

## Security of the Believer: Once Saved Always Saved? by Rich Deem

### Introduction

There seems to be a growing trend among Christians to deny that Christians can be sure whether they are saved - or will remain so - until they die. Is it true, "once saved always saved" or can we lose our salvation through disobedience or unbelief? Theologically, this doctrine has been referred to as the perseverance of the saints or security of the believer.

### Salvation

Before we can examine whether a believer can be secure in his salvation, we need to understand how we are saved according to the Bible. In many religions it is believed that a person goes to heaven if one's good deeds outweigh one's bad deeds. However, the Bible says that sins (bad deeds) keep a person out of heaven,<sup>1</sup> regardless of good deeds, since God is completely without sin and cannot have fellowship with a sinner.<sup>2</sup> When Jesus first taught this concept, the disciples were astonished and asked "Who then can be saved?"<sup>3</sup> Jesus' response was "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:26) So, the Bible says that salvation is a work of God,<sup>4</sup> based upon belief in Jesus Christ.<sup>5</sup> Although the concept of belief seems simple and straightforward, it involves more than just an acknowledgement that Jesus existed in history, since even the demons "believe":

### Always Saved?

I put up this page in response to the overwhelming number of pages refuting the idea of eternal security on the web. If you are an eternal security skeptic, please read the entire page before emailing me. Thank you!

### Rich Deem

You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder. (James 2:19)

The difference between a true believer and a demon is that although the demon mentally understands the concept, he rejects the lordship of Jesus Christ. Likewise, a "Christian" who responded to an altar call in 1982, but isn't following Jesus isn't really a believer. The New Testament qualifies the definition of a believer as being one who has faith in Jesus Christ.<sup>6</sup> Faith is more than merely having some knowledge about the facts surrounding the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself said that those who truly believed in Him would "take up his cross" and follow Him.<sup>7</sup> The Bible calls into question the "belief" of anyone who is not following Jesus as Lord. Another sign of a true believer is that the believer does not practice sin (live in a state of continual sin),<sup>8</sup> although we are not completely without sin.<sup>9</sup>

At least part of the controversy about the security of the believer has to do with the definition of a true believer. Many critics of "once saved always saved" object to what they call "easy beliefism." Much of the emphasis in Christian evangelism is on the "altar call" or "revival meeting." Although some people can be saved through such activities, many are caught up in the emotion of the moment and do not really believe. Then they wonder why their lives have not changed. It is clear from the Bible that the true believer is transformed through the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>10</sup>

## Why the believer has assurance of salvation

Once we have defined who a true believer is we can show why such an individual can be assured of their salvation. The Bible says quite clearly that we can know that we have eternal life:

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:13)

Although this is the strongest verse telling us that we can know that we have eternal life, it is not the only biblical evidence. The Bible also says we can know that

we are children of God<sup>11</sup>

we are in Christ<sup>12</sup>

the Holy Spirit lives in us<sup>13</sup>

we have passed from death to life<sup>14</sup>

we will be raised with Jesus<sup>15</sup>

we will go to heaven<sup>16</sup>

we will receive a glorious inheritance<sup>17</sup>

we will be rewarded by Jesus<sup>18</sup>

If it is true that we cannot know for sure if we are saved, how can we know all these other things, which are dependent upon salvation?

Called, chosen, predestined, sealed, heirs

The Bible makes numerous claims that believers have been chosen and called by God and predestined to be His heirs. I am listing all these verses in the text below (rather than in the references section) so that you get an appreciation of how prevalent these teachings are. In other words, these are not "one verse" ideas.

### Children of God

First, the Bible indicates that believers are children of God:

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. (Romans 8:16)

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, (Galatians 3:26)

Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir. (Galatians 4:6-7)

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. (Hebrews 2:9-10)

And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." (Hebrews 12:5-6)

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. (1 John 3:1)

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:2)

This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother. (1 John 3:10)

We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. (1 John 5:19)

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- (John 1:12)

To the eternal security skeptic: Please cite one verse in the Bible where God disowns one of His children.

