

## Can You Lose Your Salvation?

If you've been a Christian for any length of time, you've probably run into a few people who are always afraid they might lose their salvation. A typical statement might be, "I'm afraid maybe I've done such-and-such one time too many, and now God has given me over to a reprobate mind," or "I wouldn't want to step over the line and sin one time too many!" I've even heard some "biblically ignorant" people say that a person was going to hell because they got divorced! Just where in the Bible does it say how many times is "too many" for God to forgive, or that there are some sins that are unforgivable, or that there is a point where God will "give over to a reprobate mind" one of His true children? Let's look at some of the Scriptures that are most commonly misunderstood and taken out of context to support the idea that a person could lose their salvation:

- **Romans 1:19-25 & 28** "Because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world **His invisible attributes** are clearly seen, **being understood by the things that are MADE**, even His eternal power and Godhead (divine nature), so that they are without excuse, because, although they KNEW [*about*] God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile (empty, stupid) in their thoughts, and **their foolish hearts were DARKENED**. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and CHANGED the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man-and birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things. Therefore **God gave them up** to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who **exchanged the TRUTH of GOD for the LIE**, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever....." "And even as **they did not LIKE to RETAIN God** in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased (reprobate) MIND, to do those things which are not fitting."

We must always be careful to "rightly divide the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15), and that includes looking at the context of any verse or selection of verses to see to whom the author is speaking, what is the background of the situation being addressed, and what group of people is being referred to. Here in Romans, the people that God is referring to that have turned away from God, and that He has given over to a reprobate mind and has given up to uncleanness and to dishonor their bodies **are not Christians at all!** He is speaking of the Gentile nations, people groups, tribes or ethnic groups that turned away from the true knowledge of God many centuries ago, and turned instead to idol worship and worship of the creation rather than the Creator. **They did not like to retain (keep) God in their knowledge.** This could also refer to individuals today who have been witnessed to by Christians, but who throw away any Bibles or tracts that were given to them, and declare that they "have their own beliefs about God" and they don't want to be bothered by you anymore. This could refer to the people who want to take God, prayer and the Bible out of our public schools, or take Nativity scenes out of public places at Christmas, or take the words "under God" out of the Pledge of Allegiance. They don't want to have **ANY reminder** of the true God in their lives, so that they can live their lives any old way they want to, and God says, "Okay, go ahead and live any way you want to." That is what it means for God to turn them over to a reprobate or debased mind.

- **Psalm 51:10-12** "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and **do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.** Restore to me **the joy of Your salvation**, and uphold me with Your generous Spirit."

Some people use this verse to try to prove that God will take the Holy Spirit away from you if you sin one time too many, or whatever. That is not what these verses say! First of all, King David was under the Old Covenant (Old Testament), and we have a different relationship with

the Holy Spirit as Believers under the New Covenant. Jesus said that **the Holy Spirit would be in us, not just with us** (John 14:16-17). As Believers in Jesus Christ, we are "sealed" with the Holy Spirit as God's guarantee until He gets us to heaven, and our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit who has come to live in us (I Corinthians 6:19, Ephesians 1:12-14). In the Old Testament, **the Holy Spirit did NOT come to live in every Believer**, but would "come upon" certain individuals (prophets, priests, kings - see I Samuel 10:5-10) for a particular time and purpose. The Psalms in the word of God that David wrote were written under the influence of the Holy Spirit (II Peter 1:20-21), so that means he wrote Psalm 51 under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Psalm 51 was written over a year after David sinned by committing adultery with Bathsheba and then arranging to have her husband murdered. If David is just now, at this point, praying, "Do not take Your Holy Spirit from me", then it is obvious that he still has the Holy Spirit with him! **God never left David, even in the depths of his sin.** After he repented, David asked God to restore the JOY of his salvation. He didn't ask God to restore his salvation - just the JOY of it! We don't lose our salvation when we sin, but **continued sin will rob us of the joy we had in fellowship with the Lord** (I John 1:3-9).

