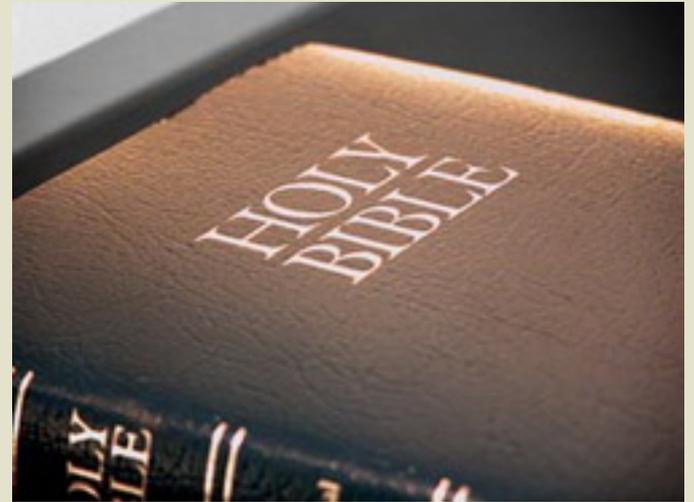


Eternal Security, Apostasy, and Falling from Grace

Is a Child of God "Once Saved, Always Saved," or Can He So Sin as to Be Lost?

One of the major points of Calvinism is "the eternal security of the believer" or the "perseverance of the saints." It is also called "impossibility of apostasy," or simply "once saved, always saved."



The doctrine teaches that it is impossible for a child of God to so sin as to fall from grace and be eternally lost. It is based on the belief that salvation is unconditional, so there is nothing a person can do to be saved; and once he is saved there is nothing he can do to be lost. What does the Bible teach about falling from grace?

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Introduction:

Many people believe that, when a person becomes a child of God, afterward it is impossible for him to so sin as to fall from grace and be eternally lost.

This doctrine is one of the five major points of Calvinism. It is often called "the eternal security of the believer," "perseverance of the saints," "impossibility of apostasy," or simply "once saved, always saved." Several major denominations officially believe the doctrine, though some do not emphasize it and as a result the members may not be aware of it.

The *Westminster Confession* adopted by most Presbyterian churches, states:

"They whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved ... Nevertheless they may, through the temptations of Satan ... fall into grievous sins..." (*Book of*

The *Philadelphia Confession*, adopted by many Baptist churches, is almost identical to the above.

Sam Morris, "Pastor" of the First Baptist Church, Stamford, Texas, expressed the doctrine in its most extreme form as follows:

"We take the position that a Christian's sins do not damn his soul! The way a Christian lives, what he says, his character, his conduct, or his attitude toward other people have nothing whatever to do with the salvation of his soul ... All the prayers a man may pray, all the Bibles he may read, all the churches he may belong to, all the services he may attend, all the sermons he may practice, all the debts he may pay, all the ordinances he may observe, all the laws he may keep, all the benevolent acts he may perform will not make his soul one whit safer; and all the sins he may commit from idolatry to murder will not make his soul in any more danger ... The way a man lives has nothing whatever to do with the salvation of his soul." (Morris, *A Discussion Which Involves a Subject Pertinent to All Men*, pp. 1,2; via *Handbook of Religious Quotations*, p. 24)

The purpose of this study is to examine what the Bible says about falling from grace.

It would be very comforting if this doctrine were true. However, if it is not true, then it would be a very dangerous doctrine because it would give people a false sense of security. People would not be on their guard against sin, and may not see any need to repent of sins, if they thought they would still be saved eternally despite their sins. If however they will be lost for sins they do not repent of, then such people are in grave danger. Surely it is important for us to know what the Bible teaches.

We can all agree that there is security *for those who serve God faithfully*. If we study God's word diligently and honestly, if we strive to overcome sin in our lives, and if we diligently repent and ask forgiveness for our sins, then we definitely have assurance and security regarding our eternal destiny. The question, however, is whether it is possible for a child of God to cease being faithful, to become disobedient, fail to repent, and so be lost.

Part 1: Evidence that a Child of God Can Sin and Be Lost

A. Passages Warning Christians about the Danger of Sin

The Bible teaches that there are conditions a person must meet in order to receive forgiveness and become a child of God. Likewise there are conditions one must meet to continue faithful after becoming a child of God. Many passages warn us to be careful to meet these conditions else we will not receive eternal life. In each case we will note first that the passage is

addressed to children of God. Then we will note that we are warned to avoid sin or we will be lost.