Predestined for salvation

The Bible also indicates that believers have been predestined, even before the creation of the world:

Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father." (Matthew 20:23)

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. (Matthew 25:34)

but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared." (Mark 10:40)

In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. (John 14:2-3)

For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. (John 17:2-3)

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. (Romans 8:29-30)

What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory-- (Romans 9:23)

but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; (1 Corinthians 2:7)

However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"-- (1 Corinthians 2:9)

he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- (Ephesians 1:5)

also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, (Ephesians 1:11)

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up (Ephesians 4:11-12)

Instead, they were longing for a better country--a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. (Hebrews 11:16)

To the eternal security skeptic: Please cite one verse in the Bible where God unpredestines a believer.

## Heirs of God

In addition, the Bible indicates that believers are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, according to the promises of God:

Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. (Romans 8:17)

If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:29)

So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir. (Galatians 4:7)

This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 3:6) whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:6-7)

Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. (Hebrews 6:17)

By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. (Hebrews 11:7)

To the eternal security skeptic: Please cite one verse in the Bible where God disinherits a believer. Please cite one verse where God breaks a promise.

## Called by God

The Bible also says that believers are called by God:

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. (John 10:27-29)

The LORD will keep you from all harm-- he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore. (Psalms 121:7-8)

All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. (John 6:37)

The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2:39)

To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 1:7)

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. (Romans 8:29-30)

To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ--their Lord and ours: (1 Corinthians 1:2)

but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1 Corinthians 1:24)

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even

among pagans: A man has his father's wife... hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord. (1 Corinthians 5:1, 5)

Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. (2 Corinthians 1:21-22)

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:30)

For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory. (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12)

For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. (1 Thessalonians 4:7)

With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. (2 Thessalonians 1:11)

but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. (Hebrews 7:24-25)

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, (1 Peter 1:3-4)

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will--to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. (Ephesians 1:4-6)

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, (Ephesians 1:18)

Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ: (Jude 1:1)

They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings--and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers." (Revelation 17:14)

The Bible says God's call is irrevocable. (Romans 11:29)19 To the eternal security skeptic: Please cite one verse in the Bible where God uncalls a believer.

## Chosen by God

The Bible also indicates that believers are chosen by God:

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. 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, (Ephesians 1:11-13)

If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them. (Mark 13:20)

And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? (Luke 18:7)

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. (John 15:16)

If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. (John 15:19)  
Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. (Romans 8:33)  
So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. (Romans 11:5)  
To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:27)  
Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. (Colossians 3:12)  
For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, (1 Thessalonians 1:4)  
But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. (2 Thessalonians 2:13)  
Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? (James 2:5)  
who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance. (1 Peter 1:2)  
But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Peter 2:9)  
They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings--and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers." (Revelation 17:14)  
"For many are invited, but few are chosen." (Matthew 22:14)  
They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings--and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers." (Revelation 17:14)  
To the eternal security skeptic: Please cite one verse in the Bible where God unchooses a believer.

### Sealed by God

The Bible also says believers are sealed by God for redemption:

Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. (2 Corinthians 1:21-22)  
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, (Ephesians 1:13)  
And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:30)  
Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness." (2 Timothy 2:19)  
To the eternal security skeptic: Please cite one verse in the Bible where God unseals a believer.

### Glorified by God

The Bible says that believers will be glorified after death:

Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. (Romans 8:17)  
encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom

and glory. (1 Thessalonians 2:12)

And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. (1 Peter 5:4)

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. (1 Peter 5:10)

For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy. (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20)

He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 2:14)

Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. (2 Timothy 2:10)

When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (Colossians 3:4)

To the eternal security skeptic: Please cite one verse in the Bible where God unglorifies a believer.

Born again, new creature

The Bible says that once one believes, one becomes born again:

Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3)

"Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' (John 3:7)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (1 Peter 1:3) for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. (1 Peter 1:23)

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. (Ephesians 4:23-24)

To the eternal security skeptic: Please cite one verse in the Bible where a believer can be unborn again.