- **I Corinthians 6:9-11** "Do you not know that **the unrighteous** will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And **such were some of you.** But you were **washed**, but you were **sanctified**, but you were **justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."

This Scripture says that the "unrighteous" shall not inherit the kingdom of God. **We, as Christians, are NOT the unrighteous**, we are the "righteousness of God in Christ Jesus" (see I Corinthians 1:30, II Corinthians 5:21). Paul goes on to describe the unrighteous (unbelievers) by their behavior, but Paul says WE (believers) have been **washed, sanctified and justified** from all these sins. In Revelation 1:5, it says "Jesus Christ loved us and WASHED us from our sins in His own blood." In I Thessalonians 5:23, it says, "Now may the God of peace Himself **SANCTIFY you completely**, and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless (pure, holy) at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." **SANCTIFICATION** means HOLINESS, purity, being SET APART for God and His use. The word "SAINT" comes from the same word as "sanctified" in the Greek. This is both a PROCESS and a ONE-TIME experience. We are sanctified, or MADE HOLY in God's sight when we accept Jesus Christ as Savior, but our continual SANCTIFICATION is **the PROCESS by which we are becoming MORE LIKE CHRIST** as we YIELD more and more of our SELVES to the control of the Holy Spirit. **Justified** means that God by His GRACE declares **RIGHTEOUS** the sinner who believes on Jesus Christ. It is **NOT a process of becoming** righteous, **it is a ONE-TIME ACT of GRACE** - we are MADE RIGHTEOUS the moment we accept Jesus as our Savior! It is NOT merely FORGIVENESS, although forgiveness is INCLUDED - God does indeed FORGIVE AND FORGET OUR SINS. However, **JUSTIFICATION means God even FORGETS that we were ever SINNERS!** There is NO MORE RECORD of our sins.

- **Matthew 12:31-32** "Therefore I say to you, **EVERY SIN and blasphemy WILL BE forgiven** men, but the **blasphemy against the Spirit** will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, **it will not be forgiven him**, either in this age or in the age to come."

The devil can get some people spinning out of control by convincing them they've committed the "unforgivable sin," and they will use these verses out of context. Nowhere in these verses is it talking about committing a sin "one time too many" or even a particular sin of the flesh such as fornication, adultery, murder, etc. There is no such thing as an "unforgivable sin" for a born again Christian who has put their faith and trust in Jesus. The dictionary defines "blasphemy" as **insulting or showing contempt, or lack of reverence for God.** However,

the "blasphemy against the Spirit" in Matthew 12:31-32 is very specific: the Pharisees had attributed Jesus' miracles to the power of Satan instead of God (see verses 22-28). Jesus said that He cast out demons by **the Spirit of God** (vs. 28)(see also Acts 10:38), but the Pharisees said it was the power of Satan (Beelzebub). Jesus then says in verse 37, "For by your words you will be justified, and **by your words you will be CONDEMNED.**" The Pharisees will stand before the Judgment seat of God one day ("in the age to come") and will have to listen to **their own words** as they are condemned to hell for not believing in Jesus. In fact, Jesus says He is the one to whom all judgment is given, so they will stand before the very One they rejected on earth. But why is it that blasphemy against **the Holy Spirit in particular** is unforgivable? Because it is the **Holy Spirit who convicts men in their hearts** of the truth about Jesus (John 15:26; John 16:7-14), and to ignore or reject that convicting means there is **no other chance, no other WAY** for a person to believe and be saved (John 14:1-6, Acts 4:12). Since **all other sins** can be forgiven when a person accepts Jesus as Savior, then **the sin of hardening their hearts against the convicting of the Holy Spirit** (and thus rejecting that forgiveness through Jesus) has no way of being forgiven. Jesus Himself said, "I say to you, **EVERY SIN and blasphemy WILL BE forgiven men**" (Matt. 12:31), and I John 1:9, "If we CONFESS our sins, **He is faithful and just to FORGIVE us our sins**, and to cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness." If you believe that Jesus died for your sins, and trust Him as your Savior, there is NO SUCH THING as a sin that CANNOT be forgiven you. The only unforgivable sin is to REJECT JESUS!!!!

