

# WHAT MUST I DO?

*And he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'* — Acts 16:30

## **Man's Part In Salvation**

**Required: Faithfulness.** The one who has come out of the world and who has turned to God, becoming a part of the family, is assured of the many blessings that are found in Christ Jesus (**Eph. 1:3**). But just because we have obeyed the things which bring forgiveness of sins does not mean the fight is over. On the contrary, it has just begun. The child of God who says he's "got it made" just because he was converted at some point way back in his history is fooling only himself. A servant who only served one thing at the master's table and then sat down to work no more would be fired. A servant of the Lord who does nothing after his or her conversion will face fire. An eternal fire.

First, we should address the popular concept among religious people that once we are saved, we are always saved — with no possibility of being lost. Called either "The Perseverance of the Saints" or "once saved, always saved," the doctrine teaches that those who become children of God can never so sin as to lose their eternal salvation. Again, this is based on the erroneous concept that God has chosen all of the individuals who will be saved and, if that was true, He would ensure that none of those ones who were chosen would be lost, so He makes sure they **cannot** so sin as to be lost. Or so they say.

One man went so far as to say:

"We take the position that a Christian's sins do not damn his soul. The way a Christian lives, what he says, his character, his conduct, or his attitude toward other people have nothing whatsoever to do with the salvation of his soul. All the prayers a man may pray, all the Bibles he may read, all the churches he may belong to, all the services he may attend, all the sermons he may practice, all the debts he may pay, all the ordinances he may keep, all the benevolent acts he may perform will not make his soul one whit safer; and all the sins he may commit from idolatry to murder will not make his soul in any more danger." [Sam Morris, from a tract entitled *Do A Christian's Sins Damn His Soul?* (Stamford, TX: First Baptist Church, 1949).]

Such is **not** a teaching that originates in the written Word of God, the Bible. You should note that he did not — could not — offer up a single Bible passage to justify his words.

**Scripture References.** Numerous are the warnings and exhortations to the saints [believers] to remain faithful. If it were absolutely impossible for the believer to fall away, why would such warnings [inspired by the Holy Spirit] be needed? Note that, as Christians, we are told to "*stand fast in the faith*" (**1 Cor. 16:13**), "*stand fast in the Lord*" (**Phlp. 4:1**), "*hold fast our confession*" (**Heb. 4:14**), "*hold fast the confession of our hope*" (**Heb. 10:23**), "*hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown*" (**Rev. 3:11**), and to "*be faithful until death*" that we might receive "*the crown of life.*" (**Rev. 2:10**)

Many times, we are told that the rewards of God are **dependent** our faithfulness. The Corinthian brethren were told that they were "*saved*" by the gospel that Paul had preached to them "*if you hold fast that word which I preached to you; unless you believed in vain.*" (**1 Cor. 15:1-2**) The writer of Hebrews told his audience [Jewish Christians] that we are God's house "*if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.*" (**Heb. 3:6**) To the Roman Gentiles, Paul warned them to not be haughty in their faith, knowing that the Jews had been 'broken off' because of their unbelief. To them Paul says, "*(D)o not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, 'Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.'* Well said. *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 may not spare you either.*" (**Rom. 11:18-21**) If the Jews were 'broken off' because of unbelief, would they be any different? Paul didn't think so, and he was inspired by the Holy Spirit!

To the Corinthian brethren Paul again writes, exhorting them to “run [live] in such a way that you may obtain [the prize from Christ].” (1 Cor. 9:24) If it didn't matter what one did after obedience, why bother? He went on to speak of his own efforts to “discipline” his own body, to “bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.” (v. 27) The word *disqualified* means *rejected*. And this from the apostle Paul! All through the letter to the Galatians, Paul warned them about turning away from the gospel he had already preached to them and which they had believed to “any other gospel.” From the outset of the letter, Paul said that he marveled “that you are **turning away** so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel.” (1:6) The Greek word translated here as ‘turning away’ is μετατίθεμι [metatithemi, met-a-tith-a-may], which means to *desert from one person or thing to another*. [Thayer's] No matter which dictionary you look at, the term *desert* has implications of leaving someone, some place, or something. You cannot desert someone you had never met. You cannot desert a place you had never been to. [Webster's: *to leave (a person, place, etc.) without intending to return, esp. in violation of a duty, promise, or the like.*] The warning to the Galatians was to not abandon the gospel that saved them. Why warn them if there was no danger? Why would Paul marvel if it did not matter?

