

“Once Saved, Always Saved”

One heresy leads to another heresy – requiring two lies! The lie of decisional regeneration needs the lie of guaranteed eternal life to comfort the “saved” that continue living in sin.

Summary

“Once saved, always saved” is a popular mantra of easy-believism that turns God’s grace into lasciviousness by promising eternal life to those with ungodly lives. It has no Biblical basis as it is commonly used. The God of heaven will not lose a single one of His elect. All He intended to save shall be saved. Not one true believer shall be cast out. They shall all be received into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. But the concept of “once saved, always saved,” based on decisional regeneration that obligates God rather than God’s work of grace leading to godly evidence, is wrong in both phrases. Read on for the scriptural proofs!

A Catechism about Salvation and Assurance

What does “once saved” mean?

It is used by those who think salvation is merely a choice and recitation of a prayer. Rather than believing God’s sovereign will and work in salvation, they teach the heresy of decisional regeneration – sinners in the flesh decide when God must save them, contrary to the Bible (John 1:13; 3:6-8; 5:21,25-29,39; Rom 8:7-8; 9:15-16; Gal 5:17; Eph 2:1-3; Jas 1:18). They limit salvation to the moment they decided to be saved. This includes the inventions of “going forward” and/or “inviting Jesus into my heart.” They look at this date as the “once saved” event that counts.

What does “always saved” mean?

For those who pin salvation on their decision, it means salvation cannot be taken away or lost, no matter how they live. “Always saved” guarantees salvation, regardless of what happens later, whether they live a holy and righteous life or one of sin without fruit or good works. This is unscriptural and inconsistent! The Bible does not guarantee salvation to those living wickedly; the only assurance of salvation is by good works (Ps 15:1-5; Matt 7:21-23; John 8:31-32; II Cor 5:17; Phil 2:12-16; Titus 3:8; Jas 1:26-27; I John 2:4; 3:10). See the document, [“Salvation By Works.”](#)

Where did it come from?

The saying did not come from the Bible. There is nothing like it in the Bible. Two situations caused the invention of this saying. First, since it was hard to believe that repeating words as a child actually brought salvation, especially when living a sinful life later, this saying was needed to comfort those who had made such a decision that they were definitely going to heaven. Second, since many others believe you can lose your salvation, like Roman Catholics and the so-called Church of Christ, this cute little jingle was invented to oppose the heresy of losing eternal life.

What is so bad about it?

The trite saying, “Once saved, always saved,” has two lies as shown in the previous answers. Eternal life is not something a sinner chooses in an event of time. It is something planned, paid for, and applied by the triune God. The Bible denies that God planned, paid for, and applied anything for salvation for those who end up in hell. On top of reducing salvation to quoting an unscriptural mantra, these heretics promise eternal life to people that show no changed life at all. These two false promises have deceived millions into grossly misunderstanding salvation.

What effect has this heresy had?

It has promoted false confidence of eternal life, leading to lascivious living; and it has discouraged the hearts of God’s elect by such an effeminate and compromising doctrine (Ezek 13:22). Today’s easy-believism is pathetic and profane, as any means are used to extract superficial professions of salvation, which lead to lascivious living by most of those who have been guaranteed eternal life (John 8:30-32; Jas 2:14; Jude 1:4). And God’s elect, who crave the powerful teaching of a sovereign God and righteous living, are left starving under milquetoast “preaching.”

Can a decision save a person?

No! Decisional regeneration was invented by Charles Finney and popularized by Billy Graham, who reduced salvation to a few words repeated as a salvation mantra. This idea is not taught in the Bible. Today, they even debate whether a person must admit Jesus is lord! They take Rev 3:20 from the church at Laodicea for fellowship and apply it to sinners for eternal life! The real issue is God’s choice to accept us in Jesus Christ (Rom 9:15-16,21-24; Gal 4:9; Eph 1:3-6). See the documents, [“Seven Proofs of Unconditional Salvation”](#) and [“Revelation 3:20 Reclaimed”](#) and [“Why No Invitation?”](#)

But I thought I chose to be saved?

You thought wrong. The Bible never encourages you to trust a past decision you made. Even Paul’s confidence for eternal life was in fighting a good fight, finishing his course, and keeping the faith (II Tim 4:7-8). He knew whom he had believed, not that he had believed, and not when he had believed (II Tim 1:12)! Faith in God is no more than devilish faith (Jas 2:19), but faith in your faith is more profane (Rom 9:15-16)! You are saved from condemnation by your position in Christ, to which you were chosen, and which is proven by godliness (Rom 8:1; Eph 1:3-6).

When and how am I saved?

