

Saved Only Once

Once saved always saved? Have you ever wondered if a Christian will go to hell if he or she murdered someone or committed suicide? Have you ever read a verse in the Bible that seems to suggest that a Christian can lose his or her salvation? What happens if you live an immoral life after you claim to be a Christian? There are verses in the Bible that say Christians must endure to the end. What does that mean? Lord willing, the following discussion will help to answer some of these questions and comfort those children of God who fear they are no longer Christians. For the people who think they are Christians but are ignoring the truth and are producing bad fruit, this is a serious lesson.

MANY ARE FALSE. Every year, farmers around the world plant seed in order to grow food for their families and others. An experienced farmer knows that he must properly prepare the land in order to have a good crop. If the soil is hard, has many rocks or weeds, the seed will never grow to maturity. The farmer's success depends on his careful preparation of the soil. This is a truth we understand well.

The same is also true in the spiritual realm. In Matthew 13:1-30, Jesus tells us what happens when the Word of God or statements in the Bible are presented to people. In the parable, Jesus uses "seed" to symbolize the Word of God and He describes four kinds of soils or four kinds of people (Matt. 13:19).

The first kind of person is like hard soil. After seed falls on it, the seed dies. This person's heart is so hard that he or she does not accept or understand the statements of the Word of God.

The second person is like rocky soil. The person

appears to be a Christian; he/she is looks real, but he/she is not a mature plant (a Christian). Persecution and suffering from family, neighbors or civil authorities will later reveal that they are not real. Jesus told His disciples to expect suffering (John 15:20). Suffering, persecution and trials are part of the Christian life (James 1:2-4). This is a reason many are unwilling to step out and trust Christ.

The third person represents soil with thorns. This person never follows God, that is, becomes a Christian, because of the concerns of this life and his or her pursuit of wealth and material goods. For this person the concerns for becoming successful, securing money, or obtaining acceptance are only a few examples of the hindrances Jesus is talking about.

Jesus' fourth and last soil is good soil.

... the good soil ... is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit, and brings forth, some a

Sower of the Seed

Soil Type	What Happens To Them?
Hard	They reject God because they reject the Bible.
Rocky	They reject God due to persecution and affliction.
Thorny	They reject God due to wealth and possessions.
Good	They follow Jesus Christ (i.e. become Christians)

hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. (NASB) Matt. 13:23

Here the Word of God is received and the person grows to a full plant and produces fruit. Some Christians will have more fruit in their lives than others. This soil produces a real Christian.

From this parable it is clear that a Christian is one who produces at least some fruit. Jesus says the first three kinds of soil are false Christians. Now some will disagree with this conclusion because they believe the last three types of soil represent Christians and the second and third soils are Christians who lose their salvation. But this conclusion misunderstands Jesus' term of "producing of fruit."

FRUIT IS THE MARK. Jesus uses the term "fruit" in a number of passages throughout the gospels (Matt. 3:8-10; 7:16-19; 12:33; 21:19, 42-43; Luke 3:8-9; 6:43-46; 13:6-9; John 15:1-8; 15:16). This was a favorite word for our Lord. He consistently uses "fruit" to refer to true Christians because true Christians produce fruit; false Christians do not.

The first time Jesus uses the word "fruit" is in Matthew 3:8. Here He gives us our first clue that fruit has a spiritual meaning,

Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance; (NASB) Matt. 3:8

Jesus uses fruit to refer to results of true repentance, and then two verses later He uses fruit as a mark of spiritual life,

And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (NASB) Matt. 3:10

Later in Matthew 7:16-20, Jesus expands on this illustration with,

You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown

into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.' (NASB) Matt. 7:16-23

Jesus' message is clear. Good fruit is spiritual fruit. Bad fruit means there is no spiritual life. Later in Matthew 13:1-30, Jesus simply uses the presence or absence of "fruit" as a mark of a true Christian (Luke 8:15). Jesus is saying that a person who is a true Christian will have fruit or good fruit which is spiritual life.

Jesus and the apostles often used fruit as the mark of a true Christian: the fruit of true repentance is obedience (Luke 6:43-46), sharing your faith (John 4:36), evidence of the Spirit in your life (Gal. 5:22-23), "all goodness and righteousness and truth" (Eph 5:9), and holiness which only comes through Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:11).

