

25 Reasons Why Salvation is Permanent for Christians



The Living Truth Fellowship

MAGNIFYING JESUS CHRIST, THE LIVING TRUTH

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This book was originally written by Mark Graeser, John Schoenheit, and John Lynn while they all worked together in ministry. They are now working in separate ministries, and the one with which John Lynn is now affiliated is The Living Truth Fellowship, Ltd., by whom this book is now being re-published.

God bless you as you take this step in your journey of coming unto a knowledge of the truth.

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There is no subject in Scripture that has more doctrinal and practical importance than that of “salvation.” It is a matter of life and death, both literally and figuratively, because both the quality of our life now and everlasting life are at stake. Unfortunately, Christendom is divided over many aspects of the salvation offered in Christ, most notably whether or not it can be lost because a Christian failed to continue to have faith, or sinned. What follows are the main reasons why we have concluded that salvation is permanent for Christians, and that once acquired by faith in Christ it cannot be lost, forfeited or nullified by subsequent behaviors, attitudes or events.

1. The Greek word translated “salvation” (*soteria*) denotes “deliverance and preservation” (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*); “Safety, preservation from danger or destruction.” It is contrasted with death (2 Cor. 7:10) and destruction (Phil. 1:28 - NASB) (E. W. Bullinger, *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament*). It also means “wholeness” or “health.” Fundamentally, we are saved from two things: sin and death. We are saved from sin and death by justification and the corresponding gift of everlasting life.

Therefore we define “salvation” as a state of being saved, rescued or delivered from something that threatens death or destruction, that is, being brought to a place of safety. The Hebrew word for “salvation” also means a place of safety (*yeshua*). Logically, if we are still in jeopardy of somehow losing this salvation, we are not in a very “safe” place.

2. “Justification” is the judicial act of God whereby the sinner is declared free from the penalty of sin by his faith in the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ. This act is done “freely” (i.e., “without a cause”) by His grace (Rom. 3:24). Therefore our faith does not *cause* God to grant us salvation, but provides a condition upon which *He* can do *His* work. Without some condition for us to meet, we could not choose to receive it. In His grace and mercy, God chose faith (**trust**), the simplest act of the human mind.

It is therefore by *His* work, not ours, that we are made righteous, which is the state of being justified. We receive this status by grace through faith in His work on our behalf. Since our works did not earn for us this status, our works or lack of works cannot negate it either, once we have received it. It is not logical to argue that what is acquired exclusively by the gracious work of another and deposited to our account can be negated by our subsequent works or lack of works.

3. Biblically, faith is not works, and works are not faith. “Faith” is distinguishable from “faithfulness,” which is to continue to have faith. This is different than one-time faith (trust). “Faithfulness” consists of works, and is itself a work. If justification requires *continued* faith, then there is work involved in maintaining a state of justification. This negates the fact that justification comes to us simply by trusting in Christ’s work on our behalf.

4. Salvation has both present and future aspects, and its various usages must be determined from each context. It is *present* in that we receive the “earnest,” or guarantee, of this future wholeness in the gift of holy spirit when we were born again. This spirit is the proof that we are presently God’s purchased possession, for the downpayment on our behalf has already been made. That salvation occurs as a present reality is proven by the following Scriptures: (Acts 2:47; Eph. 2:5 and 8).

Salvation is *future* in two ways. First, our “salvation” is in a process of becoming, in that we are being made whole as we are transformed by the renewing of our minds and the working of the holy spirit within us, making us more Christ-like. This is the sense in which we are continually being delivered from our situations and circumstances (Phil. 1:20). In its ultimate future aspect, “salvation” is our future complete deliverance from the effects of sin in our bodies and our environments by our acquisition of new immortal bodies. This future salvation is set in opposition to “wrath” (1 Thess. 5:8 and 9).

5. It is not logical to argue that we are able to pay *any* of the debt demanded for our salvation. It must be paid for by another or we are

not able to acquire it. As the downpayment was made by another, so must the remaining “payment” be made by another. This “payment in full” is called “propitiation,” referring to the completed work of Jesus Christ. To argue that Christ did not make the payment in full, but requires us to make the remaining payments to ensure our salvation, is to be what the Scripture calls an enemy of the Cross of Christ (Phil. 3:18).

