Once Saved - Always Saved?

Scripture makes it clear that we are all sinners (1John 1:8) and that we are saved by grace, not by our own works (Eph 2:8-9). We cannot “earn” salvation; it is a free gift from God. Jesus said that we need to be born again in order to see the kingdom of God (John 3:3). We become born again (saved) by confessing with our mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believing in our heart that God raised Him from the dead (Rom 10:9) and whoever believes and is baptized will be saved (Mark 16:16).

So, based on these scriptures we know that to be saved we need to do the following:

1. Acknowledge in our heart that Jesus is Lord.
2. Confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord.
3. Believe that Jesus died for our sins and was raised from the grave.
4. Repent of our sins and be baptized\* in the name of Jesus.

(\* whether you need to be baptized to be saved is the subject of another conversation)

All that you need to do to get started is to pray a simple prayer, like the one below, and sincerely mean it:

“God, I know that I am a sinner and I ask for Your forgiveness today. I believe that Jesus died for me and rose again. Lord wash me clean from sin, shame and guilt. Come into my heart and be my Lord and Savior. Guide me from this day forth, in Jesus’ name I pray.”

You should then be baptized in the name of Jesus. This is how we all begin our walk with the Lord Jesus and are “Born Again in Christ. **But then what?** Is there anything else we need to do to keep this salvation? Can we “undo” or Lose our salvation?

There are two extreme views about salvation that people have fought over for centuries and even started the Reformation. It created the split between the Protestant churches and Catholic Church.

1. One extreme is “Repent or burn in hell” believing no one can be certain they have been or will be saved. With this view you may live your life every day for the Lord but if you walk away or continue to sin you will burn in hell over it. (Arminian view)

[Hebrews 6:4-6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+6%3A4-6&version=ESV)  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, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, 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 10:26-27 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

1. The other extreme believes that once you have except Christ then you are eternally saved, and there is nothing they can do to ever change that. They believe you are “sealed” and no matter what you do, the Lord is powerless to break the previous contract. Some may treat this as a license to sin as much as they want, after they have prayed the sinner’s prayer. (Calvinists View)

John 10:27-30 “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

[John 5:24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%205.24) “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”

John Wesley and Charles Finney were great men of God who took the Arminian position. John Calvin and Charles Spurgeon were great men of God who took the Calvinist position. It is not stupid, immoral or faithless to take either position.

I believe the bible teaches us that the truth is somewhere between these two points. I know that God loves the world and wishes that no one would perish (John 3:16), though it is clear that many will (Matt 7:13).

The real difference between these two views is whether you can be saved and then kill, steal, lie and commit adultery or just do nothing and still go to heaven. I do not know who will make it to heaven. That is for God to decide and not me. No man has seen the Book of Life. I do believe that it is clear that we are to imitate Jesus and our behavior should reflect Jesus as best we can manage. A tree is known by the fruit that it bears, whether good, or bad (Matt 12:33). When you accept Christ, there will be a change in your life.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

**First, we have to look at what the Bible tell us!**

**Jesus Teachings**

First and foremost, Jesus said “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand” John 10:27-30

This sounds like you can never lose your salvation

Matthew 7:17-20 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. **A good tree cannot bear bad fruit**, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and **thrown into the fire**. Therefore, by their fruits you will know them.

Looking at these words from Jesus we get the feeling that it should be obvious who the good people are and who the bad people are and the bad people are thrown into the fire. Sounds about right. But then we continue reading in Matthew

Matthew 7:21-24 Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will tell me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in your name, in your name cast out demons, and in your name do many mighty works?’ Then I will tell them, ‘I never knew you. Depart from me, you who work iniquity.’ “Everyone therefore who hears these words of mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man, who built his house on a rock.”

In this verse Jesus talks about people calling Him “Lord”, prophesying and casting out demons but then being cast into outer darkness. Were they saved? It sounds like they were bearing good fruit when they were casting out Demons and doing Mighty works?

Matthew 10:22 “All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”

This sounds like you have to carry your faith through to the end to be saved

John 15:5–6 “I am the vine. You are the branches. He who remains in me, and I in him, the same bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. **If a man doesn’t remain in me, he is thrown out as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, throw them into the fire,** and they are burned.

