

“CAN YOU LOSE YOUR SALVATION?”

It's a great debate: can a person lose his or her salvation? Some say, "once saved, always saved." Their take? You cannot lose your salvation. Period. Others take a different approach: observing people who were once professing Christians, but who now openly, vocally deny Christ – even making fun of Christianity. Certainly these "apostates" won't make it to heaven ... right?

So ... at what point do I cross the line between being a backslider and an apostate? Am I ever in danger of reaching a point of no return? Can you sin enough to lose your spot in heaven? Do I have any assurance at all?

These questions challenge our understanding of the theology of sin and salvation. Tonight, we aim to settle this controversial question – and settle our spirits, as well.

Hebrews 6:4-6

Why do we fear the idea that we can lose our salvation?

> **An interpretation that keeps us safe.**

* Those who “fall away” WERE NEVER REALLY SAVED!

* The problem: such a view bases salvation on WORKS!

Q: Romans 5:1 teaches we are justified (saved) by FAITH!

* The logical conclusion to this interpretation is that none of us can

know if we're really saved UNTIL WE REACH HEAVEN.

* Scriptures commonly used to back this interp: Jn 10:27-29; Eph 1:4;
Rom 8:35,38-39; Phil 1:6; 1 Pet 1:3-5

* 2 of my 3 Study Bibles endorsed this view ☺

> A better, Biblical interpretation.

* A person who was once “saved,” but who is no longer heaven-bound.
(But ... hold on ... the “hard question” isn’t yet answered.)

* Step 1: Look at the IMMEDIATE CONTEXT!

(It’s dangerous to interpret a verse without reading what comes before and after it!)

- Before: (5:11 – 6:3) The lack of and need for MATURITY among believers
- After: (6:7-8) An agricultural metaphor. Key: BEARING FRUIT
- After: (6:9-20) CONFIDENCE of salvation /
CERTAINTY of God’s promise

What does this context tell us concerning the meaning of the vv. 4-6?

* Step 2: Look at the TEXT ITSELF!

-- Let’s describe the people in question:

- ▶ have once been enlightened
- ▶ have tasted the heavenly gift
- ▶ have shared in the Holy Spirit (NKJV – “*have become partakers of*”)
- ▶ have tasted the goodness of the Word of God
- ▶ have tasted the powers of the age to come

-- Does this language describe someone who is born again? OF COURSE

-- “... then have “*fallen away*” ...

Q: What does this phrase mean?

-- Scripture interprets itself (v.6b) –

“they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding Him up to contempt.” (ESV)

“... put Him to an open shame.” (NKJV)

“... subjecting Him to public disgrace.” (NIV)

-- Working definition:

A complete DISOWNING of Christ -- a deliberate and decisive abandonment of the Christian faith. The people described are not BACKSLIDERS, but APOSTATES. They have not merely fallen into sin but have denounced Christ. They have become as those who crucified Jesus.

* Step 3: Look at OTHER SCRIPTURES!

- > Heb. 10: 26-27 -- If we *deliberately* KEEP ON sinning, no sacrifice for sins is left.
 - > Heb. 3:12-14 – We share in Christ if we HOLD FIRM TILL THE END!
 - > 1 Peter 1:3-5 – What ingredient activates God’s power to save our spot in heaven?
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PRACTICAL QUESTIONS:

(1) SHOULD WE WORRY ABOUT THIS PASSAGE PERSONALLY?

- * No one who desires to repent has reached the point of apostasy!
- * No one who stumbles (or even struggles) with sin is an apostate.
- * In fact, the problem is not so much with individual sins, but with belief and choice.

(2) IS IT WORTHWHILE TO PRAY FOR SOMEONE WHO IS BACKSLIDDEN? CAN THEY REPENT?

- * It is not for us to judge whether someone has truly turned his / her back on Jesus.
- * We can always pray for the Holy Spirit’s conviction!
- * James 5:20
- * 1 John 5:16

(3) CAN I LOSE MY SALVATION? NO!!! But I *can* choose to GIVE IT AWAY.

- * John 10:27-29 – Nothing can snatch us away from the Father’s hand.
 - > How I picture my salvation: in the large hands of God!
- * Eph 1:4 – He chose us and predestined us ... but He also gave us the choice!
- * Romans 8:35, 38-39 – What can separate us from His love? Nothing.
 - But He loves those who **reject** Him.
- * Phil 1:6 – Of course He is faithful to complete what He started ...
 - ... the question is will **I** be faithful to completion?