

You can be an Overcomer! 04

"But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." John 1:12

Once Saved, Always Saved: Are we Safe while living in Sin?

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matthew 7:21

Once saved, always saved. That is the cry so often heard from many of the pulpits today. "I can do whatever I want, as long as I have accepted Jesus as my personal Savior. Why I could go out and mow down a crowd of people with a machine gun and if I were to die at that very moment, I would be saved."

Many believe this teaching today, but is it true? Once we have accepted Jesus, can we do whatever we want and still be saved? Most people who believe this teaching will quote the following Bible verse as proof: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:38, 39

Now this is a wonderful Bible promise that God has given us and it should inspire us all; but does it really say that once a person is born again, it is impossible for him to lose his way and be lost? In fact, is this verse talking about salvation or eternal life at all? No, this verse is clearly talking about God's unconditional love towards man, not unconditional salvation. Salvation is conditional! You might also notice that the word "sin" was not included in the list of things which are unable to separate us from the love of God.

If we continue in sin, after we have asked Jesus to be our personal Saviour, are we really in a saved relationship? "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." Hebrews 10:26

Let me challenge you by reading the following Bible verses regarding eternal life and see what the Bible really teaches. If this idea is false, you would really rather know now before it is too late, wouldn't you? OK, starting in the Book of Matthew, we will explore through the New Testament on this subject:

- "Blessed are the **poor in spirit**: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:3 The sense of need, the recognition of our poverty and sin, is the very first condition of acceptance with God. This is the opposite of pride.
- "Blessed are the **meek**: for they shall inherit the earth." Matthew 5:5
- "Blessed are the **pure in heart**: for they shall see God." Matthew 5:8
- "For I say unto you, That except **your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees**, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:20
- "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that **doeth the will of my Father** which is in heaven." Matthew 7:21
- "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that **endureth to the end** shall be saved." Matthew 10:22
- "And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye **be converted**, and **become as little children**, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 18:3
- "But he that shall **endure unto the end**, the same shall be saved. Matthew 24:13
He that **believeth** and is **baptized** shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Mark 16:16

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- "And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, **Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?** He said unto him, **What is written in the law? how readest thou?** And he answering said, **Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.** And he said unto him, **Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.**" Luke 10:25-28
- "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man **be born** again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3
- "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be **born of water and of the Spirit**, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John 3:5
- "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever **believeth in him** should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16
- "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that **heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me**, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." John 5:24
- "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that **believeth** on me hath everlasting life." John 6:47
- "Whoso **eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood**, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." John 6:54
- "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; **and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.**" John 12:24, 25
- "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall **call on the name of the Lord** shall be saved." Acts 2:21
- "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but **the doers of the law shall be justified.**" Romans 2:13
- "That if thou shalt **confess** with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and **shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead**, thou shalt be saved." Romans 10:9
- "For **by grace are ye saved through faith**; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:" Ephesians 2:8
- "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that **love his appearing.**" 2 Timothy 4:8
- "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that **obey him;**" Hebrews 5:8, 9
- "Blessed is the man that **endureth temptation**: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." James 1:12
- "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that **love him?**" James 2:5
- "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the **righteous scarcely be saved**, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" 1 Peter 4:17, 18
- "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. **He that hath the Son hath life**; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." 1 John 5:11, 12
- "**Keep yourselves in the love of God**, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Jude 1:21
- "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that **overcometh** will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Revelation 2:7

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- "...**be thou faithful unto death**, and I will give thee a crown of life." Revelation 2:10
- "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that **overcometh** shall not be hurt of the second death." Revelation 2:11
- "He that **overcometh**, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." Revelation 3:5
- "Behold, I come quickly: **hold that fast which thou hast**, that no man take thy crown." Revelation 3:11
- "To him that **overcometh** will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Revelation 3:21
- "He that **overcometh** shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." Revelation 21:7
- "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every **man according as his work shall be.**" Revelation 22:12
- "Blessed are they that **do his commandments**, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Revelation 22:14

Here is just one reference of many found in the Old Testament:

- "Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: **the soul that sinneth, it shall die.**" Ezekiel 18:4

There Are No Shortcuts

The bottom line in all of this is, if we are going to spend eternity with Jesus, we must be born again, meek, love him, pure in heart, converted, baptized, born of the water and the spirit, do the will of our Father, do His commandments, be an overcomer, be obedient, endure temptation, etc. There are no shortcuts to heaven... If there were, Jesus would not have had to come to this earth, and die for us. We can trace all of the misery and suffering in the world today back to one person's disobedience in the Garden of Eden. If God were to take one unrepentant sinner to heaven with Him, sin would rise up again.