### John 15:10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love.

From these last two versus we see there is an ongoing action required to “Remain in” Christ. Remaining in the Father’s love was not, for Jesus, a passive thing it involved an ongoing obedience to His commands. Jesus says the same is true for His followers: We are to remain in Him by keeping his commands. If we don’t remain in Him we can be “thrown out” and “burned”

**Jesus Parables**

**The parable of the prodigal son** (Luke 15:11): Jesus told a parable about a son who lived with his father, but then left with his inheritance and spent it on prostitutes and reckless living. He came to his senses, returned to his father and repented. His father was glad to have him back and when the older brother complained, the father said: Your brother who was dead is alive **again**; he was lost but is now found (Luke 15:24). While the son was away spending his money on prostitutes, the father considered him dead and lost, not alive and saved, though he was always welcome to return. Can we determine if the son was saved before he left: The Bible tells us we are considered sons of God when we are led by the spirit (Romans 8:14) and the word “Again” suggest that he was alive then dead in his sin then alive again. (If this is the meaning of the parable – some suggest this is about isreal)

**The parable of the ten virgins** (Matt 25:1): Jesus told a parable about ten virgins waiting on the bridegroom to arrive, just as we are waiting on Jesus to arrive. Five virgins prepared themselves and were ready to meet Him. The other five were unprepared and caught off guard. The five who were ready went into the marriage feast, the five who were not were locked out. They knocked on the door and said “Lord, Lord, open to us!“, but He answered and said “I do not know you.” (Matt 25:11). All ten virgins knew the bridegroom, called him “Lord, Lord”, and were waiting on His coming. The half that prepared themselves went in, the rest were locked out. so, what was the difference between the two groups other than one prepared for his return and the other did not?

Jesus also taught about being ready for when he returns this could lead someone to believe there is some continued action we need to take to prepare.

**The parable of the talents** (Matt 25:14): Jesus told a parable about a man going on a journey that gave his servants talents to invest while he was away. To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to the last man one, according to their ability. A talent was a large sum of money, equal to about 6,000 days pay for a laborer. It is interesting that the English word for “talent” (natural aptitude) comes from this parable, though here it is speaking of money. When the man returned, he rewarded the ones that had been actively investing and increasing what they had been given, but the worthless servant was cast into outer darkness because he had done nothing with his talent. Being a Christian is more than just “not doing anything wrong.” It requires active, responsible, faithful service. Remember all three men were called servants of the master!

**The lukewarm Laodicean church** (Revelation 3:14–21): Jesus spoke to John about the Laodicean church that had become lukewarm. This church felt they were rich and needed nothing, but were poor, blind and naked. There was more hope for open antagonists than the indifferent. Jesus said that He would vomit the lukewarm out of His mouth, but those that overcome would sit down with Him on His throne. Whether you will burn in hell or not, I don’t know, but being vomited out of His mouth or cast into outer darkness does not sound good to me. I am not sure what being vomited out entails, but it does not sound pleasant. I would suggest leaning more toward the “on fire” for Christ.

**Teachings from Jesus disciples**

**Paul’s Teaching**

We can find support for eternal security in Paul’s teachings. for example

Ephesians 1:13-14 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession–to the praise of his glory.

Romans 8:30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

But we need to be clear that Paul was not saying you could be saved and continue in your sinful life and get away with it. Paul came from the strictest sect of Pharisees and believed in obedience at all cost. He was not teaching that once you are saved you can go on sinning and do the least possible in your faith. Paul was not a slacker and you would never call Paul “lukewarm.” In his own words:

2 Corinthians 11:22-27 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham’s descendants? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.

Peter warned us that Paul wrote some things that were difficult to understand and that people would twist them (2Peter 3:16). Even Paul disciplined his body and kept it under control, “lest after preaching to others that he himself be **disqualified for the prize**.” (1 Cor 9:27)

Peter said that we should be holy and not follow our former lusts:

1 Peter 1:13–16 “Therefore, prepare your minds for action, be sober and set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ— as children of obedience, not conforming yourselves according to your former lusts as in your ignorance, but just as he who called you is holy, you yourselves also be holy in all of your behavior; because it is written, “You shall be holy; for I am holy.”

But Peter also said our inheritance can never perish

Peter 1:3-5 “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade–kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Peter also warns against turning back to your sin after following Christ

2 Peter 2:20–21 “For if, after they have escaped the defilement of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the last state has become worse with them than the first. **For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them**.

How can the last state be worse than the first if you now have salvation that can never perish?

James said that faith without works is dead: “For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead.”(James 2:26). Dead is not alive so how can you have eternal life if your faith is dead?

[James 5:19-20](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James+5%3A19-20&version=ESV) My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, 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.

Here we see someone who had the truth but walked away and needed someone to bring him back to saves his soul. So did they lose their salvation?

Paul did write in the following versus that someone can “fall away” from the Faith but does that mean losing salvation?

1 Corinthians 10:12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!

1 Timothy 4:1 But the Spirit says expressly that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons”

In later days some will depart from the faith and fall away? Being that you cannot depart from a building that you have not entered at all, this seems to suggest that these people were once a part of the Christian faith. So it may be possible to be a part of the faith, and then to fall away from it. No one can snatch you from the Father's hand, but can you walk away from it on your own accord if you choose. You have free will or you would be a mindless robot. The prodigal son was free to leave his father's house and was considered dead and lost until he returned:

Luke 15:24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.