Over 80 verses, from virtually every New Testament book indicates that the believer is predestined, called, chosen, and sealed as a child of God to be an heir with Christ for glorification in heaven. The idea that believers can never have assurance of their salvation is something that is refuted over and over in the Bible.

Eternal Life

Throughout the Bible are promises of eternal life to believers. None of these verses indicate that one can lose the eternal life that God promises:

And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. (Matthew 19:29)

"I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields--and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. (Mark 10:29-30)

"I tell you the truth," Jesus said to them, "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in

the age to come, eternal life." (Luke 18:29-30)

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

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him." (John 3:36)

"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 5:24)

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. (John 6:39)

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." (John 6:40)

For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. (John 17:2-3)

For this is what the Lord has commanded us: "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth." When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. (Acts 13:47-48)

The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 5:20-21)

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. (2 Corinthians 5:1)

The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. (Galatians 6:8)

But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life. (1 Timothy 1:16)

Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (1 Timothy 6:12)

a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, (Titus 1:2)

he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:5-7)

See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he promised us--even eternal life. (1 John 2:24-25)

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:11-13)

Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. (Jude 1:21)

In John 5:24 above, Jesus says that a believer "has crossed over from death to life." Nowhere does the Bible say that a believer can cross back to death. In John 6:39, Jesus said He would "lose none" of those the Father gave Him. Was Jesus lying? Acts 13:48 says that believers have been "appointed for eternal life." Nowhere does the Bible say a believer can become unappointed. In Titus 1:2, Paul tells us that God promised eternal life "before the beginning of time." The promise is tied to God's inability to

lie. In Titus 3:5-7, Paul tells us that believers undergo "rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit." Nowhere does the Bible say a believer can be unreborn or unrenewed. John tells us in 1 John 5:11-13 that we can know we have eternal life. If it's true that we can lose our salvation, why does John say that we can know we have eternal life? Dozens of other verses explain how believers can earn rewards in heaven by doing good works on earth<sup>20</sup> (although such works do not get one into heaven). If we can lose our salvation, what happens to all those rewards we had supposedly earned?

Can one lose salvation through sin?

The Bible indicates that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.<sup>21</sup> This means that no sin a believer commits can result in condemnation or loss of salvation. What about "believers" who live in a continual state of sin? Such individuals are hypocrites and not believers at all. The Bible indicates that believers do not practice sin on a routine basis.<sup>8</sup> A direct example of a believer falling into sin, but still retaining his salvation is given by Paul:

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife... hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord. (1 Corinthians 5:1, 5)

Paul indicates that the man was committing incest with his father's wife (mother?), yet Paul was still confident that his spirit would be saved. So, a true believer cannot lose his salvation through sin.

Can one lose salvation through unbelief?

There is one sin that the Bible indicates is unforgivable - blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.<sup>22</sup> The context states that the Pharisees had accused Jesus of doing miracles through the power of Satan, instead of the power of the Holy Spirit. Hence, attributing the works of God to Satan is an unforgivable sin, being in essence, complete unbelief. In fact, unbelief is the only sin that cannot be forgiven. Can a true believer fall into unbelief? According to all the verses list previously, the answer is no. The Bible says believers will persevere, even in the face of extreme opposition.<sup>23</sup> Numerous atheists have claimed to have gone from being believers to unbelievers. It is difficult to confirm that these individuals were, in fact, true believers. Several atheists have written to me making such a claim. However, upon making further inquires of them, it has been clear that they never truly understood what faith meant, and never had any kind of experience with the Holy Spirit. So, I have never been able to confirm that a true believer has ever gone into unbelief. Even if they did, we would not know if they came back to faith later in their lives.

He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 1:8)

Loss of salvation in Bible?

Dozens of websites claim that the believer does not have any security for salvation. This is a summary and rebuttal to their arguments. One of their main complaints is that the doctrine of eternal security might lead to licentiousness (increased sinning). However, those who value sin above Jesus are not real believers anyway. My contention is that those kinds of people would practice sin whether or not they believed in eternal security. So, the claim that the doctrine of eternal security might lead to licentiousness is a red herring. Here are their other arguments.

