

“ONCE SAVED - ALWAYS SAVED”

Is this the security of the believer?

compiled by Rachel M. Cory, December 25, 2007

JAMES 5:19-20 “Brethren, if **anyone among you wanders from the truth**, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

The sinner here is not someone who has never known the truth. This is one of Christ's own. This verse says it all - one who knows the truth, CAN wander from it, And that soul will ultimately die, unless he turns back to Christ. The verse is shown below from the New Revised Standard Version.

James 5:19 My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and is brought back by another, you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

Now that you know where I'm coming from - Let's start over:

JOHN 10:28, 29 Jesus said “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.” NIV

JOHN 5:24 "Most assuredly, I say to you, **he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life**, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

PHILIPPIANS 1:6 “Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;”

You gave your heart to Jesus. You honestly desired to be changed, to have a new heart, to be righteous from the inside out. You were baptized in His name - and the name of His Father, and the name of the Spirit. You are now part of the body of Christ, His church, His bride. Your name is written in Heaven, in the Book of Life. No one, not even Satan himself, can take you away from your Savior. You're safe. You're secure forever. Right?

Well, yes - and no.

It's easy to see that as long as you *want* a relationship with Him, Christ your Savior will allow nothing to sever that relationship. But what happens if you should turn your back on Christ and go back to a life of *rebellious* sin without regard for God or fellow man? Does God ever have grounds for divorce??

GOD IS ULTIMATELY CONCERNED WITH OUR FREEDOM OF CHOICE.

God created Adam and Eve in His own image. Man was given free will. Without free will there can be no love, for love by definition must be freely given. Men are not androids, programed to act within narrow defined parameters.

To God, this freedom of choice was so important that He was willing to sacrifice His only Son rather than create man without this freedom. The Father knew of course, that one day Lucifer would rebel against Him, never to return. He knew that Adam and Eve would choose to doubt His love, disobey His command and eat of “the tree.” He knew that only a portion of their descendants would finally be reconciled. He knew what it would take to win them back. And yet He created beings with the freedom to choose.

WILL WE BELIEVE AND TRUST HIM, OR NOT?

Obedience is an outward sign, a result of our trust relationship with God. If we love and trust our Father, we will obey Him because we believe that He knows what is best for us. **When we disobey God, we are really saying, “I don't believe you”**, “I think you are keeping something good from me.” (This is the rationale that Satan used at the tree in the garden.) You see, being saved is not just a legal manipulation. Being saved means that we come to trust God completely. We have entered a relationship which allows God to make changes in our thoughts, desires, and actions.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE “SAVED?”

“I'm saved,” He says. “I will live forever. Someday I will live in a beautiful city with streets made of gold.”

Yes, that can all true. He can live forever in a beautiful place. But there is much more to salvation. We are saved *from sin* - not just from death and unpleasantness. We are saved from the selfishness within our own hearts. Christ Himself through His Spirit comes to live in us. We live mind to mind with our Savior. Through us He pours out His gentleness, His kindness, His patience, His unselfishness, His power, and His truth - His love. We enter into a living, dynamic relationship with a living being - our Lord.

Some people very much want to live forever in Heaven, but they are not so concerned with day to day righteousness. **They want the rewards but not necessarily the relationship. Yet it is the relationship which leads to the final reward. We cannot have one without the other.**

CAN A MAN CHOOSE TO LEAVE GOD?

HEBREWS 3:12-14 “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you **an evil heart of unbelief** in *departing from the living God*; but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,”

There's that word again - “unbelief.” What did Jesus say, “If you believe.” The above text suggests that one can believe in Christ, and then be deceived into unbelief. The Israelites who died in the wilderness, could not enter into the promised land because of “unbelief.” Their disobedience was proof of their disbelief. (Hebrews 3:19) If we believe, we will obey. If we refuse to obey, it is because we do not truly believe in the rightness of God.