Men are saved in five phases. God elected some men before the world began (Eph 1:3-6; II Tim 1:9). Jesus died for them on the cross (Gal 4:4-5; I Tim 1:15). The Holy Spirit regenerates them in time (John 3:8; Titus 3:5). They are converted by the gospel to various degrees (I Cor 15:2; II Tim 1:10). They are finally glorified in heaven (Rom 8:29-30; I Pet 1:3-5). Only those predestinated end up glorified (Rom 8:29-33; Eph 1:3-12). Your faith, baptism, or any good works are the evidence and result of salvation, not conditions for it. See the document, [“When Were You Saved?”](#)

Can a child of God lose his salvation?

No, a child of God can never lose heaven and end up in hell. He may lose earthly benefits of knowing and living the truth, but his name will stay in the book of life. God predestinated His elect to adoption as sons through the purchase price of Jesus Christ’s death (Gal 4:4-6; Eph 1:3-6). Jesus Christ will stand before God and present every one of them to God (Heb 2:13). It is impossible for even one to be separated from God’s love (Rom 8:28-39). It is God’s faithfulness that keeps them, not their faithfulness. He will never repent of His gift of eternal life (Rom 11:29).

Are there any elect in hell?

No, that is impossible! The word “elect” means that God chose a person to eternal life before the world began (Rom 8:29-33; Eph 1:3-12; I Pet 1:2). God put the elect in the hand of Jesus Christ, and no man is able to pluck them out of either Christ’s hand or God’s hand (John 10:28-29). Just as surely as Adam made all men sinners, so Jesus Christ made all the elect righteous and beneficiaries of eternal life (Rom 5:14-19; I Cor 15:22). It is just as impossible for Jesus Christ to go to hell as it is for even one elect in Jesus Christ to go to hell (Ps 89:19-37; Heb 6:13-20).

Can Jesus lose any He died for?

No, that is entirely impossible! Jesus promised He would raise up every single person God gave Him (John 6:39). God has made all the elect accepted in Jesus Christ the Beloved (Eph 1:3-6). Everyone in Jesus Christ, the elect are chosen in Him, will be saved to the uttermost (Heb 7:25). Jesus Christ will present every single one of the elect to God (Heb 2:13). Since His death was so precious, God will give every other gift to the elect (Rom 8:32). If anyone for whom Jesus died could be lost, then God would have to reject His Son’s work, which cannot occur (Is 53:10-12).

What is the basis of eternal security?

The faithfulness and power of God and the meritorious value and perpetual intercession of Jesus Christ (Rom 5:10; 8:34; I Cor 1:8-9; Heb 7:25)! There is no other basis for confidence in eternal life, either now or later. The “once saved, always saved” crowd takes comfort in a mere decision for Jesus, for God and Jesus Christ have put forth the same effort for the lost in hell! Even at funerals, they assure families that their loved ones are in heaven based on an event in the past, rather than God’s grace or Christ’s work. No one in the Bible did anything even close to this error.

How can I know I am elect?

Believe on Jesus Christ, repent of your sins, and live a righteous life with zeal. Peter listed eight good works, beginning with faith, which can prove election sure to your own heart and conscience (II Pet 1:5-11). Paul declared that the Thessalonians were God’s elect by three good works (I Thess 1:2-4). James declared that it is good works by which we can distinguish ourselves from believing devils, since faith by itself is proof of nothing (Jas 2:14-26). Paul told Timothy to lay hold of eternal life for assurance by righteous living and giving (I Tim 6:11-12,17-19).

Can I have assurance of salvation?

Yes! Your assurance of eternal life depends on a couple things – your faith in the will of God and the finished work of Jesus Christ and your good works that provide the evidence you are one of His elect (Rom 10:8-17; I Thess 1:2-4; II Pet 1:5-11; Heb 6:9-12; Jas 2:14-26). If you play with sin, you grieve and quench the witness of the Holy Spirit that you are a child of God (Rom 8:13-16; Gal 4:6; Eph 4:30; I Thess 5:19). John wrote to confirm possession of eternal life, and he wrote about personal righteousness and love (I John 5:13). See the document, [“No Fine Line.”](#)

Am I saved by my works?

No! The Bible declares unequivocally that human works of any kind are not the means of obtaining eternal life (Rom 9:11,15-16; Eph 2:8-9; II Tim 1:9; Titus 3:3-7). Justification, the forgiveness of sins, and eternal life are by the obedience of one – Jesus Christ (Is 53:10-12; Rom 5:19; II Cor 5:21; Heb 1:3). God will not share His glory with another, and salvation by works puts Him in a position of debt to sinners, which He is not at all (Rom 4:1-8; I Cor 1:29-31). Salvation is a free gift by the grace of God without works (Rom 3:24; 5:15-18; 6:23; 8:32; 11:5-6).

Can I be saved without works?