## Parable of the sower

The parable of the sower has been used by eternal security skeptics as proof that eternal security does not exist, since Jesus indicates that at least one group "fell away."<sup>24</sup> However, if this were a parable about salvation, then there should be only two groups (saved versus not saved) instead of four, as in the parable. The first group does not even understand the gospel message, hence doesn't believe.<sup>25</sup> The second group hears the word of God and "receives it with joy," but falls away because of "trouble or persecution."<sup>24</sup> The third group hears the word but produces no fruit since they are more concerned about wealth and worries of life.<sup>26</sup> Unbelievers are able to recognize the goodness of the gospel, and may play the religion game while there is no cost to them. Both the second and third groups fall into this category. Neither group produces any fruit. It would be quite a stretch saying that these groups represent true believers. True believers always produce some fruit (although the amount of fruit can vary considerably). Since the "seed" in the parable is the preaching of the gospel, it is clear that none of the first three groups ever preached the gospel to others. So, it is quite clear that none of these people were true believers at any point before they "fell away."

## Matthew 7:21

In Matthew 7:21, Jesus says that not all who call Him Lord will go to heaven, "but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."<sup>27</sup> If we continue reading, we find out what Jesus is talking about. Some of these people who call Jesus "Lord, Lord" are actually practicing evil. The NIV calls them "evildoers" while the NASB says they "practice lawlessness." Either way you translate it, these people are pretending to be followers of Jesus while they continually practice evil deeds. So, these people are not backsliding Christians, but unbelievers who were never truly saved.

## Matthew 24:10

In His description of the Great Tribulation, Jesus says in Mathew 24:10 says that "many will turn away from the faith."<sup>28</sup> Although it seems at first glance to be a pretty clear description of believers losing their salvation, it is really a description similar to that found in the parable of the sower (discussed above), in which unbelievers playing the religion game fall away under the pressure of persecution. In addition, the Greek word translated "turn away"<sup>29</sup> does not necessarily indicate a permanent condition, since all the disciples "turned away" when Jesus was arrested and crucified.<sup>30</sup> However, within three days they were all back on board, so, obviously, this word does not imply they lost their salvation.

## Mark 13:13

Mark 13:13, along with Matthew 10:22, 24:12-13 indicate that "one who stands firm to the end will be saved."<sup>31</sup> One must look at the context to determine what these verses are referring to. In all instances, the context is persecution of the followers of Jesus by unbelievers. A true believer will hold onto his faith in Christ even in the face of persecution. One should note that none of these verses say that a person will lose their salvation if he fails to stand firm.

They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. (Revelation 12:11)

## John 8:31

In John 8:31 Jesus distinguished between Jews who were true disciples and those who weren't saying

they "hold to my teaching."<sup>32</sup> Believers are not saved by holding to His teaching, but they hold to His teaching because they are saved. There will always be those who pretend to be believers, but do not hold to the teachings of Jesus.

Acts 5:32

Acts 5:32 says that God has given the Holy Spirit to "those who obey Him."<sup>33</sup> Eternal security skeptics say this verse implies that if you stop obeying God the Holy Spirit will be taken away and you will lose your salvation. But the verse doesn't say that. It says that the Holy Spirit is given to those who obey God. The Holy Spirit is not given to those who pretend to obey God, but to those who actually obey. The verse does not say that one can lose the Holy Spirit or his salvation through an act of disobedience. If this were true, then none would ever be saved.

Romans 2:13

Romans 2:13 says that those who merely hear the law are not righteous, but those who obey the law.<sup>34</sup> It sounds like believers have to obey all the laws to be justified. However, the context makes the meaning clear. Here is the preceding verse:

For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; (Romans 2:12)

The last part of the verse should be chilling to all people who have a realistic understanding of their moral condition. The phrase "all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law" refers to anybody who has ever sinned at any time - this means everybody! In other words, if you choose to live under the law you will be condemned by it! Personally, I prefer living under the grace of God given through faith in Jesus Christ. The eternal security skeptics are welcome to live under the law if they want, but I don't recommend it!