MATTHEW 24:13 “But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”

I JOHN 1:7 “**If** we walk in the light the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

ROMANS 11:22 “Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. *Otherwise you also will be cut off.*”

I JOHN 2:24 “Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.”

The words HOLD, WALK, CONTINUE, ABIDE, REMAIN, all suggest an ongoing relationship, rather than a one time decision. The word “if” stresses an ongoing choice between options.

II TIMOTHY 2:12 “*If we endure*, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.”

JOHN 15:1-6 “You are already clean (saved) because of the word which I have spoken to you. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; *If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.*”

Here clearly are believers who have been “saved.” They have been forgiven of their sins. They are clean. Yet Christ tells them that they will be cut off the tree like a withered branch, and “cast into the fire,” unless they continue to abide in Him.

Again notice the words ENDURE, AND ABIDE are commands to continue. Again the word “if” suggests alternatives, and free choice.

I CORINTHIANS 9:27 Paul himself said, “. . . lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast away.” (rejected)

If anyone was in a “saved” condition, it was Paul. The apostle to the Gentiles - stoned, imprisoned, whipped, shipwrecked, all for the cause of Christ. Yet here Paul says there is a chance that even He could be “cast away,” if He does not continue to abide in Christ, and thereby keep His commandments.

ROMANS 11:17-20,21,22 Speaking to a Gentile convert, Paul said, “. . . some of the branches were broken off, and you . . . were grafted in. . . .” “Do not be haughty but fear, for if God did not spare the natural branches He may not spare you either.” “. . . toward you, goodness, *if you continue* in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.”

First please notice that “some,” not all, of the “natural branches” (biological descendants of Abraham) were “cut off” “because of unbelief.” God has not broken His covenant with Israel. His covenant with Abraham continues to this day for any Jew who comes to belief in Christ. Paul here tells the Gentile convert that He has been grafted into the tree (the true Israel - the believing descendants of Abraham). He has become part of the church. He is blessed of God. He is saved. His name has been written in Heaven. Yet just like the unbelieving Jews, he can and will be cut off if he does not continue in the faith.

SOME WILL DEPART

I TIMOTHY 4:1 “. . . some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits”

I TIMOTHY 5:15 “For some have already *turned aside* after Satan.”

REVELATION 2:4 (Speaking to the church of Ephesus) “*you have left* your first love.” “Repent”

II PETER 2:20 “For if, *after they have escaped* the pollution of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, *they are again entangled* therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.”

II PETER 1:9-10 Peter tells the brethren to give all diligence to their growth in knowledge and virtue, “for he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and *has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.*” (He lacks faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity.) “Therefore, brethren, *be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure*, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Peter here seems to be saying that if one does not “give diligence” or attention to Christian growth, he could stumble and fall away and thereby lose his election or entrance into the everlasting kingdom of Christ. In other words - he could lose his salvation.

HEBREWS 10:26 “For if we sin (continue to sin) willfully (with a rebellious attitude) after we have received the knowledge of the truth there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.”

(This verse was improperly translated from the Greek because there is no present participle in the Greek.)

This verse describes the condition of the rebellious and callous individual, who goes on sinning without even trying to stop. There is nothing that God can do for this person, because he does not hate his sin, and he will not repent.

EZEKIEL 33:13 “When I say to the righteous he will surely live (eternally), and he so trusts in his righteousness that he commits iniquity, none of his righteous deeds will be remembered; but in that same iniquity of his which he has committed he will die (the second death).”

Here is the man who believes that his salvation is a fact, which nothing can alter. He has been righteous and will receive his reward. Because he believes that his reward is certain, he becomes careless. He does not feel his need of continued heavenly support. He does not stay close to Christ or pray for victory. And what happens? He “commits iniquity” - of course. The text is clear - he will die in his iniquity, with his sin unforgiven.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A RIGHTEOUS MAN TURNS AWAY FROM RIGHTEOUSNESS?

