Can you lose your salvation?

Salvation & the Gospel · https://thebiblicalroots.org/answers/can-you-lose-your-salvation/

Scripture teaches that salvation is God's work from beginning to end, and those who truly belong to Christ are kept by His power. Jesus said, "no one will snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:28), and believers are described as being "sealed with the promised Holy Spirit" (Eph 1:13–14). At the same time, the Bible contains real warnings about falling away, which must be taken seriously (Heb 6:4–6).

On the one hand, the New Testament gives strong assurance to believers. Salvation is not grounded in our performance but in Christ's finished work (John 19:30). Paul writes that those whom God justifies, He will also glorify (Rom 8:30), and that nothing "in all creation" can separate us from the love of God in Christ (Rom 8:38–39). The language of being "sealed" (*sphragizō*) in Ephesians 1:13 conveys ownership and security—God marks His people as His own and preserves them.

On the other hand, passages like Hebrews 6:4–6, Hebrews 10:26–29, and Jesus' teaching about abiding in Him (John 15:6) warn against falling away. These are not theoretical statements. They are pastoral warnings given to real people in the church. The New Testament holds both truths together: God preserves His people, and His people are called to remain in faith.

Historically, Christians have understood this tension in two primary ways. Some traditions (such as many Reformed and Baptist perspectives) teach the perseverance of the saints—that those who are truly saved will continue in faith to the end, and those who fall away were never truly regenerate (1 John 2:19). Other traditions (including Lutheran and Methodist perspectives) affirm that genuine believers can fall away through persistent unbelief, which is why the warnings are necessary (Heb 3:12). Both views take Scripture seriously, though they emphasize different aspects of the biblical data.

A helpful way to frame this is that believers are genuinely secure in Christ, and yet they are also called to continue in Him. The warnings are one of the means God uses to keep His people. They are not in conflict with His promises but serve to strengthen perseverance in faith (Col 1:23).

Key Scriptures to Study

Core teaching passages

- John 10:27–29 — Jesus' sheep are secure; no one can snatch them from His hand
- Romans 8:38–39 — Nothing can separate believers from the love of God in Christ
- Philippians 1:6 — God will complete the good work He began in His people
- Ephesians 1:13–14 — Believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of their inheritance

Supporting theological framework

- John 6:37–40 — Jesus will lose none of those the Father has given Him
- 1 Peter 1:3–5 — Believers are guarded by God's power through faith for salvation
- Hebrews 7:25 — Christ saves completely those who draw near to God through Him

Clarifying or balancing passages

- Hebrews 6:4–6 — A warning passage often discussed regarding falling away
- Hebrews 10:26–29 — A sober warning against persistent, willful rejection of the truth

Objections & Misconceptions

Common Objection: "If salvation is secure, doesn't that mean I can live however I want?"
Response: No. Scripture rejects that idea directly (Rom 6:1–2). A person who truly belongs to Christ will not persist comfortably in unrepentant sin. Ongoing rebellion calls into question the reality of one's faith (1 John 3:6).

Common Objection: "What about people who seemed to believe and then walked away?"
Response: Scripture addresses this. Some interpret such cases as evidence that those individuals were never truly converted (1 John 2:19). Others understand them as genuine believers who have fallen into unbelief. In either case, the biblical response is the same: a call to repentance and return to Christ.

Common Objection: "How can I know if I'm truly saved?"
Response: Assurance is grounded in Christ, not in our feelings. Those who trust in Him, confess Him as Lord, and see evidence of His work in their lives can have real confidence (1 John 5:13; Rom 5:1), while continuing to examine themselves and remain in the faith (2 Cor 13:5).

Why This Matters

This question directly affects assurance and perseverance. If salvation depends on us, we will either live in fear or drift into pride. But if it rests on Christ, we can have confidence while still taking seriously the call to remain faithful. This produces humility, vigilance, and trust—resting in God's promises while actively walking in faith and repentance.

Recommended Resources

- *Stop Asking Jesus Into Your Heart* - J. D. Greear
- *The Race Set Before Us* - Thomas R. Schreiner and Ardel B. Caneday
- *Four Views on Eternal Security* (ed. by J. Matthew Pinson)