

## "Can Christians Be Lost?"

Some say that once you become a Christian, you never lose your salvation. Is this true? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. And this is a Bible study, "In SEARCH of the Lord's Way." Today we're asking if a Christian can lose his salvation, so stay tuned.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way. We're here to search God's word for the Lord's Way. God is the author of scripture and we can believe the bible because God was behind the writing of every verse, every chapter, and every book. We can trust God to give us the truth because God wanted us to know. We are always delighted when you spend this time with us. Let us know that you're watching. Tell a friend about this program. We want to be a part of your life each week.

The doctrine of "once saved, always saved" suggests the Christian, once truly saved, can never do anything to lose his salvation and be finally lost in hell. This belief says Christians have an unconditional security in Christ. They suggest that any person who appears to be a Christian and falls away was never truly converted in the first place. They say Christians do sin; but when they sin, they are punished in this life and forfeit privileges in heaven but not entrance into heaven.

But is heaven conditional? And salvation conditional? What is a condition? A conditional statement is usually introduced by words such as "if" or "unless." When Jesus said in Luke 13:3 that unless you repent, you will perish, we understand repentance is a condition to keep from being lost. When the Bible says "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:6 to 7). You see, there are conditions.

Now if you're interested in whether Christians can be lost, we offer printed copies of our study or the booklet "Take Up Your Cross" free. Just mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream this program on our website at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org) and on YouTube.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from 2 Peter 2:20 to 22, and answer the question, "Can a Christian lose his salvation?"

Our reading today comes from the second letter of Peter chapter 2 verses 20 to 22. And here he discusses what happens when people leave the faith and begin going in the wrong direction.

For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT," and, "A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire."

This is a pretty straight forward statement that a Christian, even if he has known the truth at one point can leave it. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful for Your word which helps us to understand Your will for our lives. Father help us to be willing to listen and to hear all that the word of God says about being saved and remaining saved. In Jesus name, Amen.

The doctrine of once-saved, always saved is built upon the belief that God's grace is unconditional. Some say once grace is given, a Christian cannot lose it. But the doctrine of unconditional security

ignores the conditional, qualifying statements in Scripture about whom the grace of God saves. Several passages show our salvation is conditional. And we must remain faithful to God and to His word.

For instance, the Lord Jesus said in John 8:51, "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word, he will never see death." But what happens if a person stops keeping God's word? The Lord said in John 15:1 to 2, "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 that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit." Now when a branch in Christ no longer bears fruit, it's taken away. John 15:6 says, "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned." Now this is the end of a Christian who will not bear fruit.

Moreover, how your moral life matters. A Christian who turns to fleshly passions can lose his soul, but one who puts away sin can live with God. Romans 8:12 to 13 says, "So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if (you) by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live." You see morality is a condition of salvation.

The Lord expects His people to hold firmly to their faith. Our salvation depends on it. 1 Corinthians 15:1 to 2 says, "Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain." Now if they do not hold firmly to their faith, they will have believed in vain and could lose their salvation.

Colossians 1:21 to 23 says, "And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach— if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister." Holding firmly to the gospel is a condition of our salvation.

Remaining active in church attendance is a condition of our salvation. In Hebrews 10 verse 25, the inspired writer noted that some Christians had forsaken assembling with the church. In response to this, he said in verses 26 and 7: "For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries." Yes, a Christian who quits all together on God can lose the blessing of eternal life. God expects us to stay involved in church as long as we're able.

The second epistle of Peter was written to Christians urging them to remain faithful and not to fall away to immorality or to false teaching. 2 Peter 2:20 and 21 says, "For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, (now these people are Christians) they are again entangled in them (that is these defilements) and are overcome, (he says ) the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them" Now this clear Scripture shows that if a Christian gets overcome by sin, he can find himself worse off than before he became a Christian. It would have been better if he had never known the way of the Lord.

In 1 John 1:6 to 7 the Bible says, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him (with Jesus) and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." Our freedom from sin is conditional on whether we follow the Lord or follow the world. Now, I've

presented several conditions that God has placed on our salvation. If there were only one Scriptural condition on this list that would be enough to show that our salvation is conditional.

In addition, the Scriptures warn Christians to remain faithful and committed to the Lord. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:24 to 27, "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore (Paul says) I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified." Paul knew that he could lose his crown of life if he didn't discipline himself and stay free from sin.

In Galatians 5:19 to 21 Paul warned the Galatian Christians about the deeds of the flesh. He said, "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, (that is you Christians in Galatia) that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." Now why would Paul forewarn Christians about these sins keeping them out of heaven, if Christians couldn't lose their salvation?

Our commitment to Christ is a lifetime effort. The Lord Jesus said in John 5 and verse 24 that, "whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." Now this passage says the believer possesses eternal life but doesn't say anything about the person who stops believing or stops hearing the word. John 8:51 says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he shall never see death." But what about the person who quits keeping the Word? John 3:36 says, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." One has eternal life as long as he believes and obeys. If he stops believing, stops obeying, he can lose that life.