EZEKIEL 18:26-27 “When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and dies because of it, for his iniquity which he has committed he will die (the “second death”).

Again, when a wicked man turns away from his wickedness which he has committed and practices justice and righteous, he will save his life (eternally).” (Ezekiel 33:13-16)

No man can be righteous without the indwelling Holy Spirit, so this “righteous man” must be in a saving relationship with God. Yet if he turns away from righteousness he will die (eternally).

MALACHI 3:7 “Return to Me, and I will return to you, Says the LORD of hosts.”

THE MESSAGES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

REVELATION 1:1 - 3:22 John the apostle was given a message for each of seven churches. Each message was given by Christ Himself. Each message gives a command, and each message gives a promise of reward for those who follow the command.

To **Ephesus**, the message is given by the One “who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands” (Rev. 2:1, 1:13,20). The command is given: “Repent and do the first works...” (Rev. 2:5). The promise: “TO HIM WHO OVERCOMES, I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7).

The implied message would be that whomever does NOT overcome, will NOT eat of the tree of life.

To **Smyrna**, the message is given by “the First and the Last, who was dead and came to life:” (Rev. 2:8). The command is given: “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). The additional statement is made: “HE WHO OVERCOMES shall not be hurt by the second death” (Rev. 2:11).

The implication - that the one who is NOT faithful, and does NOT overcome, will NOT receive the crown of life, and will die the second death. The second death is the “lake of fire” (Rev. 20:6,14).

Remember that these messages were not given to unbelievers. They were given to the churches.

To **Sardis**, the message is given by “He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars” (Rev. 1:16,20). The command: “Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die” (Rev. 3:2). And the promise: “You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. HE WHO OVERCOMES shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels” (Rev. 3:4-5).

If Christ does not confess the name of a sinner before His Father, that sinner will be lost. His name will be blotted from the Book of Life, and he will die the second death. (Rev. 20:15). No one will enter the New Jerusalem who’s name is not found written in the Book of Life (Rev. 21:27).

To **Philadelphia**, the message is given by “He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts, and no one opens” (Rev. 3:7, 1:11,18). The command is given to “Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown” (Rev. 3:11). The promise: “HE WHO OVERCOMES, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out not more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name” (Rev. 3:12).

The “crown” here referred to is the “crown of life.” To receive this crown is to receive eternal life. The “key of David” is the key to life - eternal life (Rev. 1:18).

To **Laodicea**, the message is again given by Christ, “the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God;” (Rev. 3:14). To command: “buy from Me gold,” and “white garments,” and “eye salve.” Hear my voice and open the door” (Rev. 3:18-21). The promise: “and I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me” (Rev. 3:21). “To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcome and sat down with My Father on His throne” (Rev. 3:21).

Anyone who refuses to open his heart to Christ will not receive eternal life.

THE LAMB’S BOOK OF LIFE

REVELATION 21:27 “But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only **those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.**”

LUKE 10:20 “Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because **your names are written in heaven.**”

HEBREWS 12:23 “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and **church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven**, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant . . .”

PHILIPPIANS 4:3 “And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, **whose names are in the Book of Life.**”

REVELATION 12:18 “All who dwell on the earth will worship him (the beast), whose **names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.**” (Rev. 17:8)

REVELATION 20:15 “And anyone **not found written in the Book of Life** was cast into the lake of fire.”

REVELATION 22:19 “. . . and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy (Revelation) , **God shall take away his part from the Book of Life**, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

REVELATION 3:5 “He who overcomes ... I will not **blot out his name out of the Book of Life.**”

Our name is written in “the Lamb’s book of life” when we come to God in repentance and faith - when we enter into the covenant. We receive forgiveness. The words “blot out his name,” and “take away his part” tell us that it is possible for us to loose salvation and eternal life. Once saved - always saved is not taught here.

“LAST RITES” - LAST MINUTE SALVATION

A mafia don keeps a priest close by for “emergencies.” Can the mass, administered by a priest just before, or even just after death, gain a place in Heaven for one who committed murder after murder in life, with no thought of reform?