John 15:1-6 - We must bear fruit or be cast off.

Disciples are described as branches "in Christ" (v2,5, etc.) who have been cleansed by His word (v3).

But if they don't bear fruit and abide in Christ (v2,4-6), they will be taken away (v2), cast into the fire and burned (v6). (Abiding in Jesus and bearing fruit requires obedience - I John 3:6,24; John 15:10; Gal. 5:19ff; etc.)

Romans 8:12-17 - We must live according to the Spirit, not the flesh.

This is addressed to children of God (v16).

We are warned not to live according to the deeds of the flesh but be led by the Spirit. If we live according to the flesh, we will **die** (v13). This cannot be physical death since we all die physically regardless of how we live. This death is the opposite of the life we receive if we follow the Spirit.

To be heirs of Christ, we must be led of the Spirit (v14) and suffer with Christ (v17). It is conditional and depends on our life.

Galatians 6:7-9 - We must sow to the Spirit, not the flesh.

This is addressed to members of the church (1:2), sons of God by faith (3:26). [Cf. 4:6]

We will reap as we sow. If we sow to the spirit (i.e., if we produce the fruit of the Spirit - 5:22-25), we will reap eternal life (v8). If we sow to the flesh (do the works of the flesh - 5:19-21), we reap corruption (6:8), which is the opposite of eternal life. In this case, we cannot inherit the kingdom of God (5:21).

We reap eternal life **if** we don't grow weary in doing good (v9). Note: "**Be not deceived.**" Yet "once saved, always saved" is a doctrine that deceives many into thinking they will still reap eternal life even if they sow to the flesh.

1 Corinthians 9:27 & 10:12 - We must control our bodies and avoid sinning like Israel did.

9:25-27 - Paul, who was an apostle and therefore a child of God, was striving to gain the imperishable crown (v25). He had to discipline his body and bring it into subjection lest he himself be disqualified (NKJV; "a castaway" - KJV; "rejected" - ASV). (KJV elsewhere translates this word "reprobate" - 2 Cor. 13:5; Rom. 1:28; 2 Tim. 3:8; Tit. 1:16).

10:1-12 - Israel is an example showing us the importance of avoiding sin. The people to whom this warning applies ("we," "us") include the church, sanctified saints (1:2; cf. 1:9), and the apostle Paul.

This is an example and admonition to us (v6,11). We should not lust after evil (v6), commit

idolatry (v7), commit fornication (v8), etc. One who thinks he stands, must take heed lest he fall (v12). In context, this means he will not receive the crown Paul described (9:25-27). 6:9,10 show that people guilty of these sins won't receive the kingdom of God.

Note that a person who believes in "once saved, always saved" thinks he cannot fall. This passage is addressed to just such people and shows that they are the ones in the very greatest danger that they will fall!

Hebrews 3:6,11-14; 4:9,11 - We must avoid rebelling like Israel.

This is addressed to "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling" (v1).

Israel failed to enter God's rest because they lacked faith and obedience. We too must guard lest we have an evil heart of unbelief, departing from God (v12), and become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (v13).

To partake with Christ, we must hold fast our confidence (faith) firm to the end (3:6,14). If we do so depart, we will not enter the rest God has for us (4:9,11). Note that receiving the eternal reward is conditional on continued faithfulness.

Hebrews 10:26-31,39 - We must avoid willful sin.

This is speaking to those who know the truth (v26) and have been sanctified by the blood (v29). It is discussing the Lord's judgment on "His people" (v30).

We are warned not to sin willfully (v26). As long as we go on sinning willfully (NASB - v26), there is no sacrifice for sin. (This is not discussing what will happen if such people repent and change but what our condition is as long as this conduct continues.)

Such people are trodding underfoot God's Son (v29), doing despite to the Spirit of grace, counting the blood by which we were sanctified unholy (v29). Their only future is fierceness of fire (v27), sorer punishment than physical death under the law (v28f), vengeance from God (v30).

This is why we must not shrink back to perdition (v39).

2 Peter 1:8-11; 2:20-22 - We must grow in Christ instead of returning to the world.

1:8-11 - This is spoken to those who have obtained like precious faith (v1), escaped the corruption of the world (v4), and been purged from old sins (v9).

We must add to our lives the qualities listed (v5-7). If we do, we make our calling and election sure so we don't stumble (v10), but we receive the abundant entrance to the everlasting kingdom (v11). Note there is security for the believer, but it is conditional on growing and adding these qualities.