6. Ephesians 1:5 says that God has predestined us to be “adopted” as His sons through Jesus Christ. What adoption means must be determined by the cultural norms of the first century. Adoption was a very binding legal contract in the Roman Empire, more binding even than natural birth. An adopted son was a full heir, and could never be disinherited after adoption. A natural-born son, however, could be disinherited. The difference is choice. A father could have a son by accident as the by-product of sexual intercourse with a woman, but a child could be adopted only by deliberate action on the part of the adopting parent.

Thus, the metaphor of “adoption” emphasizes the deliberate choice exercised by God in choosing us to be His sons. This is also borne out by the language of the immediate context of the first chapter of Ephesians: (1:5) “...in accordance with **his** pleasure and will,” (1:6) “to the praise of **his** glorious grace, which **he** has freely given us...,” (1:7 and 8) “...in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that **he** lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding,” and (1:9) “...**he** made known unto us the mystery [Sacred Secret] of **his** will according to **his** good pleasure, which **he** purposed in Christ.” Clearly this was a decision entered into by God with complete understanding and commitment. To argue that man’s sin can negate the express determination and accomplishment of God is ridiculous.

7. Once a person accepts the relationship of adoption granted by God’s grace on his behalf, such a “contract” is binding upon God to fulfill, despite the contractee’s faithlessness. The emphasis of the word “adoption” is upon God’s unilateral decision to make the believer “His son.” Adoption is generally a unilateral, contractual relationship,

and permission need not be acquired by the person being adopted. Therefore, the relationship created by God's contractual bond cannot be disannulled by the behavior of the adoptee. It is a relationship created and maintained by legal process, not behavior (works).

8. In Scripture, salvation is compared to a birthing by seed ("born again," "incorruptible seed," etc.). As a father remains the father of his child by virtue of the permanent effect of his seed upon the egg, so God's fatherhood remains permanent by the effect of His grace upon the believer who once believes in Christ as his Savior. Therefore, the conversion experience, like conception, is an irreversible process.

9. Salvation comes by way of one confessing with his mouth Jesus as Lord and believing in his heart the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Romans 10:9 says to the person who does this: "**you will be saved**," which grammatically is referring to a present state of being, not future. The bedrock of this salvation is a historical fact verified by eye-witnesses, the highest form of legal testimony, even more compelling than a confession. God grounds salvation in belief of an historical fact. This indicates that He desires to provide man a basis for rational conviction that can withstand the challenges of blasphemers, atheists and historical revisionists. Salvation depends upon written testimony by witnesses. On top of that is the presence of holy spirit, the witness within, which provides an even greater testimony than if we were eyewitnesses of the Resurrection ourselves.

10. Scripture says that, "...with the mouth confession is made **unto** salvation," (Rom. 10:10 - KJV). The translation "unto" in the King James Version is a very accurate translation from the Greek text. Our belief in and confession of Jesus as Lord is not the *cause* of our salvation, but rather the *condition* we meet that enables God to save us. Since the believer does not save himself, he cannot "*unsave*" himself.

11. Salvation is the guarantee of life in the age to come. This life is a *gift* (Rom. 6:23), as opposed to death, which is the "wages" paid for the work of sin. If this life is a *gift*, there is no merit required on

the part of the recipient. He is simply the object of another's love and desire to bless him. If some merit were required, the fallen human heart would boast about it (Eph. 2:8 and 9). If the gift can be kept only by faithfulness, then it is not truly a *gift*. A gift, by definition, becomes the property of the recipient, once he has received it. He can then appreciate it and use it for good, or ignore it or even trample it under foot.