- **Hebrews 6:4-6** "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame."
- **Hebrews 10:26-29** "For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, **there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins**, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment.....of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common (unholy) thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?"

These two passages in Hebrews are **misinterpreted** by some, and cause some people to think they can lose their salvation. Again, we must **read scripture in its CONTEXT**, so that we understand TO WHOM the writer of Hebrews is speaking here. These warnings were being given to Jews who had been exposed to the gospel of Christ, but then went back into Judaism, even **to the point of offering animal sacrifices in the temple!** The warning to these people was that **if they "fell away" from the teachings of the New Covenant in Christ**, the animal sacrifices would no longer cover their sins, as they had in the Old Testament. Jesus was the FINAL SACRIFICE for SINS! **If a person rejects JESUS, then there is NO OTHER SACRIFICE that can take away their sins.** There has been so much misunderstanding and wrong teaching of these Scriptures. The ones to whom "it is impossible to renew them again to repentance" are the ones who have heard the gospel, even seen and felt the working and convicting power of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 6:4), but they only "tasted" of the gift of salvation - **they never actually RECEIVED Christ!** They "tasted" of God's precious gift of salvation, but then "spit it out" by turning their backs on Christ and going back to a religion of "dead works" (Heb. 6:1). Hebrews 10:12 says, "but He (Jesus), **having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time**, sat down at the right hand of God", and Heb. 10:18 says, "Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is **no longer any offering for sin**" (meaning the animal sacrifices of the Old Covenant). These people were saying that the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross was not sufficient, or didn't count at all, and **they were going back to the Old Covenant sacrifices.** Verse 27 warns them that only "a terrifying expectation of judgment" awaits them if they reject Christ's sacrifice, because "there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins" (verse 26). Hebrews 10:29 is talking about people who "trample the Son of God underfoot, and count the blood of the covenant (the BLOOD of JESUS) an unholy thing", and by doing this they have "insulted the Spirit of grace" There is that "insulting the Spirit of grace" or blaspheming the Holy Spirit again. It is **only those who reject Christ's sacrifice**

**altogether, and count His blood as unholy**, who are guilty of that sin. If you believe that Jesus' blood is holy, and that He died and shed His blood on the cross for your sins, there is NO SUCH THING as a sin that CANNOT be forgiven you. **All of your sins were paid for on the cross!** The only unforgivable sin is to REJECT Jesus!

- **II Peter 2:20-22** "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. 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. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and "a sow (pig), after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire"

II Peter 2:18-22 is used by some to "prove" that a Christian can lose their salvation by falling back into sin and being "overcome" by it. However, nowhere in these verses does it say these people are saved, chosen, or redeemed, nor does it call them saints or Christians. Peter is speaking about false prophets and the people whom they ensnare, entrap, and lure into following their sinful ways. In fact, verse 22 says, "...a sow (pig), after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire" which sounds to me like the pig was always a pig. In other words, an unsaved person was always an unsaved person. They may have joined a church, been baptized, and done a lot of the **outward things** Christians do, but **they never had a new birth** by giving their heart and life to Christ. A true Christian may take a few trips back to the old pig pen, but he will be miserable about it, and will eventually repent and turn away from it. He doesn't feel "at home" in the old pig pen and the mire (mud) anymore, because he is no longer a pig! The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:14-24) is also an example of this, as he finally came to his senses and returned to the Father's house - he didn't stay in the pigpen.

