

Once Saved, Always Saved?

GodsLawToday.com

Many (if not most) Protestants believe in the concept of “once saved, always saved.” Likewise, it’s not uncommon to hear them ask the question, “Are you saved?”...or “Have you *been* saved?”

In this article we will look at this concept of “once saved, always saved.” (For a fundamental understanding of what “salvation” *means*, see the article “*What Does it Mean ‘Not Under the Law’?*”)

It is important to understand that the Bible speaks of “salvation” as a **process**—a process of **three stages**. So, let’s now *consider* the “3 stages” of salvation.

(1) Christ Has **ALREADY** Saved Us (*Past Tense*)

Jesus Christ has already saved us from “the death-penalty” which *each* of us has earned for our *past* sins.

Two scriptures that speak of “salvation” in the *past tense*, are Romans 3:25 and Titus 3:5. Titus 3:5 says this: “...according to His mercy He **saved us**, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.” Yes, this is speaking of justification of *past* sins (see verse 7).

However... there are actually *two points* here which cause **confusion** among some. First of all, *many* church-goers wrongly believe that this is the **only** way that the Bible speaks of salvation... that a person “**has been** saved.” *Secondly*, when this scripture says that Christ “**saved us**,” people fail to understand that Christ’s sacrifice is **applied ONLY TO** those who have **both** accepted Jesus Christ **AND** who have truly **repented!** (See the sub-heading “Salvation is **CONDITIONAL**,” which begins on page 3 of the article “**PROOF that Christians Are Required to Keep God’s Law!**”)

“**True** repentance” involves an **unconditional surrender** to God. It means that from that point forward, you will strive to live how God’s Word **tells** you to live—**NOT** how **you think** you should live! (See the article “Repentance”—especially “Point 5” of that article.)

When an individual comes **TO that point** of unconditional surrender... and he comes to understand his **absolute NEED** of Jesus Christ, he then—**at baptism**—enters into **a covenant** with God... “the **NEW Covenant**”—whereby he then *receives* God’s Holy Spirit.

(2) We Are BEING Saved (*Present Tense*)

Some scriptures speak of salvation in the *present* tense... that is, we are **being** saved. So, what is the meaning here? Just *this*: As long as the Christian *continues* his life of repentance and faith in Christ, then he is “on the road toward” final and ultimate salvation. He is “on the road **toward**” everlasting life in the Kingdom of God.

The following are two scriptures which speak of Christians as “*being* saved”:

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are **being saved** it is the power of God. (I Cor. 1:18)

For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are **being saved** and among those who are perishing. (II Cor. 2:15)

(3) We SHALL BE Saved (*Future Tense*)

There are **many** scriptures which speak of a Christian’s *future* (and *ultimate*) salvation.

All of the following scriptures speak of salvation in the *future tense*:

(Matt. 24:13) But he [the Christian] who endures to the end **SHALL BE** saved.

(Matt. 10:22) And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end **WILL BE** saved.

(Rom. 5: 9-10) Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we **shall be saved** from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, **we shall be saved** by His life.

(John 6:27) Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man **will give you**, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.

(James 1:12) Blessed *is* the man who **endures** temptation; **for when he has been approved**, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

(Rev. 12: 10) [Speaking of a yet future end-time] Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “**Now salvation**, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ **have come**, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.”

(Acts 14: 22) strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, “**We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.**”

So... we see that there are *many more* scriptures which speak of salvation in the **future** tense, than in the past **or** present tense.

Falling Away

Let's understand! In order for an individual to be "**ultimately** saved," he must "endure **to the end**"— as plainly stated above in Matt. 24:13 and Matt.10:22. And, **UNTIL** the end—that is, **at any point during a Christian's life—it is possible for that person to FALL AWAY—that is, LOSE the Holy Spirit... and lose out on salvation!**

For *proof* of that, notice Hebrews chapter 6: "For *it is impossible* for those who were **once enlightened**, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, **if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance**, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame" (Heb. 6: 4-6).

In the passage above, we are plainly told that if a Christian falls away, it is "**impossible**" to renew him again to repentance! Plainly, such a person has *lost out* on salvation. His irrevocable destiny is then the Lake of Fire!

Notice now, some additional scriptures which *clearly show* that a Christian can "fall away"—and therefore show the *falsehood* of the concept "once saved, always saved."

For if we sin **willfully** after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there **no longer remains a sacrifice for sins**, but a certain fearful expectation of **judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries** (Heb.10: 26-27).

Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit **He takes away**; and every *branch* that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit... 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 (John 15: 2, 6).

how shall we **escape** if we **neglect so great a salvation**, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*, (Heb. 2:3).

For if, after they have **escaped** the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and **overcome**, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them (II Peter 2: 20-21).

But I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become **disqualified** (I Cor. 9:27).

Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall (I Cor. 10:12).

[Also see Matt. 25: 7-12, 23-30.]

One Final Clarification

There is *one sense* in which the statement “Once saved, always saved” is *true*. At the time of an individual’s death, if the person still has God’s Holy Spirit dwelling within him, then, **AT THAT POINT**, the individual **is saved—forevermore!** (Likewise, those individuals still alive at Christ’s return— if they have God’s Holy Spirit dwelling within them at the time of Christ’s return— then they will, at that point, be saved forevermore.)

However, it is absolutely vital to understand, that *at any point in a Christian’s life*, it is **possible** for him to fall away and **lose out** on salvation! And, *that* is what people who *use* the phrase “Once saved, always saved” don’t understand.

It is only the Christian who **endures to the END**, who will finally and **ultimately** be saved!

(For *more* on this subject, see the article on this website entitled “Falling Away.”)