To the **Ephesian** brethren, Paul exhorted them to “put on the whole armor of God” that they would “be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” (6:11) If **God** is the one that is protecting us from falling away, why instruct **us** to do anything regarding that which would prevent it? To the **Colossian** brethren, Paul reminded them that Jesus would “present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight; if indeed **you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard.**” (1:22-23) The presentation of them as holy and blameless before God by Christ was conditioned upon continuing in the faith.

The writer of **Hebrews**, especially, gives warning after warning about turning away from the gospel to anything else. [In the case here, he writes to Jewish Christians who considered abandoning the gospel and going back to the old system.] In 2:1, he warns that “we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.” Drift away from **what**? In 3:12, he warns the brethren to beware “lest there be in any of you an evil heart of **unbelief in departing from the living God.**” Again, how could one depart from God unless they had first been **with** Him? He goes on to use the Israelites as an example of unfaithfulness and unbelief to encourage them to remain faithful. He exhorts them [and us] to “be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.” (4:11) The Israelites were God's people, yet some did not attain to the reward. Why? “So we see that they could not enter in **because of unbelief.**” (3:19) Even God's people could be guilty of unbelief! To these Jewish Christians, he wrote, “**For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.**” (10:36) Notice that endurance was required of **them**, and not something the writer expected God to give them. The writer went on to say, “But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.” (Heb 10:39) When he used the term ‘draw back,’ he spoke of abandoning the faith, or **apostasy**.

Peter exhorted the Christians to add to their faith that they might not be barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, instructing them to “be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for **if you do these things you will never stumble.**” (2 Pet. 1:10) And if we don't do this, what will result? We will stumble. What happens when someone stumbles? They fall! Peter would later say that if those who had “escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord” were “again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.” (2:20) This does not sound like ‘once saved, always saved’ if the end is worse than the beginning! How could they be in a worse condition and, at the same time, dwell with God in heaven? Peter continues by saying, “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.” (v. 21) If this is not speaking of one who had heard and obeyed the gospel message, then what **is** it? What did he mean when he spoke of ‘escaping the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord’ and what did he mean by ‘the way of righteousness’ if it wasn't the gospel message?

Why would he exhort them to “*be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless*” (3:14) if it was all in God's hands?

And regarding specific examples of falling away, Paul told Timothy that “*the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith.*” (1 Tim. 4:1) [The New American Standard translated this “*some will fall away from the faith,*” under the heading of ‘*Apostasy.*’] One cannot depart, or fall away, from a place he has never been. He later warned Timothy of those who taught messages of ungodliness [Hymanaeus and Philetus], “*who have strayed concerning the truth...and they overthrow the faith of some.*” (2 Tim. 2:16-18) He also warned of the time that would come when some would “*turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.*” (2 Tim. 4:4) They turned away from where they once were: in the truth.

Particular individuals are also presented as having once obeyed and then found to be in danger regarding their salvation. Simon the sorcerer stands out as the most well-known example, found in **Acts 8:9-24**. We read that Simon believed the gospel and was baptized (v. 13), just like many other Samaritans had done (v. 12). Later, when Simon offered money to buy the power the apostles had, Peter said to him, “*Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.*” Simon's soul was in danger — his heart was not right with God and he needed forgiveness.

But the unanimous response to this passage is, ‘Well, he really wasn't saved.’ And how does one draw such a conclusion? The Bible says that he believed and was baptized (v. 13); was that not what all teach is necessary for salvation? If he was ‘not really saved,’ then what about the rest of the Samaritans who had done the same thing? Why then did the apostles lay hands on all of them, including Simon (vs. 16, 17)? And if we can discount Simon's conversion, even though it clearly states that he believed and was baptized, must we also then discount those on the day of Pentecost, the Ethiopian eunuch, those in Corinth, those in Athens, and anywhere else that it says they had believed and were baptized? If not, why not?