2:20-22 - This is still talking to people who have escaped the pollution of the world (v20), knowing the way of righteousness (v21). [cf. v1,15]

We are warned not to become entangled again in the world (v20), turning from the holy command (v21). If we do, we are worse off than we were before we knew the truth (v20). We are like a dog returning to vomit or a sow returning to mire (v22). [cf., v1,3]

But if "once saved, always saved," then this dog is much *better* off after returning to the vomit than he was before.

Romans 6:12-18 - We must not let sin reign in our bodies.

These were baptized into Christ (v3,4), set free from sin, and become servants of righteousness (v18).

They are warned not to let sin reign in their bodies nor present their members as instruments of sin (v12,13). The result of that would be death (v16). This must be spiritual again, since all die physically. The wages of sin, even for those here addressed, is death, in contrast to eternal life (v23).

Hebrews 6:4-8 - We must avoid falling away.

This is addressed to those once enlightened, who tasted the heavenly gift and the good word of God and were partakers of the Holy Spirit (v4,5).

We are warned not to fall away (v6). If they continue in this pattern of life (implied), they cannot be restored. They are crucifying Jesus afresh and putting Him to an open shame (v6). Their destiny is to be burned like a field of thorns (v8).

Revelation 3:5; Exodus 32:30-33 - We must avoid having our names removed from the Book of Life.

Those whose names are in the book of Life will enter the eternal city, but those not in it are cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 21:27; 20:12-15). But people whose names are in the book, may be removed because of sin (Ex. 32:30-33). Those guilty of sin CANNOT enter the city (Rev. 21:27). But those who overcome will not be blotted out of the book (Rev. 3:5). [Cf. Rev. 22:18,19]

Why would God continually warn of the danger of sin and being lost if it cannot happen? Do human parents warn their children to be careful how they flap their wings lest they fly too high and crash into the moon? God is not the author of confusion (I Cor. 14:33). Why waste time warning us about dangers that cannot happen anyway?

B. Bible Examples of Christians Who Sinned & Stood Condemned.

The Bible not only warns us to be on guard lest we fail to meet the conditions for remaining faithful, but it also mentions specific people who did fall. This is not just a theoretical possibility. It is a practical reality. In fact, it has happened to many people, and could happen to us if we are not diligent.

Genesis 3:1-6 - Adam and Eve

God said if they ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they would *surely* die (2:16,17).

3:4 - Satan said if Eve ate, she would *not* die. She ate and we know the result. This event is used in 2 Cor. 11:3 as an example to us of the danger of falling into sin.

Satan was the first one to teach the doctrine of "impossibility of apostasy." God stated the consequence of sin, but Satan denied that the consequence would follow. Today God has stated the consequences of sin, and Satan uses preachers to deny the consequences. The doctrine of "once saved, always saved" was originated and first preached by Satan himself.

The nation of Israel

The Old Testament contains countless examples in which God's people sinned and fell from God's favor, both individually and collectively. (Lev. 26; Deut. 28-30; I Sam. 12:10; chaps. 10-16; 28:15,16; I Chron. 28:9; 2 Chron. 15:2; 24:20; Isa. 1:28; Jer. 2:19,32 cf. Psa. 9:17; Jer. 3:6-14; 8:4-13; 9:12-16; Hos. 9:10; cf. Acts 7:37-43; Rev. 21:8)

The fact these are in the Old Testament does not diminish the lesson for us. The New Testament expressly warns us that the same principle applies to us - I Cor. 10:1-12; Heb. chap. 3,4. With regard to the possibility of God's people sinning and being lost, the Old and New Testaments teach the same.

Christians who lost their faith

Hebrews 3:12 warned of the danger of developing an evil heart of *unbelief* like Israel. Many New Testament examples show people to whom this very thing happened:

2 Timothy 2:16-18 - Hymenaeus & Philetus strayed and *overthrew the faith* of some. (Faith cannot be overthrown in those who do not first possess it.)

1 Timothy 1:18-20 - Timothy should hold the faith and not be like Hymenaeus and Alexander, who made *shipwreck* concerning the faith and committed blasphemy.

1 Timothy 5:8 - Anyone (including a child of God) who doesn't care for his family has *denied the faith* and is *worse than an unbeliever*.

What happens to people who lose their faith? Faith is essential to salvation. Those who lose it are no better off than those who never had it.