The thief on the cross asked for and received assurance of a place in Christ’s kingdom (Luke 23:42,43). Does this mean that any one of us may ask for and receive forgiveness and salvation in the last moments of our life?

Only God knows the heart. If the person who is dying is asking for absolution just so that he/she will go to the good place instead of the bad place - then the answer is no. On the other hand, if that person is genuinely sorry for his sin, if he has truly caught a glimpse of the great love of God, if he greatly desires a relationship with God and with His Son for all eternity, then the answer is yes.

REASSURANCE

The human mind cannot live with the thought of burning torment without end. The individual seeks reassurance that, no matter what happens, no matter what he does or does not do in the future, he will never go “there.” This is why the “once saved - always saved” doctrine is so important to those who believe there is a place called “Hell.”

Other studies at this web site will explain that God will not send anyone to a place called “hell,” to be tortured for eternity. See: “The Condition of Man in Death,” and “Hell - Who? What? When? Where? Why?” Please be assured - God does not believe in cruel or unusual punishment any more than you do.

**CONSIDER A FEW EXAMPLES OF PERSONS
WHO WERE IN A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, AND THEN FELL AWAY.
SOME REPENTED AND WERE RESTORED AGAIN, SOME WERE NOT.**

David:

PSALM 51:11 “take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.”

v. 12 “Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation.”

King Saul:

I SAMUEL 10:6,9 Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied. He was converted.
v. 9 “God gave him another heart.”

I SAMUEL 31:1-6 Saul committed suicide rather than be captured by the enemy.

I SAMUEL 28:6,16 The Lord refused to communicate with Saul.

v. 16 The Lord had departed from Saul.

I SAMUEL 28:7-25 Saul consulted with the spirit medium of Endor.

I CHRONICLES 10:13,14 “for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it:

He (God) slew him.”

Solomon:

He close to the Lord when he began his reign as king. Then he married many heathen wives and they turned his heart away from God and he built alters to their false gods. In his old age he returned to God but not in time to save the kingdom of Israel from the result of his influence.

Judas:

He walked with Jesus for three years, and accepted him as the Messiah. Then he betrayed him.

Mary Magdalene:

Saved seven times. (Mark 16:9)

The parable of the Prodigal Son:

He was free to leave again if he chose. (Luke 15:11-32)

THE CITIES OF REFUGE

When a murderer fled to a “city of refuge” he was safe from the “avenger of blood” *only so long as he remained inside the city.* (Numbers 35:26-27). If he ventured outside, the avenger could kill him. So we are safe from Satan “the destroyer” only so long as we remain in Christ our Refuge.

WHAT DOES THE SANCTUARY SYMBOLISM TELL US?

The sacrificial system pointed forward to Christ “the Lamb of God” who was sacrificed once for the sins of the whole world. Each time an Israelite sinned he could bring a lamb to the Sanctuary (later the Temple) and obtain forgiveness. He would confess his sin over the head of the Lamb, symbolically transferring that sin to the Lamb. If coming to Christ once is sufficient for all our sins- past, present, and future, then the sacrifice of one lamb - once in his life - should have provided forgiveness for life, for the Israelite. But this was not the case.

Unconfessed sin in the life of an Israelite on the Day of Atonement meant separation from God's people. So in fulfilment of this prophecy, unconfessed sin in the life of any person at the end of his/her life (or at the last Day of Atonement - the day of Christ's return) means that he/she will be “cut off” from God's people (at least for the period of the millenium).

Christ's death on the cross won for Him the right to forgive anyone who comes to Him in faith. His death covers all sins of ignorance (Lev. 5:17-19, John 9:41). Yes, Christ died once for all sin, for all time, but each time we sin knowingly we must ask for and claim that forgiveness in the name of Christ. We cannot ask in advance to be forgiven for our future sins. (This was the Roman practice of buying indulgences - forgiveness in advance, which caused Luther to lash out at the Roman Church.) Before we can be forgiven, we must hate our sin, we must be sorry for the pain we have brought to the heart of God, and to our fellow men.