12. To be “saved” (*sozo*) also means “to be made whole,” and this is what is being referred to in 1 Corinthians 15:2, a verse sometimes used in an attempt to prove that a person can lose his salvation. The verse begins with the affirmation that the Corinthians had received the Gospel and taken a stand upon it. Therefore the salvation being referred to—“...you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you...”—must mean the opposite of “in vain,” or to *no purpose*. How could one be saved to “no purpose” if the meaning of salvation as “rescuing from death or destruction is employed?” That is surely purpose aplenty, but if salvation here means “wholeness” or “soundness,” then the meaning of the verse is that their salvation would not be in *evidence*, not that it wouldn't be really in their possession.

This is the same usage of salvation as in Philippians 2:12, in which we are exhorted to “...work out our salvation with fear and trembling.” There is no guarantee that, once having been saved by grace through faith in the Gospel, we can enjoy the fruits of this salvation without *continued* faith in the efficacy of this Gospel. The same truth is found in Hebrews 4:2: “...the message [Gospel] they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith.” We must value our salvation and walk in it to enjoy the fruits of it, as the parable of the sower makes plain (Matt. 13:3–9).

13. “You will be saved” (Rom. 10:9) means that the whole of man (spirit, soul, body) is saved, and not a part only. 1 Peter 1:9 refers to the salvation of the soul, but this is clearly the usage of the figure of speech **synecdoche**, in which a part of a person stands for *the whole person*. The salvation referred to in 1 Peter 1:9 is that salvation

unique to our present administration, which could not be seen in Old Testament Scripture (verses 10-12). Salvation by faithfulness to perform the works of the law was well known, so this salvation must be referring to something qualitatively different.

1 Corinthians 5:5 is the only verse of Scripture referring to the saving of the “spirit,” and we agree with E. W. Bullinger that this usage of *pneuma* is equivalent to “soul” and refers to the whole person rather than a part of him. The point in the context is that the man’s *flesh* must be “reckoned dead” (cp. Rom. 6:11–13) and his fleshly deed righteously condemned.

14. God has from the beginning chosen us to salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth (1 Thess. 2:13). If God has chosen us to it, then our choice is limited to either accepting or rejecting it, not making it happen by our good behavior or negating it by our perverse behavior once we have accepted it.

15. Because some Christians return to their sinful ways after becoming saved and walking in the ways of the Lord, some argue that they were never saved in the first place. Other Christians would say they were genuinely saved, but have “lost” their salvation. It is common to hear the word “backslider” used of people who have abandoned their Christian commitment. Both the doctrine that you can lose your salvation and the doctrine that a worldly person was never saved can lead to the same uncertainty, despair, and confusion.

If a person can never really know if he is saved because no matter how firm his commitment to God, because he may in the future walk away from Him, there is never any real assurance of salvation. There is simply no Scriptural support for that position. The Bible is clear that if someone obeys Romans 10:9, he “will be saved.” Likewise, if a person thinks he can lose his salvation if he sins, then there really is no such thing as assurance of salvation, because none of us knows the future. Even some of the strongest Christians have had something happen in their life that shook them to the core and caused them to leave their Christian commitment for a time.

The guarantee of everlasting life is something the Lord gave to Christians in the Administration of Grace, and it was not a part of the revelation of the Old Testament. That is the why the word “backslider” never appears in the Church Epistles [Romans through Thessalonians]. The teaching that you can backslide out of salvation and the teaching that you can think you are saved and walk in the ways of the Lord without really being saved are not accurate. The Seven Church Epistles and the other New Testament epistles to Christians make it clear our salvation is permanent.

16. Just because some abuse their gracious salvation and treat it as a license to sin, causing God’s grace to be blasphemed, that ought not to argue against the reality of His grace. It only means that such people do not understand what constitutes real grace. Romans 6:1ff presents the argument against such thinking: We who are dead to sin ought no longer to live that way. The grace of God establishes a moral ground and obligation for holy behavior. However, God does not enforce this by reneging on His promise of salvation. Rather, those who willfully sin suffer the loss of *rewards*, and thus will be ashamed at Christ’s coming. Apparently, God believes that this admonition is sufficient to motivate believers to pursue holy living.