Romans 8:13

Romans 8:13 says that if you live according to the sinful nature you will die, but if you live by the Spirit you will live.<sup>35</sup> Does this mean that you will lose your salvation if you sin? The answer is found in the very next verse, which says, "those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God."<sup>36</sup> So, those who are living according to the sinful nature are not sons of God at all, but unbelievers. The verse does not refer to believers. Elsewhere, Paul makes it clear that there are "so-called brothers"<sup>37</sup> who are really unbelievers, practicing evil within the church body. Paul says to kick them out of the congregation.

1 Corinthians 9:27

In 1 Corinthians 9:27<sup>38</sup> the context is one of a race,<sup>39</sup> which is compared to the preaching of the gospel. Although Paul talks about being "disqualified," he is not speaking of salvation at all, but of service. He was not suggesting that he might ever be lost, but that he might not stand the test as far as his service was concerned, and might be rejected for the prize, which exactly fits the meaning of the word "disqualified" from an athletic context. Paul recognizes the possibility that the Lord might determine him as no longer usable by Him (hence "disqualified"). Paul indicated that he did what he did for the gospel to "share in its blessings,"<sup>40</sup> hence his motivation not to be "disqualified."

## 1 Corinthians 10:12

1 Corinthians 10:12 warns believers to "be careful that you don't fall!"<sup>41</sup> Does this mean that a Christian can fall out of salvation? The next verse makes it clear that the "fall" is in reference to succumbing to temptation:

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

So, the verse is referring to standing under temptation rather than falling into it. It does refer to salvation at all.

## 1 Corinthians 15:1-2

1 Corinthians 15 is Paul's defense of the doctrine of the resurrection, which was being challenged by some in the Corinthian church. In his introduction, Paul says the gospel is the means "by which also you are saved" and adds, "if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain."<sup>42</sup> To eternal security skeptics, Paul is implying that if you don't hold fast you have believed in vain and lost your salvation. However, the broader context shows that the "believing in vain" refers to one's position if one accepts the false premise that there is no resurrection. In fact, Paul flat out says in verse 14 "if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith."<sup>43</sup> He repeats the concept in verse 17, saying, "if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins."<sup>44</sup> In verse 19 Paul says "we are to be pitied more than all men" if there is no resurrection of the dead.<sup>45</sup> So, your belief would be in vain if there is no resurrection, not if you fail to "hold fast."

## Colossians 1:21-23

Colossians 1:21-23 discusses the reconciliation of mankind to God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Paul indicates that believers are reconciled to God "in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach."<sup>46</sup> However, verse 23 adds a condition, "if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard." The Bible makes it clear that true believers will persevere in the faith under all circumstances.<sup>23</sup> The warning it seems was written to those who assume they are believers, when they aren't. Such verses will cause the casual "believer" to examine his faith for veracity.

## 2 Thessalonians 2:3

In 2 Thessalonians 2:3 Paul is writing to believers about the second coming of Christ, beginning with the admonition, "Let no one in any way deceive you."<sup>47</sup> The assumption is that believers can be deceived, presumably about their salvation. Although I know that Christians can be deceived, this passage in no way is about salvation. It is about the timing of the second coming of Christ, which cannot occur until the antichrist is revealed.

## 1 Timothy 4:1

Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 4:1 "that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons."<sup>48</sup> The fact that some people fall away from the faith does not mean that they were ever saved, but that they had professed to be Christians at some point in time.

They knew about the Lord Jesus Christ and professed for a time to follow Him, but then they apostatized from the faith.

1 Timothy 5:15

1 Timothy 5:15 says, "Some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan."<sup>49</sup> Who are these "some" who turned away? The context shows that the passage is referring to the treatment of widows. Paul gives the advice that the older widows are to be taken care of by the church. However, the younger widows are to remarry and raise a family as opposed to becoming "gossips and busybodies."<sup>50</sup> So, some of these younger widows have turned away to follow Satan. We don't know if these widows were true believers or not. It is possible that their husbands had been believers while they were not.