IT IS A DAILY CHOICE.

LUKE 9:23 " Then He said to them all, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.'"

I CORINTHIANS 15:31 "I die daily."

ONCE SAVED - ALWAYS SAVED?

MATTHEW 18:23-35 THE PARABLE OF THE DEBTOR

Sins are **forgiven and covered when confessed and forsaken**. So long as the sinner remains in Christ, his past sins remain covered and forgiven. If however, this person returns to his former life without Christ, his sins, past and present will be open in the books of Heaven. He will meet the record of his entire life on judgment day.

This lesson is taught in the parable of the unmerciful servant, who after he had been forgiven his entire debt, (been saved) dealt harshly with his debtors, and the Lord then required him to pay all that had once been forgiven him."

If forgiveness were obtained by doing something to coax God into forgiving us, then it would also be true that we can do things that would cause God to change His mind. But if forgiveness is discovered as an unchanging quality in the heart of God, then the way to lose forgiveness is to separate oneself from this forgiving God. (See the study on "The Wrath of God" at this website.)

- (1) I can become so rebellious, so drawn by the cheap attractions of sin, that I don't care about forgiveness.
- (2) I can become so self-righteous, so impressed with my good works, that I don't think I need forgiveness.
- (3) I can be so smitten by guilt that Satan convinces me to think God could never forgive such a sinner as I.
- (4) I can become absorbed in the cares of this life and become so busy that I forget about God and my relationship with Jesus.

But in each case I am the one who has changed. God has not changed.

This, of course, is the weakness of the "once saved, always saved" doctrine. It is based on the premise that once God has decided to forgive a sinner, He will never change His mind. The problem is, God does not change His mind; we do! The sin problem doesn't center in God's opinion of man, but in man's opinion of God.

God *is* forgiveness. He cannot be untrue to Himself. There was never a point in time when Divinity decided to forgive sinners. "For I am the Lord, I change not." (Malachi 3:6) God forgave man before he ever sinned. God forgave all man before mankind was created. But man must accept that forgiveness, and enter a covenant relationship with God, before he can receive its life giving power.

There is another deception into which many Christians fall. It is **the sin of presumption**. Many come to believe that God is so forgiving that He will continue to forgive them, no matter how long they continue to repeat their sin. As long as they ask for forgiveness over and over, they can sin, over and over. This deception is deadly, because they have ignored the need for repentance. David said, "If I regard sin in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm 66:18).. Confession is not enough. Repentance is also necessary. To repent means "to turn around." It means to stop doing what you were doing. Those who believe that confession is enough, never really plan to change. They never ask God for the power to change. They deny Christ entrance into their hearts and their lives.

ROMANS 6:16 "You are the slaves of the one you obey."

If I willfully, blatantly sin then I am Satan's slave. If I say, "forgive me," but then I refuse the saving power of God, which would change my life, I deny God Himself. I refuse the essence of forgiveness which is healing, and I am lost.

BY GRACE YOU ARE SAVED, THROUGH FAITH

WE MUST BELIEVE

If we lose faith, we loose salvation.

JOHN 20:31 ". . . but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that **believing you may have life** in His name.

ACTS 16:31 "So they said, '**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved**, you and your household.'"

MARK 16:16 "**He who believes and is baptized will be saved**; but he who does not believe will be condemned."

MARK 9:23-24 "Jesus said to him, "**If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.**" Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

ROMANS 11:20-21 "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.

HEBREWS 3:12-14 "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in *departing from the living God*; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ *if* we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end."

HEBREWS 3:19 "So we see that they (Israel) could not enter (into Canaan) in because of unbelief."