Did you notice in Revelation 3:5 that unless you are an overcomer, Jesus will blot your name out of the book of life... Only the names of the born again are written in the book of life in the first place. So if we had only one verse in all of the Bible to show that a person can lose his salvation and that it is conditional, it would be this verse.

Now let's look at the following verses from 1 John 3:2-15. This passage really goes into depth regarding the born again person. Please look at the whole chapter from your Bible and read it.

2 "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, **when he shall appear, we shall be like him**; for we shall see him as he is."

3 "And every man that hath this hope in him **purifieth himself**, even as he is pure."

4 "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."

5 "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin."

6 "**Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not**: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him."

7 "**Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.**"

8 "**He that committeth sin is of the devil**; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

9 "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

10 "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."

15 "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."

In conclusion, according to the above Bible verses, obedience most certainly does affect our salvation. It surely affected Adam and Eve. Is that not why we lost our first inheritance, due to their disobedience, back in the Garden of Eden. Yet thousands of years later people think they can do as they like and still be saved. I guess my point in all of this is this, if you are not having victory over sin in your life and you keep constantly committing the same sins, over and over again, then maybe you need to stop and ask yourself this most important question. Am I converted??? Am I on the pathway to heaven? Or am I just fooling myself...

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." John 3:7, 8

These words were spoken by Jesus to Nicodemus: This highly educated church leader had come to see Jesus thinking to have a most interesting theological discussion where he could show off his great learning. Imagine his shock when Jesus point blank told him that he needed to be born again—he needed to be converted!

WHAT SHALL IT PROFIT?

Jesus asked a very pointed question in Mark 8:36 "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

The story is told of a conversation Elder J. N. Andrews had with a young man as they were hoeing the garden together: All was quiet for a while as the two of them worked; Finally Elder Andrews said, "Young man, you are twenty years old, aren't you? What are you going to do with your life?"

The youth looked up with a smile of determination and said, "Elder Andrews, I am going to be a lawyer."

"Well, you might do a good deal worse," said the friendly man, "but what are you going to do before you are a lawyer?"

"I am going to school!" he brought his hoe down with a hard whack. "I haven't been inside a schoolroom since I was ten years old, and I have hardly finished the third grade. I am going to school until I get an education," he said with decision.

"What will you do then?"

"I am going to study law."

"Yes, and what next?"

"Well, I hope I will practice law."

"And what next?"

"I hope to earn some money, get a home, and have a family."

"Yes, and what next?"

The boy stopped hoeing and wished that Elder Andrews wouldn't ask any more questions. But he did.

"And what next?"

"Well, I suppose I shall die."

"What next?"

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The young man did not answer. He asked himself, "What next? Will being a lawyer and making money be enough to take me into heaven?"

Elder Andrews said earnestly, "My boy, take hold of something that will land your feet safely on the other side, where you will be safe for eternity."

Yes, 'what next?' is a question we all need to ask ourselves.

What if the offer was made to you of several millions of dollars? Haven't we all often played the little mind-game what would I do if I had millions of dollars?

Well, what if you could have this huge amount, tax free, to spend as you please, and no strings attached — except ONE?

Well, you hesitate— OK, what's the ONE string?

The deal is this, you can have it all—for one year—and at the end of the year, you will die. No way to escape it— you WILL die. Sort of makes it look different doesn't it? A year passes very quickly! Few would want to accept this deal.