Jesus' illustrations are simple. It is black versus white or good versus evil. The tree either produces good fruit or does not. The soil either grows a plant or does not. A Christian produces fruit - good fruit. Now someone could ask, "Could the tree start out producing good fruit and then turn badly?" The answer is given to us by Jesus when He says, "I never knew you . . ." Jesus' parable is simple. You either have or do not have fruit. Jesus never talks about when fruit appears. He always assumes a true disciple produces some fruit (Luke 13:6-9). Remember even repentance results in fruit (Gal. 5:22-23).

Today, there are many wonderful people in church. Some have a wonderfully compassionate, charismatic personality; others are hard working and faithful. Some churches have men and women who are naturally great teachers and preachers, but they are not real. The Holy Spirit is not active in their life, but they are people with wonderful native gifts. Unfortunately, Jesus will some day say,

'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers! (NIV) Matt. 7:23

If they never really trust in Jesus for forgiveness of their sins. Are you trusting in Jesus to forgive your sins?

HOW TO MAKE FRUIT. In John 15:1-8, Jesus tells His disciples that they are incapable of producing fruit. How often does some teacher or preacher look at what God is doing in their class or church and think to himself or herself that they doing something great. They have forgotten an important truth. The Holy Spirit is the real teacher (1 Cor. 2:13). God only used them. Jesus says,

I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch

They did not continue to remain. Those who abide in Jesus “do not walk away,” they abide, continue to remain.

What is required to make fruit? Without abiding in Jesus, we can do nothing that counts for eternity. Are you abiding in Jesus? What kind of fruit is evident in your life? If you belong to Jesus, the Holy Spirit **has been** working in your heart and life to produce fruit. What fruit do you see?

HOW DOES ONE START TO ABIDE? Jesus has told us that if we are good soil, we will produce fruit, “hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.” And those who produce fruit are the ones who are continuing to abide in Christ. Those who do not abide do not produce anything because they are

God Chose Us . . .

What is meant by, “He chose us in Him”? By means of faith which is in Him, Christ. He . . . happily ordered this for us before we were born: . . . before the foundation of the world.

John Chrysostom
A.D. 395
Ephesians 1:4

that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit . . . the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. . . apart from Me you can do nothing. (NASB) John 15:1-6

Jesus communicates two very important truths: 1) a branch by itself does not produce fruit and 2) a branch in Christ produces fruit. Jesus is talking about people who “abide” in Him. The Greek word for abide is the present active participle of MENO. This simply means a true branch continues to remain in the vine. It never departs! Someone will ask, how do we understand “in Me” in the second line? The answer is that “in Me” is **not** the same as “abide in Me.” In the second line, Jesus is describing the type of disciple who was following Him and then turned away:

As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew, and were not walking with Him anymore. (NASB) John 6:66

either hard, rocky or thorny soil.

Ephesians 1:4-5. “How does one start abiding?” To answer this question, we need to turn to Eph 1:4-5,

. . . just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself . . . (NASB) Eph. 1:4-5

God tells us that He “chose us . . . before the foundation of the world.” There is nothing special in the Greek. God is saying He selected us before the foundation of the world to be adopted as His son, that is, to be a Christian (Romans 8:29-30). He did not ask our opinion. He did not look to see what kind of fruit we would produce. He did not hope and wait to see if we would accept Jesus as our Savior. He decided for us!

John 6:37, 44, 65. Jesus Himself tells us that no person can

become a Christian by his/her own decision. Jesus told His disciples,

And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father."

No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out . . . And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." (NASB) John 6:65, 44, 37-40

This is very plain. The Father grants permission for men and women to come to Jesus. The Father draws them and when He draws them, they will come. According to Jesus, our salvation depends on God, not on us. No one has a choice. Someone will say, "I do not agree. I decided to accept Christ." That is true too. God chooses us and we choose Him. Notice the phrase in verse 37, "**the one who comes to Me**" implies the one whom the Father draws does want to come to Him too. This means that if you are not a Christian and you want Jesus to become your Savior, then God is drawing you. All you need to do is tell Him.

Has anyone been left out? Jesus says that He will lose no one. ALL will come. The Greek word He uses for "lose" is APOLLUMI which has the sense "to put out of the way entirely," "to destroy," or "lose" in the ultimate sense. What a wonderful comfort to know that Jesus will raise us up on the last day to go to heaven. Can we destroy ourselves? The answer is no, because Jesus said, He will raise up ALL that the Father gave Him.