17. The Adversary, Satan, is more concerned about distorting the glorious Gospel of Christ than he is about our personal holiness or lack of it (2 Cor 4:4). He is therefore going to try to water down and undermine God’s gracious offer of salvation so that it is not so compelling or persuasive to sinners. He adulterates the Gospel, the “Good News,” to become “good news and bad news.” It is to his advantage that the doctrine of the loss of salvation be promulgated because he can thereby compromise the Word of God and diminish the awesomeness of God’s grace. He promotes this doctrine in a cloak of religiosity that values the holiness of our walk above the graciousness of our God.

18. 1 Corinthians 3:10ff argues powerfully for the permanence of salvation, as well as the separation of *salvation* (birth that guarantees life) from *rewards* (growth to maturity). First, the truth of Jesus Christ as the only source of gracious salvation is established (verse 11).

Then, what the believer builds upon this foundation is considered. The quality of his work is tested by fire, and what remains is the basis of his reward. If nothing is left, he is still saved, "...but only as one escaping through the flames" (i.e., "by the skin of his teeth"). If one could lose his salvation after having established the foundation of his life in Jesus Christ, then the metaphor would be misapplied here. The believer would be preoccupied with establishing his own foundation, or basis, for salvation. Yet, having established his foundation on the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the believer goes about to build by his works things that are worthy of Christ and his sacrifice.

19. Salvation comes by means of the Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation. ("...the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation..." (Eph. 1:13); "...chosen you to salvation through...belief of the truth" (2 Thess. 2:13 - KJV)). If salvation comes as a result of believing a message of good news, then subsequent rejection of this message cannot disannul what has already been believed and produced by the belief. The emphasis is on the *effect* of the truth once believed, not the *continuity* of the belief itself. To argue for the latter is to put the cart before the horse.

20. Scripture speaks of "the earnest of" (KJV) / the "deposit, guaranteeing" (NIV) the gift of holy spirit (2 Cor. 1:22, 5:5; Eph.1:14). This is the "*witness*" within each Christian (1 John 5:9-12 - KJV). The usage of this word indicates that it is a *guarantee* of what will absolutely be consummated in the future, when each Christian receives the fullness of his salvation, a new body.

21. Scripture makes it clear that speaking in tongues is, for each believer today, the indisputable evidence that the divine nature of Christ dwells within him. No matter what his behavior, if a believer can still speak in tongues, he is obviously still filled with holy spirit.

22. God says in His Word that He is looking for obedience from the heart, and not conformity to outward rules. The gracious gift of salvation is consistent with this desire, encouraging us to open our hearts to Him in gratitude for His kindness and grace, and

for energizing us to work for Him more lovingly, consistently, and faithfully than if we were required to do so for our salvation.

23. God's love energizes both love and faith in us. We love because He first loved us. Romans 2:4 (KJV) says that His *goodness* leads to repentance. Why would He, on the one hand, graciously give us the promised holy spirit, which is the guarantee of life in the coming age (salvation), and then on the other hand, contrary to His gracious offer, demand that we keep working to maintain that salvation? It would be like a father giving a new bicycle to his son for Christmas, and then *requiring* him to appreciate it, do errands with it or have it taken away. The purehearted love of the giver is sullied by such subsequent conditions.

24. Continuity of faith is a condition of salvation in other administrations (Matt. 24:13, etc.), but Scripture makes it very evident that we are in a unique and different administration at present, called in Ephesians 3:2 "...the administration of God's grace..." Since "grace" means "divine favour" it is logical, therefore, that God would have a more favorable program for salvation for those living in this age.

25. Romans 6:1–23 addresses the issue of continuing to sin after being united with Christ through salvation. Never in the entire passage is there any suggestion that continuing to sin will cause the believer to forfeit his salvation and eternal life. What is supposed to restrain the believer from continuing to sin after salvation is not fear of losing his salvation but moral arguments designed to educate the believer's conscience. These arguments are based on two things: the believer's identification with Christ and the tendency of sin to enslave. If salvation could be lost because of continued sin, this section of Scripture would have been the perfect place to say so. The fact that the issue is addressed head on in Scripture without a word about the loss of salvation is persuasive proof that the Apostle's Doctrine did not include the idea that the Christian could lose his or her salvation by sin.