Hebrews 11:6 - Without faith it is impossible to please God (the application in the context of this book is to those who had faith but turn from it - 3:12; 10:30).

Revelation 21:8 - Unbelievers will be in the lake of fire.

Acts 8:12-24 - Simon the Sorcerer

Simon believed and was baptized (v13). This is what Jesus said one must do to be saved (Mark 16:16). This is what the other Samaritans did (v12). Simon did "ALSO" the same

things the others did. If they were saved, he was saved. If he was not saved, then none of the others were saved.

But Simon later sinned. His heart was not right (v21), he was guilty of wickedness (v22), and was in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity (v23). As a result, he would perish (v20) if he did not repent and pray (v22).

Galatians 5:1-4 - The Judaizers

These people were children of God (3:26; cf. 1:2-4; 4:6), who had been set free by Christ (5:1). They had to be in grace if they fell from it (5:4).

They sinned in that they desired to go back to the Old Testament yoke of bondage (5:1) and bound circumcision. As a result, Christ profited them nothing (v2), they were severed from Christ (v4), fallen from grace (v4). They were not obeying truth (v7).

These were children of God who were in God's grace but then fell from that grace so that Christ profited them nothing and they were severed from Christ. Can one receive eternal life if he is severed from Christ (Eph. 1:3-7) and fallen from the grace that saves (Eph. 2:8)?

"Once saved, always saved" is a tempting doctrine because it is comforting.

It tells people what they would like to hear. We would all like to think that, even if we or our loved ones fall into sin, they will still receive eternal life.

But it is a false doctrine because it clearly contradicts Scriptures in nearly every book of the Bible.

It is also a dangerous doctrine because it leads people to think they are safe even if they don't examine their lives, don't study the Bible, and don't repent of sin. Furthermore, it leads preachers to not warn sinners that they need to repent.

I have personally known people who told me of terrible sins they deliberately and knowingly committed, justifying themselves because they believed it would not affect their salvation. I have known teachers who justified those very people saying that they would not have lost their salvation even when committed those sins.

Suppose a child is about to cross a busy street. Shouldn't the parent warn the child to look carefully for traffic before they cross the street? People who advocate "once saved, always saved" are like a parent who not only does not warn the child, but worse yet tells him there is nothing to worry about because he can't get hit, and if he does get hit, he won't die!

Why should the child be warned? Because there is a very real danger. And the situation is most dangerous if the child is not on guard. The worst thing anyone can do to the child is to tell him there is no danger. Yet that is exactly what preachers do when they teach "once saved, always saved." And this has eternal consequences, because souls are at stake.

Nevertheless, if the child is careful, he can cross the street safely despite the danger. So the

best favor anyone can do for the child is to warn him of the danger, so he can avoid it. That is exactly what we do when we preach the Bible passages that warn Christians to avoid sin. It is not that we believe Christians have no security, but we know people are only secure when they are aware of the dangers, so they can be on guard.

Part 2: Evidence Offered to Show that a Child of God Cannot So Sin as to Be Lost

Folks are sometimes confused by passages that are used to defend "once saved, always saved." We need to understand the arguments and how to answer them. Some of these passages do offer hope and security to believers, but they are *conditional* passages, and these conditions are often overlooked. If we study the verses in light of what we have already learned we will see that, while they do give security to those who are faithful, they do not teach unconditional "once saved, always saved."

John 10:28,29 - "They shall never perish ... no one shall snatch them out of my hand"

This is a wonderful promise. But is it, as the preacher said, so unconditional that a person's soul cannot be lost no matter how he lives?

The context gives conditions - v27,28.

Note the word "*and*" repeated. Receiving life and never perishing are tied to *hearing Jesus and following him*. These are conditions, exactly like we have been teaching.

As the Good Shepherd, Jesus protects His sheep so no one can destroy them, *as long as* the sheep hear Jesus and follow Him. But what if they *cease* to hear and follow, as we have learned elsewhere they can do?

"Pluck" refers to an outside force.

"Pluck" (KJV) or "snatch" (NKJV, ASV) means "to seize, carry off by force" (Thayer), like the thief might do (v10,12). Neither Satan nor any outside force can steal you from the Lord, as long as you meet the conditions.

But we must "resist the devil," and then we have assurance he will flee from us (James 4:7). What happens if, through negligence or willful rebellion, we wander away from the protection of Jesus' fold?

