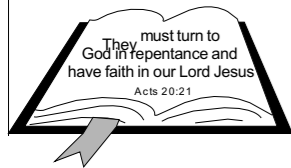




From Initial To Final Salvation



In this tract the term, *initial* salvation, refers to the moment in time when a person extends a trusting-submitting faith in Jesus Christ for his personal salvation and thereby **instantly receives the gift of salvation. At this same moment in time he passes from death to life, from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to the power of God (Jn. 5:24; Acts 26:18; 1 Jn. 3: 14). Such a person is set free from the slavery of sin (Jn. 8:32-36; Rom. 6:22). As a recipient of eternal life he has been declared righteous in God's sight and made a son of God because of his faith in Christ (Rom. 3:22; Gal. 3:26), who is now his Lord and Savior (Gal. 5:24; Eph. 5:24a).**

Final salvation simply refers to **entering the kingdom of God**, which only occurs for those who die righteous or are in such a state when the Lord returns.

At this very moment, the physically alive, present-tense Christian is somewhere between his past conversion experience and his future entrance into the Kingdom, that is, assuming he endures to the end. **He is now on the road that leads to life (Matt. 7:14).** [Many reading this article are now on this *road* that leads to life.]

But is it possible for his entrance into the Kingdom of God to be negated or is it an absolute guarantee? Is the Christian's life now, because of grace, one in which he can sit back, relax, pursue the pleasures of this world and even start to live again according to his sinful nature as a "carnal" Christian with no possible hindrance to his personal entrance into the Kingdom of God? Or can this all-important entrance into the Kingdom of God be nullified for some reason?

These are supremely important questions for which many Christians have sought answers. And rightly so, since we are not yet actually in the Kingdom of God. Let's examine this issue from various angles.

How does the Bible describe the Christian now, that is, between initial and final salvation? According to the Bible, he is:

- ♦ a soldier in a battle (Phil. 2: 25; 2 Tim. 2:3,4; Philemon 2);
- ♦ a runner in a long distance race (Acts 20:24; 1 Cor. 9:24; Gal. 5:7; 2 Tim. 4:7; Heb. 12:1);



- ♦ a worker in the vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16);
- ♦ a fruit tree required to bear good fruit (Jn. 15: 5, 6);
- ♦ a self-denying, cross carrying, Jesus follower (Lk. 9:23);
- ♦ a witness of Jesus (Acts 1:8,22; 2 Tim. 2:2; Rev. 2:13 cf. Acts 8:1-4);
- ♦ a wrestler in a wrestling match with the forces of darkness (Eph. 6:12);
- ♦ in a struggle against sin (Heb. 12:4);
- ♦ an alien-stranger in this world whose citizenship is in heaven (1 Pet. 1:1,17; 2:11; Phil. 3:20);
- ♦ a servant (Acts 4:29; 1 Thess 1:9)!

Beyond these descriptions of a Christian, the same is presently being "tested" (James 1:12) and told to be *faithful* to the very end of his life so that he won't be hurt by the second death (Rev. 2:10, 11), another name for the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8). From all of this, one can see why the Lord commanded us:

"Make every effort to **enter through the narrow door**, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to" (Lk. 13:24).

The Greek reveals **a continuous tense "effort" to enter the Kingdom is to be exerted!**

The Christian should never forget he is now in enemy territory. The devil, who is the god of this age (2 Cor. 4:4), is our enemy! We are on his turf and he doesn't like us here! We disturb him. Our value system is not only antithetical to his, but destructive to his slavish system. He is not in Hell yet, but prowls around throughout the earth looking for someone to devour (1 Pet. 5:8). We are told to "resist" him (1 Pet. 5:9). [Note: God is not going to resist him for us! We are told to resist him for ourselves, with the help of God.] "The ruler of the kingdom of the air" (Eph. 2:2) never gives up in his relentless efforts to tempt us into sin or deceive us through one of his many clever schemes! There are traps, snares, stumbling blocks and many other hindrances that he lays before us on the road that "is **hard** that leads to life" (Matt. 7:14, NRSV). The Christian is consequently **warned** of spiritual dangers that could prevent his entrance into the Kingdom (Gal. 5:19-21; Heb. 3:12-14; Rev. 22: 19), repeatedly commanded to be on his spiritual guard (Matt. 10.17-22; 16:6; cf. 2 Pet. 3:17) and told not to be lukewarm or face possible discharge from

the Body of Christ (Rev. 3:15,16).

