

IS SALVATION ETERNAL?

An excerpt paraphrased from a sermon preached by Dr Bruce Woolard
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Bible readings are taken from the NIV Bible.

If I should ask you for your name, and after you give me your name I ask you if you are sure you are the person you claim to be, you most likely will be offended that I should doubt who you are. However, there are countless Christians who are not too sure that they are saved. Too many doubt their salvation. Do you know with certainty that you are saved? Some will say to claim salvation is simply arrogant and presumptuous. However, God's Word tells us that we can know, with certainty, that we are saved – **1 John 5:13** *"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may **know that you have eternal life.**"*

CONFESSION

The Scriptures clearly teach us that salvation is subject to our affirmation and confession of faith in Christ – **Romans 10:9** *"If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."*

Meeting this condition secures eternal life. We are saved not by what we do, but what we believe Christ has done for us. It is through His merits and credentials that you and I are accepted by God. God is holy and by nature we are sinners. The only conduit by which we can be rescued from our fate is confession of faith in Christ. We receive the gift of salvation by grace through faith – **Ephesians 2:8** *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God"*.

If salvation is a gift from God, and some say we can lose it, then God has given us a gift that He will take back, if we do not perform at His standard.

CONDEMNATION

To become saved means accepting that Jesus, is our Saviour, who took the wrath of a Holy God upon himself on our behalf. Therefore, there is no condemnation

to those of us who are in Christ – **Romans 8:1** *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*

Remember, even the prodigal son, although he had left his father he was still the son of his father. Many believers wander from the pathway and therefore if salvation is based on performance, they will be lost. But salvation is not performance based, the basis of salvation is a change in our position. When we become believers and accept Christ our position changes. We become saved, secured and sanctified. We take on a whole new image – once we were lost by now we are saved. The prodigal had broken fellowship with his family but broken fellowship does not mean a broken relationship. Our relationship with God is secure because the validity of our relationship is what God has accomplished. On the other hand, our fellowship with God is subject to our performance, so we can break fellowship but still retain a relationship. You may not always feel that you are saved, but salvation is through faith not feelings.

CONTRADICTIONS

Some with good intentions and motives may disagree and may even quote some verses from the Scriptures that would contradict the *“once saved always saved position”*. Over the many years of ministry some have raised the following contradictions. Let us examine these verses:

Revelation 2:4-5 says *“Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.”*

Please note that this is in reference to the church in Ephesus. It is speaking about a church raised up by God in Asia Minor to be a witness that Jesus was the Messiah. If that church lost its motivation of love it would cease to be a witness for God and therefore, would be removed. This does not refer to an individual believer, it has to do with the local church’s location and witness to the community. Even today a Christian church in its failed mission could be removed as His witness to a lost world. So we can see that these verses are speaking about a church and its mission, not the individual believer. **Revelation 1:20** *“The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden*

lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels[a] of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.”

Another passage of Scripture is **Hebrews 6:4-6** *“It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age and who have fallen[a] away, to be brought back to repentance. To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.”*

After having read these verses superficially it seems a “fate accompli” that a person who has experienced the gift of the Holy Spirit and who has tasted of the Word of God and witnessed the power of God and who turns away that it would be impossible for such a person to again be restored. Lifting these verses out its context would certainly support the viewpoint that salvation can be lost. However, when one contextualises these verses a very different fact emerges. The first question is – Who is the writer writing to? The Hebrews. Who were the Hebrews? They were people of Israel – Jews. The writer has in mind the collective body of Jews. Some who had witnessed the works of God performed by Jesus in His earthly ministry. They had seen the miracles, signs and wonders, they had even tasted of what life would be like in the pending Kingdom, if they, after having witnessed such convincing evidence that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, and still remained unmoved, there was no other sacrifice that could redeem them. It would be impossible for them to be saved unless they embraced the Messiah. It is important that the context of **Hebrews 6:4-6** and **Hebrews 10:26-27** is understood in relation to the history of the Nation of Israel and their Kadesh Barnea encounter found in **Numbers 13:25-28** *“At the end of forty days they returned from exploring the land. They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the Desert of Paran. There they reported to them and to the whole assembly and showed them the fruit of the land. They gave Moses this account: “We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there.”*

And Numbers 14:11 *“The Lord said to Moses, “How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the signs I have performed among them?”*

The Jewish people, or Israelites, in Kadesh Barnea, had tasted of the fruit from Canaan (the Promised Land). They had witnessed the power of God in delivering them from Egypt, and yet because of doubt and unbelief they could not enter the Promised Land. The writer to Hebrews captures the scene perfectly and poignantly when he reminds his Hebrew listeners that if they, like their forbears, had witnessed and had a taste of life in the Kingdom (Promised Land) and yet turned away from this revelation it would be impossible for them to be saved, because they were looking for an alternative way of salvation.

CONCLUSION

Having considered these verses and this message we must conclude with the beautiful assurance contained in **Romans 8:37-39** *“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Yes, nothing can separate you from God’s love in Christ Jesus.