Sheep can stray from the shepherd's protection.

Luke 15:3-7 - 100 sheep belonged to the shepherd (v4,6), but one became *lost*.

Acts 20:28-30 - Wolves may enter among the flock, speak perverse things, and *draw away* the disciples. They cannot compel us to follow them and be lost. We may still choose to follow the Lord's voice. But false teachers can *lure* us, attract us, and tempt us.

I Peter 5:8,9 - Satan is a roaring lion seeking to devour us. If we do not withstand him, he can capture and destroy us. But we can withstand him if we have *faith and vigilance*. This is what Jesus promised in John 10. (John 17; 6:37-40; I Pet. 2:25).

If sheep cannot possibly stray, even of their own free will, then this would deny our free moral power to choose. We could not become lost even if we wanted to!

1 John 3:9 - One begotten of God "does not sin ... he cannot sin"

We must take all the Bible says on any subject (Matt. 4:6,7; Acts 3:22,23).

We have already shown many passages showing that it is *possible* for a child of God to sin. Many more verses, even in 1 John and addressed to these same people, show this is true:

1 John 1:8,10 - If we say we don't sin, we lie and truth is not in us. This is exactly the condition of some folks who argue for "once saved, always saved"!

1 John 2:1,2 - John wrote so we would avoid sin. Jesus is our propitiation if we do sin. If sin is impossible, why write, and why would we need propitiation?

1 John 2:15-17 - Love not the world. If we do, we don't love the Father (cf. I Cor. 16:22). Why warn us, if it is impossible to be guilty?

1 John 5:21 - Guard yourself from idols. Why, if it is impossible to be guilty of sin?

2 Peter 2:14 - Some children of God (v1,15) "*cannot cease* from sin"! If 1 John 3:9 means children of God cannot possibly commit sin, then this passage means these children of God cannot possibly quit sinning!

Clearly 1 John 3:9 does not mean sin is impossible, else we have contradictions in the Bible. In fact, many people who believe "once saved, always saved," will admit sin is possible (see quotes in introduction).

"Does not sin" refers to persisting in the practice of sin (see NASB).

A true child of God may occasionally commit acts of sin, but he must repent, confess, and be forgiven by Jesus' blood (1:9; 2:2). He must not *continue* in the practice of sin. Why not?

"God's seed abides" in the child of God.

The seed that begets us, so we become children of God, is the word of God:

1 Peter 1:23-25 - We are begotten again by the incorruptible seed which is the Word of God.

James 1:18 - We are begotten by the word of truth.

1 John 2:14,24 - The word of God, which we heard, abides in us. [Luke 8:11ff; I Cor. 4:15; I John 1:10; 2:5,7]

How does the this *seed* abide in us? Can it *cease* abiding in us?

1 John 1:10 - If we say we do not sin, His word is *not in us*. We may still know what it says, but we have rejected it.

John 5:38 - If we do not believe Jesus, God's word does not abide in us.

Acts 2:41 - Those who gladly received the word were baptized. Receiving the word requires believing and obeying it. Otherwise we are *rejecting* it. (1 Thess. 2:13)

To have the word abiding in us means to have a receptive attitude toward it, believing and obeying it, applying it in our lives. If this is our attitude, 1 John 3:9 says we will not continue in the practice of sin. Of course not, because to do so would be to reject the word so it no longer abides in us!

Note Psalms 119:11 - Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You! This is exactly what 1 John 3:9 says.

But can we cease believing the word, studying it, and striving to live by it? We have shown that we can. If we do, the seed no longer abides in us, so we practice sin.

"He cannot sin"

Does this mean it is humanly impossible under any circumstances to transgress?

"Can" (Gk DUNAMAI) means: "to be able, have power, whether by virtue of one's own ability and resources, or of state of mind, or through favorable circumstances, or by permission of law and custom" (Thayer).

Examples elsewhere show it does not necessarily mean physical or human impossibility, but rather that law, state of mind, or circumstances do not allow it:

1 Corinthians 10:21 - You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons (it is not lawful).

Acts 4:20 - We cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard (law and state of mind do not permit it).

Mark 2:19 - Sons of the bridechamber cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them (circumstances make it such that no one would do it).

Hence 1 John 3:9 means that, when one has accepted God's word into his heart and so becomes a child of God, his attitude and the principles of the word will not allow him to continue practicing sin. God's word (the seed) has become the guiding principle of his heart, and it would be inconsistent with this to continue practicing sin.

