

# **Forever His!**

## **The Factual Finality of Salvation**

### **Introduction:**

Every genuine believer in Jesus Christ is eternally secure because salvation is a work of God, not a work of man.

### **I. The Plan of the Father**

(John 5:24; 6:37-40; 10:27-29; Rom 8:28-30, 38-39; Heb 6:13, 16-18; 1 Peter 1:3-5; 1 John 4:14)

A. His Eternal Plan

B. His Everlasting Love

### **II. The Work of the Son**

(2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:22-24; Rom 5:10; Heb 6:19-20; 7:25; 1 John 2:1-2; Jude 1:24)

A. His Work as the Sacrificial Lamb

B. His Work as the Sympathetic High Priest

### **III. The Seal of the Spirit**

(Titus 3:5; 1 Cor 12:13; Eph 1:13-14; 4:30; 1 Cor 6:19; Rom 8:9)

A. He is God's Presence With Us

B. He is God's Promise to Us

### **Conclusion:**

- **Problem Passages:**

- Galatians 5:1-4 and falling from Grace
- Hebrews 6:4-6 and falling away
- John 6:63-66 and the disciples who walked with Him no more
- John 15:1-6 and the burning branches
- Matthew 12:31-32 and the unpardonable sin
- 1 Corinthians 9:26-27 and Paul's fear of being a castaway
- Matthew 13:1-23 and the four soils
- 2 Peter 2:18-22 and better to have not known the way
- Colossians 1:21-23 and "if you continue"
- Philippians 2:12 and working out salvation with fear & trembling

- **Precious Promises:**

- Your salvation is the sovereign plan of the Father
- Your salvation is based on the finished work of the Son
- Your salvation is secure because of the guarantee of the Spirit

# **Forever His!**

## **The Personal Assurance of Salvation**

### **Introduction:**

How do I know if God has saved me?

### **I. The Promises of God** (Texts from Part 1)

### **II. A Profession of Faith**

(Ephesians 2:8-9; John 20:31; Acts 20:21)

### **III. The Proof of Conversion** (1 John)

- #1 Have you enjoyed a relationship with God and His people? (1:3-4)
- #2 Are you sensitive to sin? (1:5-10)
- #3 Do you obey God? (2:3-5)
- #4 Are you uncomfortable with the philosophy of the world? (2:15-17)
- #5 Do you look forward to the return of Jesus? (3:2-3)
- #6 Do you see a decreasing pattern of sin in your life? (3:4-10)
- #7 Do you love other believers? (3:14-15)
- #8 Have you experienced answered prayer? (3:22; 5:14-15)
- #9 Do you experience the ministry of the Holy Spirit? (4:13-14)
- #10 Can you discern between spiritual truth and error? (4:1-6)
- #11 Has your faith made others uncomfortable? (3:13)

### **Conclusion:**

Do you know whether or not God has saved you?

# The Problem Passages

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This handout is a brief overview of the passages which are often a hurdle for God's children as they begin to grow in their understanding of their eternal security in Christ.

## ***Introduction***

Finite man struggles with the limitless knowledge and perspective of an infinite God. God has communicated in a clear, specific way in His Word—The Bible. While the Bible is free of error, at times man wrestles with his understanding of it. A passage may be considered to be a problem not because of any inconsistency or inaccuracy, but because of the level of difficulty man has in properly studying and interpreting it.

As we look to the Bible for an understanding of our salvation and security in Christ, there are some passages which are difficult to interpret. This handout seeks to give a basic and brief overview of some of the legitimate issues raised regarding the doctrinal teaching that once a person is saved by Christ he cannot lose that salvation.

## ***1. Passages Dealing with "Problem People"***

### **Nominal Believers**

(Matt 7:21-23; 13:1-8, 18-23; Luke 11:24-26; John 6:60-66; Heb 6:1-8)

**Sincere, but not saved** In Matthew 7:21-23, the folks mentioned there have identified with Jesus' name because of what it represents. They may have even done good and great things on earth in His name, but their relationship to Him is located only in their head not their heart. They have not come to know Him through repentance and faith. They have **never** known Him and He has **never** known them.

**Hearing, but not receiving** In chapter 13 of Matthew only the good soil ever received the truth since only the good soil produced fruit. All other soils represent different stages of coming close to saving faith, but only

the fourth soil represents genuine conversion because of the truth being truly received. The first three are various stages of nominal acceptance.

**Reformed, but not regenerated** In Luke 11, Jesus describes a demon that leaves a man. The man cleans up his life. The demon decides to return and bring seven demonic friends with him. It is possible for people to make good and credible life changes and never really receive the life change offered by Christ.