**Looking back to the Old Testament**

We can look back to the old testament for some help in understanding the role sacrifices played in providing atonement for sin knowing that Jesus death and resurrection took the place of this old system.

The first step was to recognize and admit that they had sinned. Then they had to present the sacrifice before the Lord and believe that it was accepted as atonement for their sin. (*Leviticus 1:3-9)* but we also find that there was no sacrifice or offering for a deliberate or defiant sin and therefore they were under Gods judgement and their guilt remained on them (Numbers 15:27-31). There was a common belief that the remorseful confession and repentance by a sinner would reduce an intentional sin to an unintentional sin that could be covered by a sacrifice. But the bottom line was a broken and repentant attitude for the sin committed.

Psalm 51:16-17 For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

With this in mind we might conclude that if a person, who accepted Christ and was saved, were to refuses to acknowledge and repent for a sin and therefore reject Christ death and resurrection as attornment he might then be rejecting Christ and subject to God’s Judgment.

Ezekiel 18:24 “But if a righteous person turns from their righteousness and commits sin and does the same detestable things the wicked person does, will they live? None of the righteous things that person has done will be remembered. Because of the unfaithfulness they are guilty of and because of the sins they have committed, they will die.

**In Summary**

I am not promoting legalism. You cannot be saved by keeping a set of rules and you cannot be saved by your good deeds. You are saved by grace through Faith ([Ephesians 2:8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+2:8&version=NIV) ) and it is a free gift, not earned. Faith in Jesus plus nothing. There is, however, no true faith that is not followed by obedience. If we really believe in Jesus then we will act accordingly. If we love Him, then we will keep His commandments. There will be fruit in our lives, and trees are known by their fruit to be good or bad.

There is more to being a Christian than merely saying the sinner’s prayer once and then never giving God another thought. To me, this is an ongoing relationship much like a marriage. Whether you can lose your salvation or not, I honestly don’t know. I do feel that it would be foolish to walk on the fringe and try and prove that you cannot by doing the least that you possibly can.

The lukewarm Christian that Jesus said he will vomit out of His mouth were part of the church, called themselves Christians, and felt they were in need of nothing (Rev 3:16). In my opinion, we should not even have to discuss things like this because the goal is not to do the very least possible in order to be saved. Or is it? We should be pressing in, praying, learning, serving and drawing closer to God every day of our lives just as Jesus did.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” (Matthew 16:24 WEB).

**To address the “once saved always saved” argument:**

John 10:28-30, Jesus says: “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

how can we call something “eternal” if it can be lost?  And if we can lose our salvation through our actions then there must be some actions, we can take to keep it. But this would mean our salvation is based on our actions in which case it no longer purely based on God’s Grace. Can someone that was Born again be unborn again and then if he repents be Born again again?

If we take what Christ says in Matthew 7:17-20 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore, by their fruits you will know them.

And if we then apply 1 Corinthians 3:13-14 it might make some since

1 Corinthians 3:13-14 their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

Maybe the truth is that no one can take your salvation from you but you can willingly walk away from it (Protocol son), refuse it or maybe you never had it in the first place. I think either way it is clear that there are eternal consequences to our actions and the way we live our lives. Should we test God, on not being able to lose our salvation, but then lose all the rewards that come with it.

Maybe, if you are not worried about losing your salvation you should be worried and if you are worried then your heart is in the right place: trying to please God.

I worry about Hurricanes so when I hear one is coming, I track it and prepare for it. But when there are no hurricanes. I forget all about them and go on with life.

Philippians 2:12: “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling**.”

**Bottom line: If you truly know God and accept Jesus Christ as your savior you are saved and will act like it and there should be a visible change in your life to reflect it.**

* **You can’t meet Jesus without him changing your life**

1 John 5:18 “We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him.”

**Other supporting versus**

Psalm 37:23-28 “If the Lord delights in a man's way, he makes his steps firm; though he stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand… For the Lord loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones. They will be protected forever, but the offspring of the wicked will be cut off…”

John 6:37-40 “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

Romans 8:1 “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus…”

Romans 11:29 “…for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable.”

Philippians 1:6 “…being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

**Debate Guide for Once Saved**

1. Arminian view: believing no one can be certain they have been or will be saved.

[Hebrews 6:4-6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+6%3A4-6&version=ESV)

John 15:5–6.

Matthew 10:22

2 Peter 2:20–21

James 2:26

[James 5:19-20](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James+5%3A19-20&version=ESV)

1 Corinthians 10:12

1 Timothy 4:1

1. Calvinists View: Once you have excepted Christ you are eternally saved, and there is nothing you can do to ever change that.

John 10:27-30

[John 5:24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%205.24)

2 Corinthians 5:17

Ephesians 1:13-14

Peter 1:3-5

John 6:37-40

Philippians 1:6