For example, suppose an employer asks a Christian employee to tell a lie. The Christian replies, "I can't do a thing like that." Is it physically impossible? No, but it is completely contrary to his nature as a child of God. As long as his attitude toward God's word is right, he will not do it.

The Body Sins, but the Spirit Does Not

We are told that we may physically do things that violate God's word, but He does not hold our spirit accountable for what the body does.

Those who teach this doctrine are obligated to produce Scripture to prove it.

It is not enough to make the claim. They must give Scripture.

Is the spirit responsible for the good deeds of the body? If so, why not also for the bad deeds?

If they cite Rom. 7:25 & 8:1, note 7:23 and 8:6-17 which show the man is condemned for the sins of the body.

Many Scriptures show that God holds the spirit (inner man) accountable for the sins of the outer man.

1 Corinthians 6:9,10,13,15,18-20 - Fornicators will not inherit the kingdom of God. But this is a sin of the body. The body is a member of Christ, a temple of the Spirit, and belongs to God so it should be used for His glory (this shows the people addressed are children of God, bought with a price, etc.). [cf. 3:16,17]

Mark 7:20-23 - Evil (done by the body) proceeds from the *heart* and defiles a man. [Prov. 23:7; 4:23]

2 Corinthians 5:10 - We will be judged for deeds done in the *body*. Our spirits will be held accountable for what the body does.

Romans 6:12,16,23 - People who have been baptized into Christ (v3,4) and made free from sin (v18), must not let sin reign in their mortal bodies. If we do, we are servants of sin and must *die* (v16,23).

1 Corinthians 9:27 - Paul buffeted his *body* to bring it in subjection, let he be a castaway.

Romans 8:13 - We must put to death the deeds of the *body* in order to live. Otherwise, we will die.

[2 Cor. 7:1; Rom. 12:1,2; Gal. 5:19-24; Acts 8:20-22]

Passages that Say We Have Eternal Life

Numerous passages are cited which say we have eternal life: John 10:28; 17:3; 5:24; 3:36; 6:47; 3:16; I John 5:12,13. Some argue that, if we have it, and if it is eternal, then we cannot lose it. If we do, it wasn't eternal.

We have eternal life now only as a promise or hope.

1 John 2:25 - This is the *promise* He has promised us, even life eternal.

James 1:12 - The crown of life which the Lord *promised* to those who love Him.

Titus 1:2; 3:7 - The *hope* of eternal life, which God *promised*.

We receive eternal life, in the sense of a present possession, only after earthly life is over and then only if we endure faithfully till life is over.

Luke 18:30 - We receive eternal life "in the world to come."

Romans 2:5-7 - Eternal life will be given at the judgment IF we continue patiently in well doing. [This is the same time that the wicked will receive eternal punishment - Matt. 25:46. Does this happen in this life?]

Revelation 2:10 - Be *faithful until death* and receive the crown of life.

In this life, we "have" eternal life in the sense of a promise or a hope based on faith. But we actually enter eternal life at the judgment if and only if we continue living faithfully till life is over. This is a *conditional* promise. We will be lost if we fail to meet the conditions.

The proof texts, used to defend "present possession" of eternal life, themselves state conditions to be met.

John 5:24 - He who *hears and believes*. But we have shown that one can *cease* doing these.

John 6:47; 3:16,36 - He that *believes*. But one can cease believing.

1 John 5:13 - V11,12 speak of those who *believe* on the Son, and life is IN the Son. But we can cease believing and fail to abide in Him (John 15:1-8).

John 10:27,28 - *Hear* Jesus' voice and *follow* Him.

John 17:3 - *Know* God. But one can forget God, turn from Him, and cease to know Him (I John 2:3-6; Jer. 3:21,22; Psa. 9:17; 106:12,21,24).

Note also that saving faith requires obedience, and to cease to obey is to cease to have a saving faith - James 2:14-26; Heb. 10:39; chap. 11; Gal. 5:6; etc.

The fact life is "eternal" does not prove we cannot lose it. "Eternal" describes the nature of the life. It has nothing to do with whether it can or cannot be lost.

Example: Suppose someone offers me a watch guaranteed to work for 50 years, but I must do some task in order to receive it. It is still a "50-year watch" regardless of whether or not I do the job and receive it.

These passages discuss the reward believers will receive as a result of their current state. But they are not discussing what would happen if they change their state.