**Curious, but not committed** Those described in John 6 as being Jesus' disciples were in fact simply those who followed in the crowds because they were interested in him and his ministry out of curiosity. As soon as He said something with which they disagreed, they abandoned Him. They were disciples in the sense that they were counted among those who were learners, but they had made no commitment to follow Him.

**Close, but never there.** Hebrews 6:1-8 speaks of those who have come so close to a relationship with God, but not truly turned to Christ for personal salvation. Five descriptions are given in verses 4-5 of these individuals. None of the five descriptions are used elsewhere in the Scriptures to describe the point or process of salvation. These folks are described as coming so close to receiving personally the reality of a relationship with Christ, but never doing so. They have heard, seen and maybe agreed to the truth, but they haven't personally taken the step of faith themselves. The term describing them as "falling away" in verse 6 is used only here in the New Testament. It carries the idea of finally and completely being set apart from something or someone. The passage says that it is **impossible** "to renew them again to repentance." This black and white statement is a problem for those who see the "falling away" as a Christian losing his or her salvation. For them the text would then also stress that if someone was saved and fell away they could never come back to Christ. Instead, the context and grammar used in the passage teaches us that it is impossible for those (no matter how close they came to saving faith) once they have been separated from God in eternity finally and forever to come to repentance. Some believe that God will somehow give those who were sincere in their worship, walk, and service for Christ but never personally accepted Him opportunity to repent after they step into eternity. This passage refutes that notion and does not deal with losing salvation since those described never had it.

## **False Teachers**

(Matt 7:15-23;24:11; 2 Cor 11:13-15; Gal 5:4; 1 Tim 4:1; 2 Peter 2:1-22; 3:16,17; 1 John 2:19; 2 John 1:7; Jude 4,10-16; Rev 22:18-19)

**Light, but no life** There are those who are committed to communicating from God's Word within a religious and even a "Christian" setting, but who are apostates. They handle the light of God's Word without genuine life from God. Some are very sincere and selfless and are duped by their own false doctrine. Some are schemers and shysters. Either way, their errant use of the Scriptures holds them and others hostage to the darkness.

**Huge faith, but wrong object** Many false teachers promote doctrines which deny essential concepts of the Gospel of Christ. Some replace the concepts with false ones. In the church of Galatia, Judaizers (those putting the principles of the law ahead of the concepts of grace), were promoting strict adherence to God's Old Testament codes and laws as a means of salvation. They who have fallen from grace in Galatians 5:4 have fallen from the principle of grace over the law, but not the person of grace Jesus Christ. Galatians emphasizes that those who hold to legalism as a means of justification are strangers in their relationship with Christ. Their "fall from grace" speaks of the very lack of genuine saving grace in their lives at any point. The use here is much like the use of "falling from grace" in Hebrews chapter 6.

## **Bible Characters**

**Esau:** The son of Isaac, grandson of Abraham, who foolishly surrendered his birthright to his brother for a pot of stew. Hebrews 12:16-17 gives no evidence that he was ever saved and it emphasizes that he was never able to regain his birthright.

**Balaam:** Old Testament prophet who was hired to curse God's people but couldn't (Num 22-24). Three New Testament passages clearly state he was never saved (2 Peter 2:15; Jude 1:11; Rev 2:14).

**Saul:** Some will argue that Saul--the first King of Israel--was a saved man. And yet there are many occasions in his life (see 1 Samuel) that would indicate that he was not. He is a poor example as a character to prove the theology of losing one's salvation.

**Judas:** Many will use the disciple who betrayed Jesus as an example of one who was once saved and then lost that salvation through his horrific act against Jesus. Interestingly his repentance after the betrayal

described in Matt 27:3-5 was one of emotional repentance not a repentance of life. Two different Greek words are used for repentance in the New Testament. One word for repentance has the idea of a simply emotional change and the other a life change. Jesus and the Apostles called folks not to emotional repentance, but to true, complete life-changing repentance. Judas does not repent according to the same verb that Jesus and the Apostles used to call others to repentance. His was merely emotional sorrow for what he had done in betraying Jesus. Other passages make it clear that not only did he not repent genuinely before he hanged himself, he never was saved (John 6:70-71; 12:4-6; Luke 22:22; John 13:27; Luke 22:3).

**Demas:** This co-laborer of the Apostle Paul was first described similarly to his other co-workers, but then Paul in 2 Timothy 4:10 says “Demas has forsaken me having loved this present world.” We have little to go on with this character. We do not know all the facts. Paul does not suggest that Demas has lost his salvation, but that he is distracted and of no value in ministry.