Further Study Material

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The Living Truth Fellowship

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Don't Blame God! A Biblical Answer to the Problem of Evil, Sin, and Suffering

One God & One Lord: Reconsidering the Cornerstone of the Christian Faith

Booklets

Beyond a Reasonable Doubt: 23 Arguments for the Historical Validity of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

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23 Reasons to Believe in a Rapture before the Great Tribulation

34 Reasons Why the Holy Spirit is not a Separate "Person" from the only True God, The Father

47 Reasons Why our Heavenly Father has no Equals or "Co- Equals"

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Audio Teaching Seminars available free on our web site:

Romans (18 hrs.)

Jesus Christ, the Diameter of the Ages (6 hrs.)

What Is The Living Truth Fellowship?

The Living Truth Fellowship is an international community of Christian believers connected by the love of God, the spirit of God, and a common belief of the truth as it is revealed in the written Word of God. We desire to make known that truth to as many people as possible. As a legal entity, we are a non-profit, tax-exempt United States (Indiana) corporation: The Living Truth Fellowship, Ltd.

The name of our ministry contains an intentional double entendre. The Word of God is the truth (John 17:17), and because it contains the very life of God (Eph. 4:18), it is the living truth (John 6:63; Heb. 4:12). As such, the word “living” is an adjective. But God intends that His truth be practiced, that is, He wants us to make “living” a verb by being living epistles of His truth. In that sense, being “verbal” means more than just speaking the Word; it also means doing it.

Our Father desires that we put His truth in our “inner parts” (Ps. 51:6) so that we might not sin against Him (Ps. 119:11). God looks on the heart of each person, and He does not measure the quality of one’s life by how much Bible he knows, but by how much knowledge of the truth he practices in his relationships, that is, how much of the heart of God does he manifest. We can objectively measure the quality of our lives by the quality of our relationships with people (Mark 12:28–31; 1 John 4:20 and 21).

Jesus Christ is our supreme example. In John 17:17, he said: “your word is truth,” and he exerted a lifelong effort to learn it precisely. But Jesus also LIVED the truth so flawlessly that he could say, I AM the truth (John 14:6). In other words, he BE true. And those are the two sides of the coin of truth, if you will: doctrinal and practical, propositional and relational. Without both sides, that coin won’t spend, that is, people won’t “buy” what we have to offer.

Our mission is to provide accurate biblical teaching so as to make known the Lord Jesus Christ, The Living Truth, and thus facilitate a worldwide community of mature Christians committed to following him by living the truth of God’s Word and sharing it with others.

We accomplish that mission by way of live teachers, camps and conferences for all ages and categories of people, books, newsletters, audio and video teachings, and internet outreach via our website. Those who choose to partake of and participate in these aspects of our ministry are free to utilize our resources as they see fit, whether by starting their own local fellowship or using our work in an already established group of Christians. Our goal is to provide avenues for individual Christians to exercise their unique callings in the Body of Christ.

The basis of all our belief and practice is the Bible, which is the revealed Word of God, flawless in its original writing by those 40 or so believers who wrote during a period of about 1500 years “...as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21 - NKJV). An honest look at the Bible reveals a coherence that is impossible for those writers to have achieved by collaboration. So-called “errors” or “contradictions” are due to man’s subsequent interference in the transmission of the text, or to mistranslations, or to misunderstandings of what is written. We seek truth rather than the religious traditions of men.

Our goal in setting forth the Scriptures is to enable each believer to understand them for himself so he can develop his own convictions, become an effective communicator of God’s Word, and fulfill his individual ministry in the Body of Christ. Jesus said that knowing the truth would set one free (John 8:32), and our teachings have practical benefit in terms of one’s quality of life—spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically.

One of our goals is to teach the Word to “...faithful men who are able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2 - NKJV). We plan to produce seminars and courses of study whereby those who so choose can become able ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We will ordain to Christian ministry those whom our faith community recognizes as meeting this criterion, whether by training in our ministry or via an ordination they received elsewhere that we recognize.