The passages are not intended to discuss everything about what can happen to a child of God. They are written to help us appreciate the blessings we have, or to encourage people to become children of God. But God does not put all His will in a single verse or passage. We are expected to study other Scripture. When we do, we learn that we ultimately receive the reward only if faithful. It is misusing these verses to teach from them something they do not

necessarily mean and which contradicts other passages.

Consider the consequences if we used this reasoning on passages that describe the *lost*. John 3:36 says *unbelievers shall not see life*. Shall we conclude this too cannot change (like people argue on the first part of the verse)? If a person is lost, does this prove he can never change and be saved? "Once lost, always lost"? [Cf. John 5:24; Heb. 6:4-8; 10:26ff]

If we can see how unsaved people can change their state and become saved, despite such verses as this, then in the same way we can understand how saved people can change their state and become lost.

This same approach works with most other arguments for "once saved always saved." Consistently applied to passages about lost people, the same arguments would prove "once lost, always lost."

Jesus' Blood Sacrifice Is Sufficient.

Some folks say that Jesus' death is all we need to be saved. If we argue that there are things we need to do to be saved, including living a faithful life, they say we are denying the power of Jesus' death.

We agree Jesus' blood has the power to cleanse all sin. But the question is whether it cleanses conditionally or unconditionally. We cannot earn salvation, but are there conditions we must meet to receive the forgiveness?

Jesus died for all people. If His death is all we need, and people need do nothing at all, then all would be saved.

1 Timothy 2:6 - Jesus gave His life a ransom for *all*.

Hebrews 2:9 - By the grace of God, Jesus tasted death for *all* men (the extent of this is shown in v15).

John 3:16 - God gave His Son for the *world* because of His love.

1 John 2:2 - Jesus is propitiation for the sins, not just of Christians, but for the whole *world*. [cf. I John 4:14]

Romans 5:18,19 - By Jesus' act of righteousness (His death - v8,9), justification came to *all men*.

If Jesus' death is "sufficient" and "all we need," then why aren't all men saved, since He died for all? But we know that not all will be saved (Matt. 7:13,14; etc.). So there must be something that distinguishes the saved from the unsaved. There are conditions we must meet.

God is no respecter of persons.

Romans 2:6-11 - God distinguishes the saved from the lost "without respect of persons" or partiality. If Jesus' death was all there was to it, then He must save everybody or else be a

respector of person. Instead, there is a distinction on the basis of *our conduct* - whether we work evil or continue in doing good.

Acts 10:34,35 - God is no respecter of persons, but those who fear Him and work righteousness are accepted. True, we cannot earn salvation. But there is a way God distinguishes between those who will be saved by His son's blood from those who will not - our faith and works.

When people claim that Jesus' death is all there is to it and people do not need to do anything to be saved, they unknowingly make God a respecter of persons.

If Jesus' blood saves by itself with no conditions to be met, then why is faith necessary?

In practice, everyone admits there are some conditions necessary to be saved by Jesus' blood. Most people admit we must believe. Many agree we must repent and confess Christ. (See John 3:16; 8:24; 2 Pet. 3:9; Rom. 10:9,10; 6:3,4; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Mark. 16:16; etc.) But these are simply conditions we must meet to receive the benefit of Jesus' death. To admit this is to admit Jesus' death alone, without conditions people must meet, will not save.

But if we agree there are conditions people must meet to be saved, then why object when we point out from the Scriptures that these necessary conditions include baptism and a faithful life? These no more deny the power of Jesus' death than do faith, repentance, etc.

If you can recognize faith, etc., as necessary to salvation without denying the importance of Jesus' death, then in the same way we believe baptism and a faithful life are also necessary without denying the importance of Jesus' death.

The Bible expressly shows that there are conditions children of God must meet to be cleansed by Jesus' blood.

1 John 1:7-9 - Children of God do sin (v8,10). To be cleansed by Jesus' blood, we must "walk in the light" and "confess our sins." To deny this is to deny the clear teaching of Scripture.

Acts 8:22 - A child of God (v12,13) who sinned was clearly told that, to be cleansed of his sin, he must repent and pray. It is Jesus' blood that forgives. But just as there are conditions we must meet to be cleansed and become a child of God, so there are conditions we must meet to be cleansed after we are children of God.

Please note that we have many articles about related subjects on our web site. These include articles about the importance of obedience, election and predestination, original sin and inherited depravity, salvation by faith only, etc. Please see the list of links below.

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