Hebrews 3:12, 15

Hebrews chapter 3 is about how the children of Israel rebelled when Moses was leading them out of Egypt. Verse 12 says, "See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God."<sup>51</sup> Since it addresses the Hebrews as "brothers" it would seem to be written to believers. However, the verse warns the congregation not to have an unbelieving heart. In other words, it is referring to unbelievers within church. Verse 14 says we "share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end."<sup>51</sup> Does this mean we lose our share of Christ if we don't hold firmly until the end? In looking at the overall context of the chapter, it is making reference to those who rebelled against Moses and God, which were the unbelievers. Ultimately, the passage makes this clear in verses 18-19:

And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief. (Hebrews 3:18-19)

So, the entire chapter is about unbelievers, not backsliding Christians.

Hebrews 5:8-9

Hebrews 5:8-9 tells us that Jesus is "the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him."<sup>52</sup> The verse is telling the truth, but it is not saying that they obey Jesus perfectly. Salvation is not granted to those who pretend to obey Jesus, but to those who truly believe and obey.

Hebrews 6:4-6

Hebrews 6:4-6 is the most famous "proof" that eternal security does not exist. Here it is:

It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting Him to public disgrace. (Hebrews 6:4-6)

Once again, we must ask the question of whether these people are believers or unbelievers. Let's look at their characteristics. First, at one point they had been enlightened about the gospel. Although they knew what it was, the text does not tell us that they ever accepted Jesus as their Lord. Next, they have "tasted the heavenly gift," that is the Lord Jesus. Tasting is quite a telling word. In the Greek, it means to sample or try out some food.<sup>53</sup> It doesn't mean to consume the meal. In fact, it suggests that they never made that commitment. They also "shared in the Holy Spirit." This description is also unusual. A

true believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit,<sup>54</sup> not merely "sharing" or "partaking" of the Spirit. However, the Holy Spirit is not just active in the life of a believer, but also convicts the unbeliever of "sin and righteousness and judgment."<sup>55</sup> Therefore, it is entirely consistent with the Holy Spirit working within the life of an unbeliever who is considering a response to the gospel. Third, these people "tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age." Again, tasting the word of God is not the same as living the word of God. So, the people who are being described in the passage are those who have been associated with a Christian fellowship, but have fallen away. However, the falling away is not merely a passive thing, but they are "subjecting Him [Jesus] to public disgrace," indicating an active rejection of the gospel. Finally, verse 9 indicates that the above passage does not refer to those who have been saved, saying, "we are confident of better things in your case-- things that accompany salvation."<sup>56</sup> This verse mentions "things that accompany salvation," not things that result in salvation. In addition, verses 4-6 refer to "they" whereas verse 9 refers to "your," indicating that the verses are referring to different groups of people.

#### Hebrews 10:26-27

Hebrews 10:26 says, "If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left."<sup>57</sup> Again, we must ask the question whether this verse is talking about a believer or a non-believer. The first big hint is that the verse is about people who "deliberately keep on sinning." This does not describe the typical behavior of a believer. Yes, believers sin, but do not live in a state of continual sin. In addition, verse 27 describes these people as "enemies of God," which definitely does not describe believers, who are children of God. These people are described as having "received the knowledge of the truth" of the gospel. However, it does not say that they ever accept the truth and put into effect in their own lives. Hundreds of atheists have written me at this site and have "received the knowledge of the truth," although very few have actually become Christians. Here, the author is suggesting that if a person receives the knowledge of the truth of the gospel, but rejects it and keeps on sinning, he is lost and cannot be saved, since he has rejected Jesus' sacrifice for sins.

