

ONCE SAVED ALWAYS SAVED?

— Scriptural Testimony —

According to the teachings of Jesus Christ and His Holy Apostles in the New Testament, salvation is conditional.

Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward (2Jn. 1:8)

Here, Saint John the Evangelist is speaking to Christians who believed in Christ, and telling them that it is possible to lose their salvation if they are not careful.

Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent (Rev. 2:4)

Here Jesus Christ is speaking to a bishop, who had already accepted Christ and was ministering in His Church. Nonetheless, Christ tells him to repent, or else He threatens to remove him.

Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life (Rev. 2:10)

Christ tells us that the crown of life is conditional: it is given if someone is faithful until the end. Therefore, it is possible not to be faithful until the end, and not be saved in the end.

But hold fast what you have till I come. And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations (Rev. 2:25-26)

Christ tells us that He will give power over the nations to the person who keeps His works until the end. Therefore, it is understood that it is possible for someone not to be keep in the Lord's works until the end, and consequently not be saved.

I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Be watchful... for I have not found your works perfect before God... Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you (Rev. 3:1-3)

Here, Christ is speaking to another bishop who had already accepted faith in Christ and was ministering in the church of Sardis. Despite this, Christ tells him that he is spiritually dead, that his life is insufficient before God, and that if he

does not become watchful, Christ will come to take his soul at an unknown hour, and, according to the parable, cast him in the outer darkness.

He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life (Rev. 3:5)

Here Christ explicitly states that it is possible for Him to remove a person from the Book of Life even after one's name has been recorded in the Book of Life, if a person does not struggle to overcome evil.

Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown (Rev. 3:11)

Hence, it is possible to lose the crown that has been prepared for us, and it is possible to lose our salvation as well.

Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He many not spare you either. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off (Rom. 11:19-22)

Here the Apostle Paul is speaking to Christians who had accepted Christ, and he tells them that even though they have become recipients of God's goodness, they should be careful because they could possibly be cut off from salvation if they do not persist in God's goodness.

Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them... Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition... Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1Cor. 10:6-12)

In this epistle, the Apostle Paul clearly points out to the Christians that what happened to the Jews who fell away from God after being led out of Egypt can happen to them as well. And he warns them—after they had accepted Christ and become members of the Church—that they should be careful not to become sinful, lest they lose their salvation. Let him who thinks he is saved take heed lest he fall away from salvation!

In his Epistle to the Hebrews, the Apostle Paul repeatedly stresses to the Christians that they must remain faithful until the end of their lives, as it is possible to become unfaithful and lose their salvation.

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away (Hb. 2:1)

Hence, it is possible to drift away from the faith, even after espousing the faith.

Whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end (Hb. 3:6)

God will dwell in us if we remain firm in the faith until the end of our lives. Hence, it is possible for a person not to hold fast to the end.

Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God (Hb. 3:12)

Therefore, it is possible for a person who has believed in Christ to depart from Him in following.

Lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (Hb. 3:13)

Hence, it is possible for someone to be hardened by sin even after one accepts Christ.

For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end (Hb. 3:14)

We will partake in Christ's Kingdom if we remain steadfast with Him to the end. Therefore, it is possible not to remain steadfast to the end.

Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience (Hb. 4:11)

It is possible to fall into disobedience even after someone accepts Christ.

For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment (Hb. 10:26-27)

Hence, it is possible to sin after accepting Christ and be condemned.

For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them (2 Pt. 2:20-21)

Here the Apostle Peter clearly states that it is possible for people to return to a sinful way of life even after they have come to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He who endures to the end will be saved (Mt. 10:22)

Here Jesus Christ explicitly states that salvation will be given to the person who remains with Him until the end of his life. Therefore, it is possible for someone not to remain with Christ until the end of one's life and not be saved.

When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. He who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; however, he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, but the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces (Mt. 13:18-23)

The second and third group of people received the seed; that is, they heard and accepted the word of God initially. Subsequently, however, they stumbled and became unfruitful, and were not saved.

Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish... and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also,

saying, “Lord, Lord, open to us!” But he answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.” (Mt. 25:1-11)

All were virgins; that is, all had received and been united with Christ. Despite this, the five foolish virgins were shut out of the kingdom of heaven and lost their salvation.

For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far county, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them... After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, “Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.” His lord said to him, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.”... Then he who had received the one talent came and said, “Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.” But his lord answered and said to him, “You wicked and lazy servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered... So take the talent from him... For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance. But from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Mt. 25:14-30)

All three workers in this parable were servants of the Lord; however, the first two were rewarded while the third one was condemned. Reward or punishment, therefore, is administered at the end of one’s life, not at the beginning. First a person works, and then he is paid when his master returns (i.e. at the end of his life when the Lord comes to take his soul). According to the parable, *it is* possible for a person who has become a servant of the Lord to receive no pay at the end of his life and lose his salvation.

Additionally, we have the example of Judas, who despite the fact that he initially believed in and accepted Christ, nonetheless was not saved in the end: “**Did I not choose you, the twelve?; and yet one of you is a devil**” (Jn. 6:70). There is also the example of the disciples who stopped following the Lord at some point in His ministry: “**From that time many of His disciples went back and no longer walked with Him**” (Jn. 6:66). Moreover, the Apostle Paul testifies the

following concerning one of his followers: **“Demas has forsaken me, having come to love this present world” (2Tim. 4:10)**. From ecclesiastical history, we also know that Nicolas, one of the seven deacons ordained by the Apostles, **“And they chose Stephen... and Nicolas , a proselyte from Antioch, whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them” (Acts 6:5-6)**, subsequently apostasized from faith in Christ and founded a gnostic sect: **“But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate” (Rev. 2:6)**. And commenting on Saint John the Evangelist’s verse: **“But as many as received Him [i.e. Jesus Christ], to them He gave the right to become children of God” (Jn. 1:12)**, Saint Nektarios says: “He did not immediately render them children of God, lest on account of indolence they forfeit the grace [they received]; rather, He gave them the power *to become* [children of God] so that they may always remain eager and diligent.”

Thus, no one can claim that he has secured salvation on account of his belief in Jesus Christ; for, as we have seen from the Holy Scriptures, salvation is secured at the end of one’s life, not at the beginning.