John 10:27-30. The Holy Spirit is sending us a clear message. God chose to save us before we were born. The Father determines who comes to Jesus. Those whom He has chosen will come, and Jesus will not lose any. Jesus must have repeated this message several times because we find later in

John that Jesus said,

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one. (NASB) John 10:27-30

The central theme of this verse is that God is more powerful than anything or anyone. God is omnipotent.

Some one may object to this conclusion and claim that we can jump out of God's hand. If that is true, then the person who can do that is more powerful than Jesus and the Father because all of us are included in the statement "no one."

If we want to contend that God allows us to jump, then we have another problem because Jesus said they were given to Him by the Father. This is not our choice!

Do you know your future salvation does not depend on you according to Jesus? Jesus said, "they shall never perish." The Greek grammar uses a double negative to make the point that "they shall NO NOT ever perish." It is the strongest Greek construction Jesus could use to make the point that He and the Father are in control of our salvation.

Ephesians 2:8-9. Our salvation was given to us before the foundation of the world. We could not earn before we were born. And we can not earn our salvation after we are physically born because,

THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD (NASB) Rom. 3:11

Left to ourselves, we would not even come to God. The Holy Spirit must convict us of sin and draw us (John 16:7-11). In fact, even the faith we have has been given to us by God,

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. (NASB) Eph. 2:8-9

Ephesians 1:13-14. God has indicated that our salvation is

sure because He has promised it to us when we believe,

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation - having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. (NASB) Eph. 1:13-14

God has placed a "seal" on all Christians. The seal is the Holy Spirit living inside of us (1 John 4:13). The mark of a Christian is the presence of the Holy Spirit. The seal was an ancient custom that indicated ownership. God is saying His seal of ownership, the Holy Spirit, is a promise of our future inheritance. Once we believe, we are saved. That is it. God does not lie.

1 Peter 1:5. God also tells us that He is guarding us against loss,

... who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (NASB) 1 Peter 1:5

The Greek word for "protected" is the present passive participle of PHROUREP. This means that God is actively "keeping us from escaping." We cannot run away. We cannot jump out of the Father's hand (John 10:29). In fact, this Greek word is the same word for "locked up" used in Galatians 3:23,

Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. (NIV) Gal. 3:23

Once you become a Christian, God locks you up for eternal salvation.

SUMMARY. These New Testament passages tell us the Father chose us before the creation to be saved. We cannot come to Him unless He allows us to come. Those whom He has chosen will come to Jesus, and Jesus will accept them. They will believe in Jesus because He gives us the gift of faith. He has given us His Holy Spirit as a promise of eternal life. He then protects us and keeps us for eternal salvation.

This is how we start to abide in Jesus, continue to abide and ultimately abide. We will produce good fruit (Phil. 1:6) because He is the vine and we are the branches. Good trees produce good fruit. When a man or woman genuinely, honestly trusts Jesus for the forgiveness of sins, he/she becomes a good tree producing much good fruit.

THEN WHY MUST WE HOLD FAST? Now we have a serious question. "Why does God tell us that we must hold fast?" or that "we take hold of eternal life?"

The answer lies in the life of a good tree. Only good trees continue to live. Or, put another way, the mark of true Christians is that they endure through suffering, persecution, and the allures of the world.

Philippians 2:12-13. God tells us that He is active in our Christian growth and that He wants us to be active too. He calls us to live as Christians should.

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out

your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. (NASB) Phil. 2:12-13

There is a sense in which Christians do work out their salvation. True

Old Sap Continues

It is in vain to spring up quickly like the seed that was sown upon the rock, and then by-and-by to wither when the sun is up; that would but prove that such a plant has no root in itself, but "the trees of the Lord are full of sap," and they abide and contrinue, and bring forth fruit, even in old age, to show that the Lord is upright." There is a great difference between nominal Christianity and real Christianity, and this is generally seen in the failure of the one and the continuance of the other. Now, the declaration of the text is that only the truly righteous man shall hold on his way. According to some, eternal life is given to you, but then it may not be eternal; you may fall from it, it may last only for a time..."