HEBREWS 11:6 "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for **he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.**"

If you do not believe that your Heavenly Father can help you, will help you, and in fact desires very much to help you, then you will not reach out to Him. You will not pray. You will not ask, and God will not enter your mind without your permission. He will not violate your free will.

We must believe that Jesus is indeed the Son of God. We must believe that He can and will forgive our sins. We must believe that He can and will live in us, and give us power to overcome any inherited or cultivated tendency to sin. This faith opens the door to God's healing forgiveness.

If I deny the power of God to overcome every sin, I am saying that God's power in my life is insufficient. I have closed the door.

There is no need to be lost. Paul wrote, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). "With God nothing is impossible" (Luke 1:37). "What He has promised, He is able to perform" (Romans 4:21). "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world (1John4:4).

Forgiveness is more than a legal maneuver. Salvation is more than a ticket to the city with golden streets.

God can and will change your life. But you must respond. You must choose whom you will believe. If you once had faith and somehow lost that confidence in God, go and find it again. Search, read, pray until you find it - until you find Him.

And remember, faith too is promised (1Cor 12:9).

ONLY BELIEVE

ACTS 16:31 So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."
NKJV

JAMES 2:19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. **Even the demons believe** -- and tremble! NKJV

In what way does the belief of a child of God differ from that of a demon? Demons will not be saved in the kingdom of God - yet we read that they "believe." Demons know who God is. They know He does exist. They know He is all powerful. They also know that they have lost the battle for this world. Christ will soon banish Satan to the pit. The belief held by the child of God goes beyond knowing what is and what will be.

First: The child of God believes certain things about the character of God. He/she believes that God is love, that God is kind, patient, and merciful.

Second: In the child of God belief leads to obedience. His/her obedience says, I believe that God is just, and holy, and good, and knows what is best for me. The child of God has surrendered, because he/she believes in the goodness of God.

"NEVER REALLY SAVED"

Suppose I return to a life of sin after I have been baptized, after I have made a commitment to Christ. Many Christians would say this action on my part indicates that I was never "really" saved. They believe that if a person is saved he IS changed and will never return to his old life.

What does this mean to me, if I'm out there sinning again? If I'm sleeping with someone without benefit of marriage - was I never really saved? If I become addicted to drugs and begin to steal - was I never really saved? What if I am envious of a coworker? What if I gossip frequently? At what point do I know that I was never "really" saved, so I'd better go back and do it right this time? If I commit "big" sins, then, for sure, I was never really saved. But what if I commit "little" sins?

Salvation is a process. I am being saved. Day by day - hour by hour, I am growing in grace. I have entered a relationship with my Savior. I may slip and fall many times, but so long as I continue to pray, to ask for forgiveness desiring to become like Christ in character, I have not left that relationship. (Let's face it, because of temperament or training, some folks find it easier to act like a Christian than others do.) If I were to die before I have reached full maturity, Christ's righteousness would cover my imperfections, and I would be welcome in Heaven.

I have said that I consider myself to be in a saved condition - now, because I have entered into a saving relationship with Christ. I could comfortably say, "I am saved," or even "I have been saved." I do not, however, believe that I am irrevocably saved. I may revoke my salvation, if I choose to leave my relationship with Christ.

Just as marriages sometimes die through neglect, so my relationship with Christ could die if severely neglected. Suppose I just choose to pursue things other than spiritual growth. (I'm not openly rebellious towards God. I haven't consciously turned away from Him.) The end result is the same. Doubts creep in, slowly almost imperceptibly. One day I realize my faith is gone. I can choose to go in search of evidence to restore my faith. Like the prodigal son I can return to the Father's house. But the longer I stay away, the greater the likelihood that I will ever return.

HOW CAN THE UNIVERSE BE SECURE?

How can the universe be secure for eternity if human beings, or angels for that matter, can choose to rebel? That's why the resolution of the sin problem has taken so long. God wanted all intelligent beings to see for themselves the results of doing things any other way than His way. He wanted to answer every possible question which has, or ever will be asked concerning His character, His law, His mercy, and His justice. God allowed the horrible results of rebellion, He then gave His only begotten Son, because He is committed to free will. For without free will, there can be no love.