Another lesser-known example of a particular individual's soul being in danger is that of the apostle Peter. In **Galatians 2**, where Paul speaks of Peter's partiality shown for the Jews and against the Gentile brethren in Antioch, he says, “*Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed*” (v. 11). The word *blamed* in this verse is sometimes translated also as *condemned*. In fact, the New American Standard has translated the verse “*because he stood condemned.*” Now we ask: As it stood in the situation of Galatians 2, was Peter condemned or saved? Remember that this was the apostle Peter, one chosen by God for service to the Lord, one who walked with Jesus, taught His Word, and who had led thousands to obedience through his preaching of the Word. Was he saved or condemned? What does the Bible say?

We could go on, but this should suffice as proof that the Calvinistic view of ‘eternal security’ is not derived from the entirety of God's Word. That is not to say that they do not go to the Bible — they do. They just do not consider the **entirety** of God's Word, and that is the root problem. These verses we have looked at — any one passage by itself — is evidence enough that our salvation is not ‘eternally secured.’ It is **possible** that one may fall away. [Not necessary, but **possible**.] Faithfulness is **required**.

Remember the analogy the apostle Paul used in **Romans 7:1-4** [marriage]? Let's use that analogy and apply it to this matter. Let's say you find the perfect mate and you investigate him or her and find that you are willing to marry him or her. You are willing and ready to join in matrimony with him or her and enjoy all the blessings of the marriage union. So, you set the date and, before too long, you get married. Now, let me ask you a question: Would you expect your spouse to be faithful to you?

We can huff and puff and twist the Scriptures all we want, but the parallel remains. No one who enters into a marriage union does so with no expectation of faithfulness on the part of their spouse. Marriage is **all about** faithfulness and loyalty. Spouses who are not faithful are often divorced. Let us heed the warning!

**What If One Sins After Conversion?** Many people have asked me, "What happens if I sin after I become a child of God? Am I lost? Do I need to be baptized again?" Because some have a prejudice against the very idea of man doing anything, some will not even admit that a child of God can even sin, but to deny it means we are deceiving ourselves (1 John 1:8) and we make God a liar (1 John 1:10). I am sure that no one would want to stand before God on the last day having made God a liar!

The fact is, we do sin even after we are brought into Christ. We need to forever be reminded that our enemy, the devil, does not quit trying to win our souls just because we become a child of God (cf. 1 Pet. 5:8). If anything, he tries all the harder! And remember that Paul said, "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). He did not qualify that by saying only those outside of Christ who sin. This applies to **all** men.

So what do we do? Well, sandwiched in between the two verses that tell us that Christians do sin, we find the answer: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) John wrote this to those who were already Christians (5:13), and he told them that they did sin, and that, if they did, they could be forgiven. Remember, though, that this promise of forgiveness through prayer is given **only** to those who are already children of God — Christians.

### Questions



1. What popular doctrine teaches that a Christian cannot so sin as to be lost? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. What may we infer from the numerous warnings to "stand fast" or "be faithful"? \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. What was the warning Paul gave to the Gentiles in Rome about boasting in their salvation? \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. Why did the writer of Hebrews write his letter to the Jewish Christians? What does this mean regarding the possibility of falling away? \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. What did Peter say we could expect if we turn our backs on the "holy commandments" after having once believed and obeyed? \_\_\_\_\_  
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6. Why did the writer of Hebrews cite the example of the Israelites (Heb. 3:12-4:11)? \_\_\_\_\_  
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7. If a child of God sins, how may he be forgiven? Cite the passage that teaches this. \_\_\_\_\_  
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8. To whom is the promise of forgiveness through prayer given? \_\_\_\_\_  
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9. What should this say about those who say the unbeliever may be saved by "praying the sinner's prayer"?

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