Yes, but you can never rightly have assurance without good works. Conversion and fruitbearing by God's elect vary from none to much, from Lot to Abraham, from Demas to Paul. Some of God's elect live barren lives without fruit (Luke 8:11-18; II Pet 1:5-9). The repentant thief went to heaven, and there were no good works following him (Rev 14:13). Some of the elect, even ministers, will have their works burned up (I Cor 3:15). Without works, you have no evidence of eternal life, because faith always presumes works (John 8:30-32; I Thess 1:2-4; Jas 2:14-16).

Can "once saved, always saved" be used correctly?

Yes, if it is limited to the will or operation of God, it can be used truthfully. If "once saved" is applied to the will of God in election, the death of Christ in justification, or the cleansing of the Spirit in regeneration, these are certain events of salvation that definitely occurred at points in time and result in eternal life. If any one of these salvation events has occurred for a person, then "always saved" is entirely true for that person. In particular, we can glory in this manmade phrase by applying it to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (John 19:30; Heb 9:12; 10:10-14).

How is "once saved, always saved" inconsistent?

If eternal life begins by your choice, then consistency requires you to keep that salvation by your obedience. Roman Catholics, who offer eternal life through sacraments, are consistent by teaching you can lose your salvation, if you sin later. True Arminianism, from Jacobus Arminius, also teach that you can lose eternal life by sinning after your freewill decision that got salvation started. It is Finney, Moody, Graham and others that popularized the inconsistent combination of decisional salvation with a perpetual guarantee. See the document, ["Calvinism, Arminianism, and the Truth."](#)

Is "perseverance of the saints" the solution?

No! Calvinists invented the doctrine of perseverance. Knowing that righteousness is the true evidence of eternal life, they teach fatalistically that God guarantees all the elect will live holy and righteous lives. This is not the case, or there would be no purpose for preaching or warnings against apostasy. God preserves the elect by His grace and integrity in Jesus Christ, but He does not guarantee their perseverance in holiness and righteousness (Rom 8:28-39; I Cor 10:1-11; 11:32; II Tim 2:13,16-19; Heb 6:17-20). See the document, ["Calvinism, Arminianism, and the Truth."](#)

Can I fall from grace?

Yes, it is possible to fall from grace, because Galatians 5:4 and Hebrews 12:15 declare it so. But you must understand what falling from grace means before you foolishly presume believers can lose eternal life and go to hell (Neh 8:8; II Tim 2:15). In Galatians 5:4, Paul warned about falling from the true doctrine and understanding of grace by mixing it with the Law of Moses. He did not teach that these believers were going to hell. In Hebrews 12:15, Paul warned about failing of the true grace of God by living carnal and worldly lives (Heb 12:11-17).

Can the elect's faith be overthrown?

Yes, it is possible to have your faith wrecked by false teachers, persecution, or temptations. Hymenaeus and Philetus overthrew the faith of some by teaching the resurrection had already come and gone; but God still knew those who were His, which is the real issue of eternal life anyway (II Tim 2:15-19). Paul warned Timothy to ministerial faithfulness, lest he cost his hearers the truth and righteous living (I Tim 4:16). And he told Corinth that they were of all men most miserable, if they let false teachers steal the doctrine of the resurrection from them (I Cor 15:2,19).

Does severe chastening mean I am going to hell?

No, chastening means you are a son of God and He is dealing with you in love, even when the chastening is severe enough to be compared to scourging (Heb 12:5-8). God's chastening is proof positive that you will not be condemned with the world, which He does not love or chasten (I Cor 11:32; Matt 7:23). God loved Israel of old very much, but He punished them for their sins with the loving care of a Father (Deut 7:6-11; I Cor 10:1-11; Ps 78:1-72; 106:43-48; 118:18; Is 44:21-22; Ezekiel 16:1-63). Consider how God dealt with David (II Sam 12:7-14).

For further study:

The web article, ["Seven Proofs of Unconditional Salvation,"](#) proves God gives eternal life as an unconditional gift to the elect.

The web article, ["When Were You Saved?"](#) shows that Paul and all the elect are saved in five distinct phases.

The web article, ["Revelation 3:20 Reclaimed,"](#) recovers this horribly abused verse from offering eternal life to one of fellowship.

The sermon outline, ["Why No Invitations?"](#) explains the origin and heresy of the modern invitational system of altar calls.

The sermon outline, ["John 3:16 Revisited,"](#) shows by John's writing only that the popular use of this text is entirely unwarranted.

The sermon outline, "[Salvation By Works](#)," shows how modern decisional regenerationists ignore the Bible's call to good works. The sermon outline, "[No Fine Line](#)," deals with assurance of eternal life in detail and shows that the elect can have confidence. The sermon outline, "[Salvation Problem Texts](#)," shows the Legion of errors by decisional regenerationists in using the Bible.

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