#### Hebrews 10:36

Hebrews 10:36 says, "You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised."<sup>58</sup> The big question in this verse is what is the promise? Is it salvation or something else? The context makes it clear. Verses 23-24 tell us "He who promised is faithful" and encourages us to "spur one another on toward love and good deeds."<sup>59</sup> Verse 35 tells us we "will be richly rewarded."<sup>60</sup> So, the promise is one of rewards. The Bible tells us that we given rewards in heaven on the basis of our good deeds.<sup>61</sup> These deeds do not get us into heaven, but do determine what kinds of rewards we get. Finally, in verse 39 the author distinguishes between those who are judged from those to whom the author is writing, who persevere:

But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul. (Hebrews 10:39)

#### James 1:12

James 1:12 says "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him."<sup>62</sup> The interesting part of the verse is that God has promised the crown to those who love Him. It is not promised to those who stand up to persecution (the unstated assumption of the eternal security skeptics), but to those who love Him. The emphasis of the passage (James 1:1-12) is perseverance under trial. The main point of the

verse is that the believer will be blessed by persevering under trial. Once the believer has gone to glory he will receive the "crown of life." In other verses through the New Testament it is called the "crown of exultation," "victor's crown," "crown of righteousness," or "crown of glory."<sup>63</sup> The crown refers to the rewards that are given to those who love God and trust Jesus Christ. The Greek word for crown, *stephanos*, according to Thayer, has the meaning "metaphorically the eternal blessedness which will be given as a prize to the genuine servants of God and Christ: the crown (wreath) which is the reward of the righteousness."<sup>64</sup> So, the crown does not refer to salvation at all, but rewards.

#### James 1:13-15

James 1:15 says "after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."<sup>65</sup> The concept that sin leads to death is not a well-kept secret in the New Testament. In fact, there are well over a dozen other verses that make the same claim.<sup>66</sup> However, believers do not lose their salvation through sinning. It is the unbeliever who never comes to faith in Jesus Christ, who suffers the second death due to unforgiven sin in his life.

#### James 5:19-20

James addresses "my brothers" and says in verse 5:20, "he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins."<sup>67</sup> Although the verse is addressed to "brothers," not all among the brethren are necessarily saved. The fact that the brother had his soul saved from death and it covered a multitude of sins tells us that the "brother" was never saved in the first place. If he had been saved, his sin would have already been covered by faith in Jesus.

#### 1 Peter 4:17-18

Peter tells us that judgment should "begin with the family of God" and adds, "what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?"<sup>68</sup> He then quotes from Proverbs 11:31.<sup>69</sup> Yes, it is difficult for the righteous to be saved. Jesus said believers had to enter through the narrow gate and that few find it.<sup>70</sup> Peter's point in this passage is that Christians should examine themselves and live as righteous examples. His summary statement in verse 19 says that believers should "continue to do good" in spite of trials and persecution.<sup>71</sup>

#### 2 Peter 2:20-21

2 Peter 2:20-21 says, "If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning."<sup>72</sup> Obviously, we need to know who the "they" are. 2 Peter 2 is a chapter about evildoers, who attempt to lead others into their own lifestyle. Beginning with verse 18, the text is clear that the "they" are those who listen to the evildoers.

For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. (2 Peter 2:18)  
They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity--for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him. (2 Peter 2:19)

Verse 18 says "they" are "people who are just escaping from those who live in error." So, these people are associated with Christians and have begun to understand the way of righteousness, but they are not yet believers. Verse 21 says, "It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command..."<sup>72</sup> So, the

passage is clear that these people are not backsliding Christians, but those who have heard the word and then rejected it to follow after evildoers.

1 John 2:17

1 John 2:17 tells us that "the man who does the will of God lives forever."<sup>73</sup> Obviously, the converse is also true that the man who never does the will of God does not live forever. This verse does not mean that a person must do the will of God in every single instance. If this were true then none would ever be saved. It is a heart who has chosen to do God's will as best he can. Verse 19 completely refutes the whole concept that eternal security skeptics proclaim, saying that those who "turn away" from the "faith" were actually never really part of it:

They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us. (1 John 2:19)

You will never find that verse quoted by eternal security skeptics!