But Satan is making deals like this every day and even he is surprised at how many people jump for it. He is telling people, "You can do whatever you like and not pay any attention to God or His commandments; just get as much pleasure as you can out of life. Eat drink and be merry, don't bother with that healthful living stuff, that's for wimps. Don't make commitments, shun responsibility, just take what fun you can get, wherever you find it. Lie, cheat, steal, it doesn't matter as long as it makes you happy, and you get what you want."

"Don't worry about dying, you are young, you have a whole lifetime ahead of you! After all, your grandparents lived to ninety!"

But when it's over - you will DIE! There is no escaping it. And so many fall for the deal. And oh, don't forget; the Devil is a liar and a cheat so most people don't even get their 'lifetime' of fun. Young people and even children are dying of Aids, cancer, accidents, violence, etc. Drugs and certain diseases that come from unwise indulgence can destroy your Brain—how much 'fun' do you think you have when your BRAIN is wrecked?

How much 'fun' do you have when you are hooked up to a respirator machine because your lungs are ruined from smoking cigarettes and grass?

How much 'fun' is it when you are dying of liver cancer brought on by wild parties? You turn yellowish green and itch all over so badly you don't know what to do to get relief. And the pain! Unbelievable!

But even if you do live a lifetime of 'fun', seventy or eighty years of trouble, hassle, disappointments and gradual deterioration and the day still comes—you DIE.

Are you ready for a better offer? Jesus has one for you. Just surrender to Him and let Him direct and guide your life here. He will ask you to stay away from things He knows will only harm you. He will do some training on you to get you ready for eternity, but even in the hard times He is right there to see you through. He will teach you His ways and how to live in His Universe.

If you obey Him, you are never alone or lonely, never deserted or abandoned, and if it comes to dying— it's just a brief nap in Jesus' arms. Then AWAKE to the joy and wonder of ETERNITY in the vast universe of God!

All the troubles and disappointments, fears, pain and sorrow gone forever!

A whole vast universe of beauty and wonder to explore! And the wonder of it all is that everyone in that whole vast universe is your friend. No enemies at all. No 'Private Property', 'No Parking' or 'Keep Out', signs.

A body that is tireless, never gets hurt or sick, never wears out or gets old; a mind that can learn forever and never forget anything; and above all, eternal fellowship with the Heavenly Father and the Creator/Saviour that

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loved you so much, that heaven wasn't a place to be desired when you were lost. Jesus, who poured out His life for you, so that you could have a chance to accept His better offer.

Think about it— think about it real good!

Professor Bushnell's Conversion: Millions today, know not how to give their hearts to Jesus. Millions more know not whether it is even possible to be saved, or even whether there is a God or Savior. Yet there is a simple way by which they can know and be saved. How? They can start right where they are, with the knowledge they have, and begin seeking salvation, walking in all the light that comes to them. They will then have the assurance that they will find it; for Jesus has said, "For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Luke 11:10.

Professor Horace Bushnell, a famous teacher at Yale University, was a skeptic, but he was very popular. When a minister went there to hold a series of meetings at the school, the young men, instead of giving their hearts to God, were inclined to hide behind Bushnell, because he was not a believer in Christ.

The minister at last went to Professor Bushnell and said, "Professor, if these things that I am preaching are true, wouldn't you like to know it? If Christ be real, wouldn't you like to know it? If Christ does change men who trust Him, and forgives them, and puts a superhuman power in their lives, wouldn't you like to know it?"

After thoughtful consideration Bushnell replied, "Certainly I would like to know it, if these things be reliable and praiseworthy."

The minister then said, "You can know it if you will just be honest."

"How?" Bushnell asked.

"Take Christ's own challenge, said the minister. 'If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.'" John 7:17.

"But," said Bushnell, "I do not know how to start. I do not know that there is any God at all. How could I start?"

The minister replied: "Start like this: 'O God, if there be such a Being, give me light on this matter of religion. If Thou has any interest in my getting light, and if Thou wilt give me light, no matter how it comes, I will follow such light wherever it leads.' Take that clue and you will find God."

Then with firmness and decision Professor Bushnell said, "I will take it!"

Three days later he came back, and from the rostrum of the chapel he said to his students: "My men, I have a wonderful thing to tell you. I laughed to scorn all that this man preached, and all the rest of them, and the churches. I have found out that I was in the darkness and they were in the light. Oh, I have put God to the test!" Then concerning Christ he said, "I am henceforth His disciple and friend for ever!"

