

## Once Saved--Always Saved?

Widespread in the country's largest denomination is a doctrine which is quite amazing---in view of the fact that it is so clearly in violation of numerous scriptures. This is the doctrine of "once saved---always saved". Sometimes referred to as "Security of the believer", this teaching insists that once a person has been saved *he can never be lost*...even if he abandons the Lord, commits the most terrible sins---or even becomes an atheist (imagine that---an atheist in heaven!).

The following discussion involves a number of scriptures which teach the *exact opposite* of this doctrine. They teach that not only is it *possible* for one of God's children to be lost eternally, but that in fact all Christians are to *be careful* (take heed) lest they be lost.

Before examining these scriptures it must be made clear what the issue is NOT. The question is not whether or not the Lord will ever abandon those who are his. Romans 8 beautifully assures us that this will never happen. The issue is not whether or not God will abandon or remove his love from us; the question is...what happens if *we* abandon him!

### 1. Hebrews 6:4-6

This passage refers to certain persons who had tasted all the blessings of being saved. We are told that "if they fall away" it would be *impossible* to restore them to repentance. For one to read this and insist that these people are still saved and on their way to heaven...is to defy all reason. The comparison in verses 7-8 is to thorns and thistles which will be cursed--*and burned*.

### 2. I Corinthians 10:1-2

These words are to Christians in the church in Corinth. Paul reminds them of the Israelites who saw the power and deliverance of God as he rescued them from the Egyptians. Despite being so blessed by God, these people engaged in gross immorality and idolatry---so much so that they were killed by God's destroying angel. Concerning this, Paul wrote: "These things happened to them as examples and were written down *as warnings for us*, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"

It is hard to imagine how one can read this passage and ignore the danger against which Paul warned. How can one argue that one may "fall" and still go to heaven?? Paul certainly did not hold this view!

### 3. II Peter 2:20-21

This passage refers to people who have been saved by escaping "the corruption of the world"---and then become "entangled" in it all over again. It is said that they are *worse off* than before they started. Then Peter writes that it is better *not to have known* the way of righteousness than to have known it and then turn one's back on the Lord's way.

Now consider this question: what will be the fate of those who have never accepted the Lord? Do they have any assurance of salvation? Peter says these people are better off than those who were once saved and turned their backs on the Lord! How can one possibly read this and contend that the one who abandons the Lord is *still* assured of heaven?? This is too plain to misunderstand!

#### **4. I Corinthians 9:27**

Even the Apostle Paul, righteous as he was, understood the necessity of remaining faithful to God. He said that he “beat” his body to make sure that after he had preached to others he did not lose his reward ( or “be disqualified for the prize” or become a “castaway” as per NIV and KJV). Would he have had such a concern if he believed the “once saved---always saved” doctrine? Of course not!

#### **5. Hebrews 3:1-4:11**

No passage is so devastating to the OS-AS as these verses. To make the point absolutely clear, the writer used a familiar illustration of the Hebrews who left the bondage of Egypt to go to the promised rest in Canaan. They were God’s people. But they never reached the promised land. Why? Because of unbelief.

The writer compares the “rest” in Canaan to the eternal rest (heaven) promised to Christians. He warns (4:1)...“Let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it”.

In 4:11 he writes further, “Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one fall by following their example of disobedience”. In 3:14 he had written that we share in Christ if we hold firmly to the end.

Question: would the once saved---always saved people ever issue such a warning? Of course not! It violates what they teach!

#### **The Dangers**

Some false teachings are more dangerous than others. This particular doctrine is especially dangerous for two major reasons:

1. It tends to lull one into a false sense of security. If one believes he cannot be lost, regardless of what he does (or does not do) he is much more likely to become careless in his relationship with God and with the church. He is much more likely to ignore the warnings of the Hebrew writer....to his eternal detriment!

2. Christians are strongly urged to warn and strengthen each other. If one sees a brother in sin he is to go to him and try to persuade him to return to the Lord. But...if one feels that the backsliding brother is in no danger (since heaven is assured) why would he feel any

**urgency to warn him? AND if the backsliding brother feels he is heaven-bound anyway...why would he pay any attention?**

### **The Big Problem**

**As with so many false doctrines, the problem is not that the scriptures are not clear. The problem is that people have been taught a certain thing for so long that their minds are closed---shut tight. They “have eyes and will not see” and “have ears but will not hear”. Woe to the person whose heart is not open to new truth---and not humble enough to accept it!**

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