1 John 5:3-5

1 John 5:3-5 is quoted on eternal security webpages as refuting eternal security, but like all others, it doesn't. Let's look at it:

This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. (1 John 5:3-5)

Yes, those who love God obey his commandments. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will obey what I command."<sup>74</sup> Anyone who claims to love God, but does not attempt to obey His commands is a liar.<sup>75</sup> 1 John also tells us that everyone born of God overcomes the world through the power of God.<sup>76</sup> So, true believers obey God's commands and overcomes the temptations of the world, although not always perfectly.

Revelation 2:5

Revelation 2:5<sup>77</sup> is not about salvation at all. The verse comes from a letter from Jesus to the Church at Ephesus. The original church was on fire for the Lord. However, over time, the church became complacent and unfruitful. Jesus told them to repent and go back to what they were doing at first. The lampstand is symbolic of the assembly at Ephesus. So, removing the lampstand means that Jesus would cause the church at Ephesus to cease to exist. The verse has nothing to do with salvation.

Revelation 2:10, 3:11

Revelation 2:10<sup>78</sup> is another verse from Jesus' letters to the seven churches. The concept of the "crown of life" has been discussed previously.

Revelation 2:11

In revelation 2:11, Jesus says to the church at Smyrna, "He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death."<sup>79</sup> The term "second death" is a term defined later in the book of Revelation and refers

to those who are thrown into the lake of fire (hell) after the judgment.<sup>80</sup> All true believers overcome the temptations and trials of the world and are not subject to eternal condemnation.

#### Revelation 3:5

Revelation 3:5 says, "He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life."<sup>81</sup> The question is what is this "book of life" and how does one's name get into the book or be removed from the book? The Old Testament verses describing the "book of Life" indicate that all the living are placed in the book of life and are removed from the book as the result of systematic sin (i.e., unbelief).<sup>82</sup> In the New Testament, the book of Revelation says that names are written in the book of life only for those who believe.<sup>83</sup> However, their names were written in the book "from the creation of the world."<sup>83</sup> In Revelation 3:5, Jesus says He "will never blot out his name from the book of life" to those who overcome. He didn't say He would blot out the names of those who fall. However, believers have been given the authority to "overcome all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19).<sup>84</sup>

#### Revelation 3:21

In Revelation 3:21, Jesus says, "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne."<sup>85</sup> The position is one of honor for those who overcome the trials and persecutions of the world.<sup>86</sup> So, this verse is talking about rewards and not salvation.

#### Revelation 21:7

In revelation 21:7 God tells us, "He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son."<sup>87</sup> Since all believers have been given the authority to overcome, this verse applies to all believers.<sup>84</sup> The verse before (Revelation 21:6) makes it clear that this reward is given freely to all who thirst.<sup>88</sup>

#### Revelation 22:12

In Revelation 22:12, Jesus says, "My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done."<sup>89</sup> Of course, the verse is about rewards given to believers, which is independent of obtaining salvation. Believers receive rewards in heaven based upon good deeds ("what he has done") performed on earth,<sup>20</sup> although these deeds do not get one into heaven.

#### Fallen from grace?

My concern for the eternal security skeptic is that at least some of them give the impression that they believe they have to earn or maintain their salvation through some form of conformity to the law. Paul makes it clear in Galatians 5:4 that those who seek to be justified by the law have "fallen from grace" and "have been severed from Christ."<sup>90</sup> In other words, they are not even saved! My advice to them is to trust in God's promises and believe that Jesus died for all your sins, regardless of your ability to live up to the standards of the law.

#### Conclusion

The security of the believer is a core doctrine in biblical Christianity. The doctrine is not just some idea based upon a few verses in the New Testament. As shown here, there are over 400 verses that espouse

this doctrine in one way or another. Skeptics of eternal security selectively cite a few dozen verses out-of-context or that aren't really addressing the topic of salvation, but usually of rewards. If you are trusting in Jesus for your salvation, your name has already been written in the Lamb's book of life and you will go to heaven. However, if you are pretending to be a Christian, going through the motions, and don't really believe, no amount of pretending will get you into heaven. Do you feel guilty about the sin in your life? If so, this is the work of the Holy Spirit to conform you to the image of Jesus. Follow Him!

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints. (Ephesians 1:18)