We are also advised to give absolutely no place at all to the devil (Eph. 4:27), to avoid every kind of evil (1 Thess. 5:22), **to keep ourselves pure (1 Tim. 5:22)**, from the pollutants of this world (James 1:27) and informed that "bad company corrupts good character" (1 Cor. 15:33). Our thought life is to be centered on things beyond the grave, not on earthly things (Col. 3:1,2). Furthermore, we will do well to keep a clear conscience at all times, as Paul himself did (Acts 24: 16) who also wrote about some who didn't and consequently "shipwrecked" their own faith in Christ (1 Tim. 1:19,20)! [Please note, unlike many in our dark day, Paul did **not** say of these who *shipwrecked* their faith: "They were never really saved to begin with," like the modern Calvinist would!]

In fact, in one form or another this type of apostasy, which Paul wrote about, from the road that leads to life is somewhat commonplace (Matt. 24:10; 2 Thess. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 4:4). Dear reader, unfortunately this could happen to you also, unless you do certain things to prevent it, according to Scripture! **If our perseverance in the faith was solely left up to God no one would have ever "shipwrecked" his faith in Christ or apostatized for any reason, since God always does everything perfectly and does not desire for anyone to perish (2 Pet. 3:9)!** Your own free will and human responsibilities regarding the things of God after initial salvation are the deciding factors that will determine much more than your rewards and position in the kingdom!

We are also warned of the danger of false teachers who distort the truth of God and who teach to accommodate an audience with sinful desires (Acts 20:30; 2 Tim. 4: 3,4). Yet these teachers appear righteous (Matt. 7:15; 23:28; 2 Cor. 11:13-15; 2 Tim. 3:5). Dear reader, remember even the devil can quote Scripture (Matt. 4:6)! Rather than proclaiming the full counsel of God, such teachers stress only certain passages to the exclusion of others, because if they didn't, their sought-after and easy-to-receive message would be clearly contradicted! These are truly "perilous times"! All of these are facts, as disturbing as they may be to some!

Now let's carefully consider the issue of eternal life which is directly related to all of this. Many Christians are not aware of the passages, yet to be cited, regarding eternal life **because of present-day false teachings**. Please verify them for yourself

with your own Bible. Since we are dealing with eternity the stakes are of infinite value. Therefore, carefully note them and prepare your heart to receive your findings. **If necessary, adjust your theology accordingly.**

What you are about to read is the result of looking up all the references in the Bible on “eternal life” and “everlasting life” to learn more about this all-important subject. It would be good for you also to do this. [Sometimes eternal life is simply stated as “life” (Mk. 9:43; 1 Jn. 5:12), so this is another word that needs to be sought out.] As I now look back over all this data related to eternal life, I firmly believe it could be the key or the “missing part of the puzzle” for many regarding their personal misunderstanding of the believer’s security.

The most hated, feared and denied teaching found in the Bible is that the believer’s security is conditional!

To the eternal security proponent who believes in an absolute and guaranteed entrance into God’s Kingdom, based upon a past moment of real faith in Christ, there will be some shocking Bible passages cited and examined! Shocking, not because they are taken out of context or misused in any way, but because **they are hardly known** and the reason they are hardly known is that they are problem texts for the eternal security teachers! Furthermore, many who embrace eternal security, unknowingly or unconsciously, skip over such Scriptures when teaching or while spending personal time in the Bible because they do not fit (or better yet, **cannot fit**) into their theology and, therefore, they simply do not know what to do with these awkward passages. They are thrown into a temporary state of confusion when confronted with them! Such disharmony should immediately cause the sincere truth seeker to know that there **must** be something wrong with his present understanding of that subject, since **there will always be complete harmony throughout the Bible on any given subject when properly understood.** Please remember **the following “awkward” passages are just as authoritative and inspired as any other Scripture dealing with eternal life** (or any other Scripture regardless the subject, as far as that is concerned). Let me first

cite the most commonly known ones from which we will build.