Can a person stop believing? Some think that they can't, but we have an example in Scripture of Israel coming out of Egypt. Study Psalm 106 closely. Psalm 106 verse 12 says, "Then they believed His words; They sang His praise." But verse 13 says, "they quickly forgot His works." And in verse 21 the Bible says, "they forgot God their Savior." Then in verses 24 and 5 says of Psalm 106 it says, "Then they despised the pleasant land; They did not believe in His word, but grumbled in their tents; They did not listen to the voice of the LORD." Can people stop believing? Well the Israelites did.

In the parable of the sower, Jesus described different kinds of soil: the soil beside the road, the rocky soil, the thorny soil, and the good soil. Now these types of soil describe people's hearts. Jesus tells how the Word of God, or the seed, is planted in the thorny soil and what happened. The Lord said in Luke 8 and verse 13, "Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away." You see they stopped believing. And sadly, we've all known people like that. Then those in the thorny soil let God be crowded out all together. And don't let God work in their lives anymore and they don't bring any fruit to fruition.

Now Paul predicted in 1 Timothy 4 and verse 1, "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons." Well, when you stop listening to the Lord and you begin pay attention to others, especially demons and the devil you stop believing. To believe in the Lord Jesus means you believe what He teaches. How can you say you believe the Lord if you won't accept the things that He teaches.

Now consider Hebrews 3:12 to 14, written to brothers in Christ. "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'Today,' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, (he says) if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end." To fall away is to abandon the Lord willfully and completely. This brother has been deceived and hardened by sin and he's lost his faith. Again, we're partakers of Christ only if we hold firm our faith to the end.

Now at this point someone says well, "Phil, don't you know no one can snatch us out of the Lord's hand? Don't you know that we can never be separated from God's love?" Yes, I well know the two precious promises found in John 10:27 to 29 and in Romans 8:35 to 39. They say that no one and nothing can separate us from God. These verses, however, don't consider what happens to a person who himself decides to separate from God. Jude 21 advises us to "keep yourselves in the love of God"; and John 15:9 to 10 teaches that we must abide in God's love. Now no one else can separate us from God, but we can decide to leave the Lord. And Christians can choose to fall away and abandon God! They can choose to leave God; and, sadly, many have.

Another objects, "If a Christian falls away, he was never truly converted in the first place." How do you know that. Are you sure? You've never changed your mind? The Bible says in Hebrews 6:4 to 6, "For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, (they chose to fall away) it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame."

Now it's clear that these people were once Christians. They were enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted or experienced the good word of God and the powers of the age to come. You couldn't have these spiritual blessings outside of Christ. You can't fall away from something unless you were first part of it. And they fell away by willfully rejecting Jesus Christ. And others couldn't get them to repent, because they didn't want to repent. To fall away is a willful choice to abandon the faith all together.

In a different situation Galatians speaks of Christians who followed a different gospel than Paul preached by binding circumcision and the Law on Gentile Christians. Paul said in Galatians 5 and verse 4 "You have been severed from Christ, (well they were once joined) you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace." Now here are people under the grace of God who fell away from it and severed themselves from Christ. To be severed implies they first belonged to Him. A Christian can fall from grace. And I pray that you won't.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that in Your word You have given us the warnings and given us the truth. And though they may be hard to hear, Heavenly Father help us to be willing to listen to You. To love You and to hold firm to our faith and stay close to You. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

God offers pardon for Christians who have sinned. Now even when a Christian strays from the truth, God has a way for him to return to salvation. Like the prodigal son, he can come home.

When Simon the Sorcerer in Acts 8 offered money to buy the apostles' gift, Peter rebuked him for his sin. And in Acts 8:21 to 24 Peter said, "You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness

and in the bond of iniquity.” You see God expects Christians to repent of their sins and to ask for forgiveness, if they wish to be pardoned.

The Bible says in 1 John 1 and verse 9 that, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” God is faithful to His people. He will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness, if we confess our sins, repent of them, and ask for forgiveness. Yes God offers pardon, but there are conditions to our forgiveness.

The same is true for the person who wants to become a Christian. The Lord Jesus offers salvation as a gift to those who believe, who repent of their sins, who confess His name before others, and who are baptized into Christ. Now baptism is an immersion in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2 and verse 38). Meeting conditions won’t earn you salvation; but if you fail to meet them, you cannot enjoy the grace and blessing of God.

We hope that you’ll take this to heart. And if you want a free printed copy of this message or the free booklet “Take Up Your Cross,” mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There’s also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, “SearchTVMinistry.” And be sure to like the programs and be notified; and this will help us spread the program. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don’t worry, we’re not asking for money. We’re here to help you draw close to God.

We do ask that you focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. You see everybody needs a church family. Now I realize that some of you for health reasons cannot attend worship; and I’m speaking to those who can attend and haven’t been. There’s probably a church of Christ near you. And if you’re looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we’ll gladly help you find one. We’ll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God’s Word with us and tell a friend about this program. And as we say to you always, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord’s Way.