

# CHIEF

## MINISTRIES

March 2016

Within evangelical circles there are 3 main beliefs concerning the possibility of a child of God forfeiting his or her salvation, and countless thousands of pages have been written debating the question. How can we sort things out here in a few short pages?

Let's look at the 3 main evangelical views:

1. The teaching commonly known as "once saved, always saved" (OSAS) states that once you are truly saved, no matter how you live or what you do, even denying Jesus and turning your back on him, you cannot lose your salvation. Although you may shorten your life or lessen your future rewards, you will be eternally saved.
2. The teaching called "perseverance of the Saints" states that a true believer will not ultimately turn away from the Lord, and therefore if you claim to be born-again and die in sin, denying the Lord, you were never truly saved.
3. The final teaching doesn't have one specific name associated with it, but it states that a true believer can choose to apostatize, reject God's grace and forfeit salvation. Although we are secure in Jesus, if we ultimately reject him, we lose our secure standing.

Those holding to the 1<sup>st</sup> viewpoint refer to verses such as Romans 8:28-39 which state that nothing can separate us from God's love, or John 10:26-29 which state that Jesus' sheep have eternal life and no one can pluck them out of His hand. Those holding to the 2<sup>nd</sup> viewpoint emphasize those same verses but also point to verses such as 1 John 2:19, which states that *those who left the church were never really part of it*, or 1 John 3:6, which states that *those who continue to live in sin have never really known the Lord*. Those holding to the 3<sup>rd</sup> viewpoint look to verses such as Colossians 1:21-23, which state *that salvation is assured if we persevere in faith to the end*, or 2 Peter 2:20-22, which state *it would be better to never have known the Lord than to know Him and then turn away from Him*.

For the most part "hyper-grace" teachers (Joseph Prince, Clark Whitten, Steve McVey, Andrew Farley, Rob Rufus, Paul Ellis) emphatically hold to the doctrine "once saved always saved" (viewpoint #1) although some seem to hold to the doctrine "perseverance of the Saints" (viewpoint #2), making comments such as, "True Christians are one spirit with Christ and could never reject Him. It is simply impossible! .....Any Christian who can reject Christ, stop believing, or plunge into a life of rebellion against God without remorse, was simply never born again - regardless of testimony to the contrary. True Christians cannot deny Jesus, and true un-believers cannot remain with Him." (Whitten from his book "Pure Grace")

Of course, there is the irony when hyper-grace teachers hold to views like this, since it ultimately puts the emphasis back on the believers "performance." In other words, "If I claim to be a believer and I'm living right, then I'm saved, but if I claim to be a believer and have turned away from God, I guess I was never saved." This is the last thing intended, I'm sure, by these hyper-grace teachers - and yes, prison has its fill of these pseudo-teachers and theologians as well. But again, this is the logical conclusion to statements like the one just quoted.

How then do we sort things out? It's really very simple. God's promises are to believers - to those who want to follow the Lord and whose lives belong to him - not to the rebels who have chosen sin and rejected his

Lordship. Put another way, there is not a single promise anywhere in the Bible that God will bless us with eternal life if we ultimately reject him and choose rebellion, and we give people false assurance when we make that claim (In other words viewpoint #1 is not true).

Find one verse anywhere in the Bible - just one - that gives assurance of eternal life and blessing to an unrepentant rebel who is living in willful, persistent sin, denying the Lord in an ongoing, hardened way, just one verse!

And I know there will be those who grab 2 Timothy 2:13, “*If we are faithless, He remains faithful... For He cannot deny Himself*”. But what about verse 12? “*If we endure we will also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us.*” As Greek scholar William D Mounce explains in “Pastoral Epistles” Word Biblical Commentary: “Paul concluded with a magnificent hymn, which regardless of origins speaks directly to Timothy and his historical situation and includes a strong eschatological emphasis.

1. Conversion: those who have died with Christ in their conversion/baptism will live with Christ in their post conversion life (sanctification).
2. Perseverance: if during their lives as believers they continue to be faithful to God and persevere, then they will surely reign with Christ in heaven.
3. Apostasy: however, if some deny Christ, if through their lives they deny knowing Him by their word and deed, then before the judgment seat Christ will also deny knowing them.
4. Faithlessness: however, if a believer fails to persevere fully but yet stopped short of apostasy, God will remain true to His character, true to His promises and therefore will remain faithful to that person (immutability of God)”.