- ◆ “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes [continuous tense] in him shall not perish but **have eternal life**” (Jn. 3:16).
- ◆ “I tell you the truth, he who believes [continuous tense] **has everlasting life**” (Jn. 6:47).
- ◆ “He who has the Son **has life**; he who does not have the Son of God does not have **life**. I write these things to you who believe [continuous tense] in the name of the Son of God so that you may **know that you have eternal life**” (1 Jn. 5:12,13).

These three passages, among others not cited here, clearly show **we have eternal life the moment we believe on Christ** and can “**know**” it at this time.

Now those “awkward,” but equally inspired, Scriptures on the same subject are:

- ◆ “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to **everlasting life**, others to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:2).
- ◆ “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to **eternal life**” (Matt. 25:46).
- ◆ “Will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and **in the age to come, eternal life**” (Mk. 10:30).
- ◆ “**To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life**” (Rom 2:7).
- ◆ “The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; **the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.** Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time **we will reap a harvest if we do not give up**” (Gal. 6:8,9). [The context reveals the harvest to be reaped is eternal life, and it will only be reaped “**if**” we don’t give up sowing to please the Spirit. This was written by the Apostle Paul, the true grace teacher!]
- ◆ “A faith and knowledge resting on the **hope of eternal life**, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time” (Titus 1:2).

- ◆ “So that, **having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life**” (Titus 3:7).
- ◆ “**Keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life**” (Jude 1:21).
- ◆ See also Jn. 12:25; Rom. 6:22; 1 Tim. 6:12; 1 Jn. 2:24,25; 3:15.

Though many know eternal life is given at the point of initial salvation, these additional truths reveal an aspect of eternal life that few seem aware of. **According to true grace teaching, eternal life is also a hope (Titus 3:7) yet to be reaped (Gal. 6:8,9) in the age to come (Mk. 10: 30) for only the ones who persist in doing good (Rom. 2:7) and don’t grow weary and give up (Gal. 6:9)! This is clearly what the Bible teaches, yet it is highly contradictory to the message of “once saved, always saved” which declares once a person is truly regenerated he can neither totally nor finally fall away from grace but will persevere therein to the end and be eternally saved.** Furthermore, “once saved, always saved” teachers blatantly say that such does **not** depend upon our own free will but “upon the immutability of the decree of election.” **In contrast, Scripture declares that “reaping” eternal life is dependent upon us not giving up as we sow to please the Spirit instead of our sinful natures (Gal. 6:8,9).**

Many disciples clearly stopped following Jesus for all time, so they totally and finally fell away (Jn. 6:66). Moreover, we are encouraged to add to our faith in Christ, of our own free will, various virtues “to make our calling and election sure” (2 Pet. 1:5-10). **[Please note that verse 10 does not refer to salvation assurance, but rather to making “your calling and election sure.”]**

It is also possible, between initial and final salvation, to fall from grace to the point where Christ is no longer of any value (Gal. 5:2-4), to be “disowned” by Christ Himself for disowning Him (Matt. 10:33) and to become an enemy of God again by choosing to be a friend of this world (Jam. 4:4b). [Raging fire will consume the enemies of God (Heb. 10:27).] Furthermore, Jesus shockingly told those **who were already saved** they would **not** enter the Kingdom of heaven unless they would change and become like little children (Matt. 18:1-3)! Of course, all of this is denied by the “once saved, always saved” crowd!

In view of all of this, Heb. 12:1-4 appropriately says:

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with **perseverance** the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. **Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.**”

Paul ran his race with “**perseverance**” to the very end of his life (2 Tim. 4:7). Dear saint of God, you can too, but you must follow the Scriptural directions on how to endure so that you won’t be just another casualty like Demas, Hymenaeus, Alexander, Judas, Solomon and many others. Paul was loving, humble, forgiving, thankful, faithful in prayer, and **kept a clear conscience**, just to mention a few of his many godly attributes. You will do well to pursue these. See also 1 Tim. 6:11, 12; 2 Tim. 2:22.

You are in a battle so don’t expect everything to go easy for you. Keep your thoughts on eternity and on the glorious Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, by **staying in the Bible.** There are multiple advantages from such (Ps. 19:7-14). “Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil” (1 Thess. 5:21, 22). Cast all your cares on God, for He cares about you (1 Pet. 5:7).

“Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an **undying** love” (Eph. 6:24).☞

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