a finite human being trust an all powerful Being who could do such a thing? For the one who believes that God our Father will send His own lost children to unending conscious torment, a trust relationship is almost impossible, and without a trust relationship there can be no true victory. Salvation then becomes a forensic legal maneuver - rather than a transformation of the heart.

Other studies at this web site will explain that God will not send anyone to a place called "Hell," to be tortured for eternity. Please be assured - God does not believe in cruel or unusual punishment any more than you do.

See the studies titled: "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 repented were forgiven and restored.

David:

Psalm 51:11-12 "take not Thy Holy Spirit from me" ... "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation."

King Saul:

I Samuel 10:6,9 Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied. He was converted.

"God gave him another heart." Then Saul refused to obey the LORD's direct command.

I Samuel 31:1-6 Saul finally committed suicide rather than be captured by the enemy.

Judas:

He walked with Jesus for three years, and accepted him as the Messiah. Then he betrayed him.

Mary Magdalene:

Saved seven times. (Mark 16:9)

The parable of the Prodigal Son:

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

IT IS 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 “I die daily.”

THE PARABLE OF THE DEBTOR

Matthew 18:23-35

Sins are forgiven and covered when confessed and forsaken. 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, past and present will be open in the books of Heaven. He will meet the record of his entire life on judgment day.

This lesson is taught in the parable of the unmerciful servant, who after he had been forgiven his entire debt, (been saved) 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 become so rebellious, so drawn by the cheap attractions of sin, that I don't care about forgiveness.
- (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.
- (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. The problem is, Christ does not change. We change! The sin problem doesn't center in Christ' attitude towards the sinner, but in the sinner's attitude towards Christ.

God is forgiveness. He cannot be untrue to Himself. There was never a point in time when Divinity decided to forgive sinners. “For I am the Lord, I change not” (*Malachi 3:6*). God forgave man before he ever sinned. God forgave all man before mankind was created. But each individual human being must accept that forgiveness, and must enter into a trust relationship of obedience, before he can receive its healing power which ultimately give life eternal.

There is another deception into which many Christians fall. It is the sin of presumption. Many come to believe that God is so forgiving that He will continue to forgive them, no matter how long they continue to repeat their sin. As 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” (*Psalm 66:18*). Confession is not enough. Repentance is also necessary. To repent means “to turn around.” It means to stop doing what you were doing. Those who believe that confession is enough, never really plan to change. They never ask God for the power to change. They deny Christ entrance into their hearts and their lives.

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 healing. I am lost.

BY GRACE YOU ARE SAVED, THROUGH FAITH

If we lose faith, we lose salvation.

John 20:31 “. . . but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

Acts 16:31 “So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.’”

Mark 16:16 “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”

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!’”

Romans 11:20-21 “Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either.”

This is an example of those who believe, and stand by faith, who are told that they must not become proud - lest they fall into presumption and then are lost.

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 in a dispute. If they no longer speak to each other, if one avoids the other or worse - actually harms the other by causing pain to someone dear - would the one still be called “friend.” Like friendship - salvation is an ongoing relationship, not a one time stamp of approval. It is living.

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 Christ can help you, and in fact desires very much 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 inherited or cultivated tendency to sin. 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 choose whom you will believe. 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.

And remember, faith too is promised (*1Cor. 12:9*).

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 does exist. They know He is all powerful. They also know that they have lost the battle for this world. Christ will soon banish Satan to the pit. 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. He/she believes that God is love, that God is kind, patient, and merciful.

Second: In the child of God - belief leads to obedience. His/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 he/she believes in the goodness of God.

“NEVER REALLY SAVED”

Suppose I return to a life of sin after I have been baptized, after I have made a commitment to Christ. Many Christians would say this action on my part indicates that I was never “really” saved. They believe that if a person is saved he IS changed and will never return to his old life.

What does this mean to me, if I’m out there sinning again? If I become addicted to drugs and begin to steal - was I never really saved? What if I am envious of a coworker? What if I gossip frequently? At what point do I know that I was never “really” saved, so I’d better go back and do it right this time? If I commit “big” sins, then, for sure, I was never really saved. But what if I commit “little” sins?

I have entered a relationship with my Savior. I may slip and fall many times, but so long as I continue to pray, to ask for forgiveness desiring to become like Christ in character, I have not left that relationship. (Let’s face it, because of temperament or training, some folks find it easier to act like a Christian than others do.) If I were to die before I have reached full maturity, Christ’s righteousness would cover my imperfections, and I would be welcome in Heaven.

I have said that I consider myself to be in a saved condition - now, because I have entered into a saving relationship with Christ. I could comfortably say, “I am saved,” or even “I have been saved.” I do not, however, believe that I am irrevocably saved - not until I have completed my course (my life). I may revoke my salvation, if I choose to leave my relationship with Christ.

Just as marriages sometimes die through neglect, so my relationship with Christ could die if severely neglected. Suppose I just choose to pursue things other than spiritual growth . (I’m not openly rebellious towards God. I haven’t consciously turned away from Him.) The end result is the same. Doubts 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 ever return.

HOW CAN THE UNIVERSE BE SECURE?

How can the universe be secure for eternity if human beings, or angels for that matter, can choose at any time to rebel? That’s why the resolution of the sin problem has taken so long. 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.

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,” 5 times as “be,” 1 time as “belong to,” and 1 time as “have been” in the KJV. The word is present tense, and does not necessarily point to something which happened in the past. The verse could be paraphrased - “this is how you are saved - through faith.”

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 died because it did not put down a root (*Matthew 13, Mark 4, Luke 8*).

The word did have an effect. It sprouted and began to grow. The person represented by the thorny ground, received the word (seed) "with joy." Only later was it choked out by the thorns (the cares of life, persecution, temptation and trial).

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 means that a process, or an action has begun, which, if it continues, will end in a completed action or effect. Let me give a few examples.

Ephesians 1:13 ". . . in whom (Christ) also, 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 complete, or was accomplished in a moment.

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. And here I have to point out that the Greek for "made well" and the word for "saved" is the SAME word. This should help us understand what it truly means to be saved. It is to be healed.

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."

Here again, the word "saved" was written by Paul in the aorist tense, meaning Christ is "saving us." The process begun WILL result in a "saved" (perfect tense) condition, if it continues.

My point here, is simply to say that just because a word appears in an English translation with an "ed" at the end, does not mean that it signifies a completed action. We must consider the Greek tense.

PERFECTION: IS IT NECESSARY FOR SALVATION?

If you are covered by the perfect righteousness of Christ, then YOU are perfect in the eyes of God. If you are abiding in a trust relationship with Christ, then you are indeed in a saved condition. 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/she is not righteous in the eyes of God, through Christ. A newborn Christian is indeed covered by the blood of Christ, so long as he/she remains in that saving relationship.

A friend once pointed out to me that the New Covenant promise of Ezekiel 36 will NOT be fully realized until we reach the promised land.

Ezekiel 36:24-28 “For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. THEN I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.”

If you've been worried because you're not yet a “perfect” Christian, take heart. God will keep His promise.