The people referred to in II Peter 2:18-22 are people who have **taken refuge in a FORM of Christianity**, and have cleaned up their lives to some degree, but still belong to Satan, and have never truly been saved (see II Timothy 3:5). They have heard the gospel, maybe even sat in church and listened to God's word preached Sunday after Sunday. They **"KNEW the way of righteousness" INTELLECTUALLY**, but never actually surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ and entered His kingdom. Judas Iscariot is an example of this kind of person. He sat under the personal teaching of Jesus Himself, and yet never truly believed. How do we know that Judas never was a true believer? Because Jesus called him the **"son of perdition (hell)"** and "a devil" meaning that **Judas belonged to the devil all along**. Did Judas act like and look like the rest of the disciples? Yes, up until the point of the betrayal, because the other disciples didn't even know who Jesus was talking about when He said one of them would betray Him. John 17:12, "...Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is LOST except the son of perdition (Judas), that the Scripture might be fulfilled." John 6:64 & 70-71, "'But there are some of you who do NOT believe.' For **Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did NOT BELIEVE**, and who would betray Him." "Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a DEVIL?" He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve."

- **John 15:2-3 & 6** "Every branch in Me that **does not bear FRUIT He takes away**; and **every branch that bears fruit He PRUNES**, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean (pruned) because of the word which I have spoken to you." "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.

Jesus is the VINE, and we are the branches that grow out from Him. Our whole purpose is to bear the fruit that He produces in us (see Gal. 5:22-23). The Father will **PRUNE or cut away things** in our lives that get in the way and interfere with producing this fruit. Hebrews 12:5-6 says **God disciplines His children in LOVE**, and "scourges (prunes) every son whom He receives." **Those who do not produce fruit at all require more serious measures** than just the regular pruning. Jesus says they are "branches in Me," which means these people are

saved, they are true Christians, but just not producing fruit in their lives. The meaning of the Greek words **"take away"** is "to bear up, carry away, lift up, remove." The first step in this process for a non-fruit-producing Christian (a "backslider"), is **God's discipline (chastening)**. Here is the picture of the Father, as the gardener, **lifting up and cleaning the mud and dirt off** of this non-producing branch, because it has been dragging in the mud (sin in the life). After all the gardener can do to try to get this branch to produce fruit, if it still doesn't do any good, He will finally REMOVE that branch entirely. This is also spoken of in I John 5:16 as a "sin unto death," and it is referring to Christians only, because it says "his brother", which means another Christian. What this means is that a Christian may DIE PHYSICALLY before their time **as a result of CONTINUED SIN** (see Romans 8:13). There is no particular sin that is "the sin unto death" on a list of sins. It is **whatever sin is in that particular person's life** that has a HOLD on them, and which they will not surrender to the Lord. It could be drunkenness for one person, and sexual sin for another person, and pride and materialism for another person. Whatever it is, they have already set their course on a particular path or direction of life, and have **resisted the Lord's warnings and discipline**. If they will NOT repent, they will have to **SUFFER the CONSEQUENCES** for their sin (Galatians 6:7-8, I Corinthians 5:1-5). They are still saved and going to heaven (see I Cor. 3:15), but **God has had to remove them** from the earth before they cause more damage to other Christians and bring reproach to the name of Christ.

What about verse 6, where it says "He is CAST OUT as a branch and is WITHERED"? This is referring again to the backslider, the Christian who is "not abiding" in a close relationship and fellowship with the Lord. That person has **cut himself off** from the life and nutrients of the Vine, and has become spiritually "withered." Paul also talks about it in I Corinthians 9:27 as being "disqualified" in the race. This has nothing to do with going to heaven when you die, but Paul is talking about **"preaching to others"** and what kind of testimony we are to others. If we have sin in our lives, we will be "disqualified" as far as being a witness for Christ is concerned, and we will appear as HYPOCRITES if we try to preach to others! We will be as **worthless to the cause of Christ** as old withered branches that are tossed in the fire. Some have tried to say this is referring to being burned up in hell, but it says "men" gather them and throw them in the fire. It is referring to men throwing literal withered branches in a fire, not God throwing anyone in hell.