Charles H. Spurgeon
Metropolitan Tabernalce
June 24, 1877

Christians are expected to live in obedience to the Word of Truth. Yet it is God who is really working in our lives to change us. That is the emphasis of the passage - He is the one who is really doing the work. We are to pursue holiness while His Holy Spirit is also working in us. This is not any different than any other command (Matt. 22:37-39). Only true Christians will continue.

James 1:2-4. James 1:2-4 has the same message,

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (NASB) James 1:2-4

Trials in the life of a Christian produce endurance. Persecution and difficult times in the life of hard, rocky or thorny “soils” produce death.

Hebrews 10:24-25. We need to encourage those who claim to be Christians to endure and continue because we never

know who is a true Christian. The book of Hebrews is addressed to a church in trouble. Many of the attenders were drifting away, and some had stopped attending church. So listen to the encouragement of the Holy Spirit,

... let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near. For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins . . . (NASB) Heb. 10:24-26

Why is there no longer a sacrifice for sins? They had heard the truth and stopped attending regularly - they were in danger of finally rejecting the truth and leaving. If they did that, there is nothing anyone could do for them. There is no sacrifice for that sin; there is no forgiveness for hard, rocky, or thorny soil. Only true Christians will “hold fast” through suffering and earthly trials. It is easy to lose heart under trial,

You Must Continue!

Reference

New Testament Passages

Matthew	10:21-23	“ . . . the one who has endured to the end will be saved.”
	24:8-13	“ . . . the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved.”
Mark	13:13	“ . . . the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved.”
Luke	9:62	“No one . . . looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.
Acts	14:21-22	“ . . . encouraging them to continue in the faith”
Romans	2:6-7	“ . . . by perseverance in doing good seek . . . eternal life”
Colossians	1:22-23	“ . . . if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast”
1 Timothy	4:16	“ . . . as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself . . .”
	6:12	“Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life”
2 Timothy	2:12	“If we endure, we shall also reign with Him . . .”
Hebrews	3:14	“ . . . we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast“
	6:4-7	“ . . . have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance”
	10:23	“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering”
James	1:12	“ . . . for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life”
1 Peter	1:6-9	“ . . . that the proof of your faith”
2 Peter	1:5-11	“ . . . be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you”
Revelation	2:10, 25-26	“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

so God does encourage us to “hold fast.”

Hebrews 6:1-8. In Hebrews 6:4-7, the Holy Spirit warns the non-Christians that if after being enlightened about Jesus Christ and hearing the Word of God - if after having spent time with the body of believers and experienced the fellowship of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church, they reject Jesus Christ - there is nothing anyone can do for them. The illustration in Hebrews 6:7-8 says it all,

For ground that drinks the rain which often falls upon it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned. (NASB) Hebrews 6:7-8

The illustration points out the obvious. If water falls and the soil produces thorns and thistles, the soil is bad. So the writer of Hebrews encourages these folks to hang-in there. The rest of the book teaches that He is their Savior and High Priest. They are taught that Jesus died for their sins once for all (Heb. 10).

1 John 2:19. What is the ultimate proof that someone was never a true Christian?

They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us. (NASB) 1 John 2:19

The answer is those who leave were not good soil.

CONCLUSION. Those who are real Christians continue to trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins. Every few years at a pastor’s conference in California, it is not uncommon for a visiting pastor to give his life to Jesus Christ for the first time. It is not uncommon for seminary students to discover they never knew Jesus Christ. It is less common for leaders in churches to admit they have just received Jesus. There have always been men and women who look real - they look good. They were not real, but they continued until finally one day they understand the word of faith and accept Jesus Christ.

Scripture repeatedly refers to a Christian’s position in Jesus and calls us to live like it. For example, we are “seated in heaven” with Christ (Eph 1:20; 2:6) yet we are to set our minds on things above (Col. 3:2). We are dead to sin (Rom. 6:10-11) but we are to give no place to sin (Rom. 6:12). We are “holy ones” (Rom. 1:1) yet we are called to be holy (1 Peter 1:16). And Christians are eternally secure, yet we must hold on. Some have said we can stop holding on, but we must remember Jesus has said He will never let go! Both are true; we must hold fast and He is holding on. True Christians never let go and He is faithful!

If God saved us while we were evil, wicked men and women, why would God “un-save” us because we continue to sin? Praise God that we are saved only once . . .