## ***2. Passages Dealing with “Conversion Requirements”***

### **Issues Regarding Content of Our Faith**

(Examples: John 8:51; John 6:28)

**An idea or a work:** Jesus Himself made it clear that it was not just a concept of believing in His teachings and commandments, nor was it simply “doing the works of God” that brings eternal life. In John 8:29, He told a crowd who had requested the ability to do the work of God that the content of faith was not conceptual, but personal: “this is the work of God that you believe on Him Whom the Father sent.” Believing in the ideals of Jesus or trying to do good works like Jesus is not enough to be saved. The content and object of saving faith is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus on our behalf (1 Cor 15:3-4).

### **Issues Regarding Continuing in Our Faith**

(1 Cor 15:1-2; Col 1:21-23)

**The condition “if”:** Passages with the “if” like these listed above have often shaken folks’ understanding of eternal life in Christ. These passages seem to imply to the English reader that we will be presented in Heaven as redeemed and forgiven only if we continue faithfully in our Christian walk here on earth. If we come to the point—it is then reasoned—that we do not continue, we will not be presented faultless

before Him in the future. Our getting to heaven is conditional upon our faithfulness. The key to understanding the little “if” in these cases is that the word “if” is in the first class condition in Greek and is followed by the indicative mood in the next verb. So, the emphasis is not one of uncertainty or doubt, but of certainty. “Since we will continue in the faith” is the true concept of these types of conditional phrases. Genuine faith continues and thus the security of salvation is not conditional.

### **Issues Regarding Confessing to Our Faith**

(Matt 10:32-33)

**Confession or rejection:** As Jesus is sending out the Apostles, he reminds them that if the hearers of the good news reject Jesus on earth He will reject them in Heaven someday. The issue is one of confessing Him on earth at the point of initial salvation.

## **3. Passages Dealing with “Christian Life”**

### **Losing Rewards from the Christian Life**

(1 Cor 3:11-15; 2 Cor 5:9-10; Gal 6:9; Col 3:24-25; 2 Tim 2:12; James 1:12; 2 John 1:18; Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21)

**Loss of reward, not eternal life** When we fail this side of eternity to live according to God’s principles and standards for His children, we lose rewards in eternity. Some confuse the loss of reward with the loss of eternal life. The above verses are dealing directly with rewards and their loss, not the loss of salvation.

### **Missing God’s Best for You**

(1 Cor 9:27; 10:5; Heb 3:11-19; 4:1-16 12:14-15)

**Loss of fulfillment, not salvation** The best example of all of these passages is 1 Cor 9:27. Paul says that he buffets his body and keeps it in subjection so that he may not become a “castaway” as he preaches to others. The issue is not one of salvation, but of service. He will be ineffective in ministry and thus be unfulfilled. He will be a castaway in preaching and serving, not in regard to his salvation.

### **Experiencing God’s Discipline**

(*General Discipline:* Rom 14:23; 1 Cor 11:29-32; 1 Tim 5:12; 1 Peter 4:17; Heb 12:5-11. *Sin Unto Death:* Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor 5:5; 11:30; 10:26; James 1:13-15; 5:19-20; 1 John 5:16)

**Paternal discipline, not eternal judgment** The Lord--like a good father--disciplines His children. He corrects with a nudge and sometimes a sting. We may even feel unworthy of being saved because

of something we do as His children, but He will not throw us out of the family. He will discipline and chastise us for error and to get us back on the path He has for us.

**Sin unto physical death, not spiritual death** The Apostle John makes it clear in 1 John 5:16 that there is a sin unto death. It cannot be committed by a non-believer. There is a point at which God's child can wander so far into sin and waywardness that it is better for God to remove him from the earthly scene and to take him to Heaven. This is a serious and sobering concept for anyone who knows Christ as Savior.

### **Missing Out on the Abundant Life**

(John 8:31; 15:1-6; Matt 5:13; Acts 13:43; 14:22; James 1:26; 2 Peter 1:9-11; 1 John 2:24 )

**Loss of fulfillment, not salvation** In John 10:10 Jesus said that He came so that we might experience eternal life tomorrow and that we might enjoy abundant life today. Passages like John 15:6 and Matt 5:13 speak of a lack of fruitfulness and of branches being removed by men (not by God). These fruitless or flavorless believers have not lost eternal life, but have lost the joy of the abundant life that comes as we abide in Christ and walk with Him. As we abide with Him we draw nourishment and flavor to impact those around us with the clear testimony of our fruit.

## ***4. Passages Dealing with "The Unpardonable Sin"***

(Matt 12:31-32)

**To whom did Jesus speak?** He spoke to the Pharisees who were wickedly plotting and planning against Jesus (Matt 12:24-25). No true believers in Christ were ever named as having committed this sin.