Similarly, J.N.D. Kelly states in “The Pastoral Epistles”, Blacks New Testament Commentary: “But what if we actually disown Him? The stern answer based on Christ’s own warning (Matthew 10:33) is that He will disown us. This reference is again to the last judgment, when the Lord will refuse to recognize those who have denied Him (2 Timothy 2:13). The hymn then envisages a further possibility - if we prove faithless. Some interpret this (Gk. apistoumen) as equivalent to ‘if we abandon faith in Him’, ie. apostasize. But this is to repeat the thought of the preceding sentence; it also ignores the fact that the verb is in the present (of continuous action?), Not in the future, like disown. Hence the paraphrase ‘if we fail to live up to our profession’, or ‘if we sin and prove unstable in trials and temptations’ seems to bring out the meaning better. The rejoinder which in strict logic we expect is ‘He too will be faithless, but the paradox of Divine love does not permit that. Triumphantly, the truth comes out: He remains faithful.”

The only reason I mention this here is because this is the closest anyone has come to answering the ‘find one verse’ challenge. But, of course, this verse too does not teach that no matter how you live or what you do you cannot forfeit your salvation. I also want to note that as it is possible for God to disown, it is impossible for Him to be faithless, no matter which side you find yourself on.

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16 ESV)*

*Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. (John 3:18 ESV)*

*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. (John 3:36 ESV)*

*Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. (John 5:24 ESV)*

*Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>v10</sup> For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. (Romans 10:9-10 ESV)*

In these verses we have a clear gospel message: Jesus Christ is the Savior and faith in Him is salvation. But these verses do not give any 'eternal security' for a Christian who chooses to turn away from faith and reject Jesus; for then he or she would no longer be a "believer". Furthermore, if a believer can fall away and become an unbeliever, we would expect to find numerous verses throughout Scripture warning Christians not to turn away from the faith. Well, as a matter of fact, the Bible is full of such warnings from every New Testament author! Such an amazing 'coincidence' would make sense if the 'doctrine of eternal security' is not entirely accurate.

Consider these warnings, all of which were written to believers in Jesus: *Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. <sup>v7</sup> Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." <sup>v8</sup> We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. <sup>v9</sup> We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, <sup>v10</sup> nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. <sup>v11</sup> Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. <sup>v12</sup> Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. (1 Corinthians 10:6-12 ESV)*

Christians (those who think they stand) are to take heed lest they fall into what? Lest they fall into lust, fornication, idolatry, etc. which result in condemnation and perdition, which is the opposite of salvation.

*He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. <sup>v7</sup> Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil. (1 Timothy 3:6-7 ESV) But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. (1 Timothy 6:9 ESV) Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. (Hebrews 4:11 ESV)*

Those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. *"envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."* (Galatians 5:21 ESV)

Paul said here that if we don't hold firmly to the gospel then we have believed in vain. *Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, <sup>v2</sup> and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:1-2 ESV)* He also said elsewhere that it was possible for believers to receive God's grace in vain. *Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. (2 Corinthians 6:1 ESV)*

We will be presented holy before the Lord only if we continue in the faith grounded and settled. *He has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, <sup>v23</sup> if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. (Colossians 1:22-23 ESV)*

*This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in according with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, <sup>v19</sup> holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, (1 Timothy 1:18-19 ESV).* How can a person shipwreck faith if they never got on the ship to wreck it? Paul just said that a believer can reject faith and a good conscience (which only truly saved ones have) and become an unbeliever. Unbelievers will face God's wrath (Luke 12:46) *"For without faith it is impossible to please God". (Hebrews 11:6)*

*For this reason it is needful for us more abundantly to take heed to the things having been heard that we should not slip away. (Hebrews 2:1 LITV) What might happen if we let these things slip? For if the word spoken by angels was confirmed, and every transgression and disobedience received a just repayment; <sup>v3</sup> how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? Which having received a beginning to be spoken through the Lord, was confirmed to us by the ones hearing, (Hebrews 2:2-3 LITV)*

*Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God: <sup>v13</sup> but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called To-day; lest anyone of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin: <sup>v14</sup> for we are become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end: (Hebrews 3:12-14 ASV). Notice that this was written to the “brethren” those who are part of the body of Christ. If one of the brethren departs from the living God through a hard heart of unbelief, he will not be a partaker of Christ. Our confidence (faith) in Christ must be held fast until the end. But Christ as a son, over his house; whose house are we, if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end. (Hebrews 3:6 ASV). Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest that no man fall after the same example of disobedience. (Hebrews 4:11 ASV).*

*For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, <sup>v5</sup> and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, <sup>v6</sup> and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. (Hebrews 6:4-6 ESV) These are not hypothetical verses. They provide a sobering warning to all believers. It is important to note that this passage specifically applies to those who have backslid away from the faith and are no longer able to repent. If you are living in disobedience but hate your sin and desire to repent, then these verses do not yet apply to you.*

*For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, <sup>v27</sup> but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. <sup>v28</sup> Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>v29</sup> How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?(Hebrews 10:26-29 ESV). This says that those who deliberately keep on sinning after receiving knowledge of the truth and after being sanctified by the blood of Jesus (forgiven believers) will have fearful expectation of fiery judgment because they have made themselves enemies of God.*

*Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. <sup>v36</sup> For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. <sup>v37</sup> For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; <sup>v38</sup> but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." (Hebrews 10:35-38 ESV). Once again, here is the definite possibility to draw back and become an unbeliever to face perdition.*

*See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. (Hebrews 12:25 ESV) My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, <sup>v20</sup> let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins. (James 5:19-20 ESV). The verse in Hebrews warns us to not turn away from God, for those who do will not escape punishment and James goes on to say that if a brother strays from the truth and another causes him to return to the faith, a soul has been saved from death. Does this sound like life to you, minus some rewards? Poppycock!*

*For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>v9</sup> For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. <sup>v10</sup> Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. <sup>v11</sup> For in this way*

*there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (II Peter 1:8-11 ESV).* What if we do “these things” mentioned in verses 3-7 (read them now)? Well, we might fall into unbelief and miss the entrance into Christ’s kingdom.

*You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. (II Peter 3:17 ESV).* What might happen if one of the beloved believers falls from steadfastness and is led away with the error of the wicked? Might he be judged along with the wicked?

*Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. (I John 2:24 ESV).* John said if Jesus’ words remain, abode, stay in us, only then do we continue in the Son and in the Father.

Remember that all of these verses were written to Christians (Acts 11:26 clarifies that a Christian is a disciple of Jesus). Notice the conditions for salvation. “If you keep in memory,” “if you continue in the faith,” and “if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.” These and many other similar warnings should cause Christians to reconsider the shaky doctrine called “eternal security.”

Without a doubt, there are many verses promising mercy and forgiveness to those who turned back (thank God!), and you’ll find many verses assuring us of God’s keeping power, but note clearly that the promises are given to Jesus’ sheep - to those who know His voice and follow Him (John 10:27) - rather than to those who reject His voice and walk away from Him. In short, viewpoint #2 or #3 could be right, but #1 cannot.

So, on a practical level it comes down to this: if you have put your trust in the Lord and desire to serve Him, He has given you absolute assurance that He will never leave or forsake you, that He will keep you safe to the end, and that no one and nothing can separate you from His love. Rest secure in Him! He is the author and the finisher of your faith!

But if you believe that since you were once saved, even if you reject Him and live in unrepentant sin you are still saved.....then you have deceived yourself and are in danger of falling under God’s judgment. (That’s why Jesus and Paul often warned us not to be deceived). If you walked away from the Lord, either you were never saved as you have forfeited your salvation, so turn back to Him now, knowing that He is quick to forgive, that He loves to show mercy, and that He can restore you to Himself with life, hope and purpose through Jesus. To repeat: The promise of eternal life is only to Jesus’ sheep, those who know His voice and follow Him.

But why would we ever want to walk away from Him? Everything we need is found in Him, and in Him alone is life – true abundant life – so drink deeply of His incredible love and be assured that He who began the good work in you will bring it to completion (Philippians 1:6). And if you find yourself playing games with sin and growing distant from the Lord, get sober, get serious, and turn back to the cross. The cleansing blood of Jesus will never lose its power!

I’m praying for you.....

## **Chief**

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