EPHESIANS 2:8

EPHESIANS 2:8 "For by grace **you have been saved** through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." NKJV, NAS (similar wording in NIV and NASB)

The words "you have been saved" in this verse are used by many Christians to support the doctrine of "once saved - always saved." The words "have been" are translated from the Greek "este" (#2075). The word is translated 82 times as "are," 5 times as "be," 1 time as "belong to," and 1 time as "have been" in the KJV. The word is present tense, and does not necessarily point to something which happened in the past. The verse could be paraphrased - "this is how you are saved - through faith."

Compare the Phillips: "For it is by grace that you are saved, through faith"

New English: "For it is by his grace you are saved,"

Amplified: "For it is by free grace (God's unmerited favor) that you are saved"

King James: "For by grace are ye saved through faith;"

In the parable of the sower, the seed which fell on stony ground, and the seed which fell among thorns *did* sprout and begin to grow. Christ explained that the person represented by the rocky ground, first received the word (seed) with joy, but later the young plant died because it did not put down a root (Matthew 13, Mark 4, Luke 8).

The word *did* have an effect. It sprouted and began to grow. The person represented by the thorny ground, received the word (seed) "with joy." Only later was it choked out by the thorns (the cares of life, persecution, temptation and trial). The soil represents the condition of the heart or mind, and this is personal choice. ("Do not harden your hearts" Hebrews 3:8.)

THE AORIST TENSE

In the English language we have “present tense” (I run.), “past tense” (I ran.), “future tense” (I will run.) In the Greek there is another tense, which we don’t have in the English. It is a difficult tense to translate into English. A verb written in the aorist tense means that a process, or an action has begun, which, if it continues, will end in a completed action or effect. Let me give a few examples.

EPHESIANS 1:13 “... in whom (Christ) also, having believed, you were **sealed** with the Holy Spirit of promise.”

The word “sealed” is in the aorist tense. Roughly translated it means, “you were sealing to be sealed” or “you began the sealing process and will be sealed (perfect tense) if you continue the process.”

The word “saved” as translated from the Greek, in the New Testament, is written in the “aorist” tense, the “present” tense, the “future” tense, and the “perfect” tense. Yet in almost every instance, the translation simply reads “saved.”

LUKE 18:42 To the blind man Jesus said, “Receive your sight. Your faith has **saved** you.” NRS

Here the word “saved” is in the perfect tense. The man was perfectly healed. And here I have to point out that the Greek for “made well” and the word for “saved” is the SAME word. This should help us understand what it truly means to be saved. It is to be healed.

TITUS 3:5 “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy he **saved** us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.” NKJ

And here in Titus 3:5, the word “saved” is written in the aorist tense, meaning Christ is “saving us to be saved.” The process begun WILL result in a “saved” (perfect tense) condition, if it continues.

My point here, is simply to say that just because a word translated from Greek to English has an “ed” on the end, does not mean that it signifies a completed action.

PERFECTION: IS IT NECESSARY FOR SALVATION?

If you are covered by the righteousness of Christ, then you ARE perfect in the eyes of God.

If you are abiding in Christ, if you have a relationship with God, and you are being transformed into the image of His Son, then you are indeed in a saved condition. If you were to die today, you would be called from the grave by Christ, in “the resurrection of the just.” Because one has not reached full maturity in Christ does not mean he/she is not righteous in the eyes of God, through Christ. A newborn Christian is indeed covered by the blood of Christ so long as he/she remains in that saving relationship.

A friend recently pointed out to me that the New Covenant promise of Ezekiel 36 will NOT be fully realized until we reach the promised land.

EZEKIEL 36:24-28 “For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, **and bring you into your own land.** THEN I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.”

If you’ve been worried because you’re not yet a “perfect” Christian, take heart. God will keep His promise.