**What was the terrible sin?** They rejected and degraded Jesus as the Son of God and they ascribed works done by Him to Satan not the power of God. A genuine child of God will not do this.

**Can the unpardonable sin be committed today?** Yes, in the sense that all who go into eternity without having received Christ will have committed it in their rejection of Him.

## ***5. Passages Dealing with "The Book of Life"***

### **The Book of Physical Life**

(Exodus 32:30-32; Psalm 69:28)

**Life on earth:** There appears to be a Book of Life that deals with whether we are alive or dead on earth. This may be literal or symbolic.

### **The Book of Eternal Life**

(Dan 12:1; Luke 10:20; Phil 4:3; Rom 9:3; Rev 3:5;13:8;17:8;20:12,15;21:27;22:19)

**Life in eternity:** Clearly this book contains the names of those who have turned to Christ. This is the book of eternal life. One can be blotted out of the book of Physical Life but not out of the book of Eternal Life.

## ***6. Passages Dealing with “Local Churches”***

(Rev 2:4-5; 3:2-3; 3:15-16)

**Jesus addresses churches, not individuals.** Church history is lined with churches that have fallen to ruin and some have disappeared, but that does not say that individuals who were once saved are lost.

## ***7. Passages Dealing with “Israel and the Gentiles”***

### **Judgment of Israel**

(Matt 22:1-13; 24:13; 24:13,45-51;25:1-30)

**Parables of judgment:** Many misinterpret the parables of Matthew with individual believers and their relationship with God today. Parables such as the unfaithful servant (24:45-51), the 10 virgins (25:1-13), and the 8 talents (25:14-30) refer to coming judgment for the nation of Israel in the end times of human history.

### **Grafting of the Gentiles**

(Romans 11:13-24)

**Blessing of being grafted in:** The Gentiles have been grafted in to God’s plan of redemption which came through the nation of Israel. Israel as a nation had both fallen off and been cut out (as a nation not as individuals). The warning of verses 21-22 is to the Gentiles. God has now moved through Paul’s ministry initially to reach the Gentiles, but we need to understand the precious nature of God’s unique call to the Gentiles lest we be cut off from this specific call. It does not address any individual’s relationship with God, but all Gentiles as a group.

## 8. Passages Dealing with “The End Times”

(Example: Matt 25:13)

**Those who endure to the end:** Many use this to establish the idea that those who endure to the end of the Christian life and experience without faltering or failing will realize their salvation. But the point Jesus makes about enduring to the end is for those who are experiencing and living through the Great Tribulation in the future (Matt 25:3,6,14). It has to do with being saved from the judgments of this coming time period not of personal salvation in Christ.

## Conclusion

I cannot make a final judgment regarding any professing believer. Jesus did tell us that His genuine followers would be known for their fruit. The Book of First John describes those who are genuinely God’s children. There is a big difference between being a professor of Christ and a possessor of Christ.

Someone has said that when we arrive in Heaven, we will be surprised by those we see there and by those we don’t see there. We cannot measure whether someone is truly born again by our standards. To be born into God’s family is a spiritual and personal issue between God and me. We are told in John 10:27 and 2 Tim 2:19 that ultimately the Lord knows them that are His. That’s what really counts!!!

While I am not to make final judgment regarding the salvation of others, I am to carefully examine my own life and see if genuine conversion has taken place as a result of God’s saving grace. God does not force His grace. It is freely received like a gift (Rom 6:23) through repentance and faith.

## Resources

While many resources are available regarding this subject, the best resources I have found and which I consulted with the most (because they include specific sections regarding problem passages) are:

***The Doctrine of Salvation*** by H.L. Willmington. Liberty Home Bible Institute Guide. 1977  
***Salvation Is Forever*** by Robert Glenn Gromacki. Moody Press. 1973  
***Saved Without a Doubt*** by John MacArthur, Jr. Victor Books. 1992

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# **Forever His!**

## **Grasping His Grace**

### **Introduction:**

When you begin to grasp God's amazing grace, it will do more for you than save and keep you.

### **#1. It will free you to live righteously for Him**

(Jude 3-4; Rom 6:1-15)

- Be careful not to see grace as a license to sin
- Be careful not to see grace as an excuse for sinful behavior

### **#2. It will compel you to witness passionately to others**

(2 Cor 5:12-21)

- Be careful not to superimpose salvation on others to ease your own conscience
- Be careful not to superimpose assurance on others to ease their own struggles

### **#3. It will allow you to walk wholly in Him**

(Eph 2:8-10)

- Be careful to remember that **God saved you** by grace
- Be careful to remember that **God saved you** through faith
- Be careful to remember that **God saved you** for good works

### **Conclusion:**

Are you getting a grasp on His grace?