Although many do not care whether they will be saved or lost, God cares and appeals to all everywhere on earth: "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." Isaiah 45:22. What a wonderful experience He gives to all who will look to Him for it, for He says: "Come now, and let us reason together, said the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isaiah 1:18. And Jesus Himself said, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou has sent." - John 17: 3.

Do you have a true knowledge of God and of Christ? If not, will you pray as Bushnell prayed, "O God, if there be such a Being, give me light on this matter of religion. If Thou wilt give me light, no matter how it comes, I will follow such light wherever it leads"? Will you keep this prayer before God till you get the light?

It was only a few days till Bushnell was wonderfully converted. It may not take you nearly that long. It is the earnestness that quickens the answer. To be forgiven, to be cleansed in heart, and to be made holy in life by faith in Christ, who died on the cross for all; how wonderful an experience!

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"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10. When Jesus walked the earth He sought out those whom He knew were longing for help and truth. Now as He ministers in the Heavenly Sanctuary, He still does the same thing. Here is a true story of one such case.

A Child's Dream: This story of a child's dream and how it came true shows that God knows all the future and He has a special care for children.

One time, there was a little girl who lived on a farm in Minnesota. Her parents were strict Lutherans. Let us call this little girl "Laura." When Laura was about ten years old, her parents wanted her to be confirmed so that she could join the Lutheran Church. This meant that she must go to the minister to read the Bible and learn the duties of a Christian.

As Laura read her Bible, she noticed that it said, "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." God "rested on the seventh day from all His work." "Wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." "In it thou shalt not do any work."

Laura was puzzled. How plain the Bible seemed. Yet her parents and all the Lutherans rested on Sunday. They hallowed the first day of the week. She wondered if there was anyone in all the world who kept the seventh day holy. She had never heard of any. How strange!

The more Laura thought about this, the more puzzled she became. She thought all Christians ought to obey the word of God. Why was every one keeping Sunday? She talked with her parents about it.

"Every one keeps Sunday, daughter," her mother said. "Don't let this trouble you. When older people do this way, a child should be satisfied."

But Laura was not satisfied. She kept asking her parents questions that they could not answer. At last, they told her to ask the minister. He would surely be able to explain.

"Please, sir, why do people keep Sunday, when the Bible says the seventh day is the Sabbath?" she asked the minister the next time she went to read to him.

"Sunday has been kept for ages, my child," he said, "and it should be good enough for us."

"Where does the Bible tell us to keep Sunday?" the child asked.

The minister could not answer her question. He could give no reason from the Bible for keeping Sunday. Laura was greatly disappointed. She was not at all convinced. She believed God wanted her to keep holy the day He had made holy.

Often, when the Sabbath came, she took her Bible and went to her favorite nook back of a big straw pile, and there she studied the word of God. But as she knew of no one else in all the world who kept the seventh day, she finally decided she must be mistaken, and gave it up.

A few years later Laura had a dream. In her dream she saw a tent. Beyond the tent was a bright light. A voice said to her, "Go in there, and you will see the light." The only thing Laura could think of as being held in a tent was a circus, and she had been taught to stay away from that. So she replied to the voice that she never went to a circus. Again the voice told her to go up to the tent. This she decided to do. As she neared the tent, she heard singing. They were singing gospel songs! She looked inside and saw a number of people listening to the speaker. She marked well his appearance. Then she awoke, but she did not think anything special of the dream.

A little later she had another dream something like the first one. She saw a large tent, and saw and heard a number of speakers.

Time wore on and Laura grew to womanhood. Then she married. A few years later, a tent was pitched on a vacant lot not far from the place where she lived. She then had a little boy about ten years of age. One day, as

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he was coming up the street on which the tent was pitched, a man seemed to be waiting to speak to him. Soon he reached the place where the man stood.

"Good morning, son," the man said pleasantly. "When you go home, tell your mother that meetings are held every night in the tent, and we should like to have her come and hear."

On his way home, the boy stopped a moment at the tent. Hanging up in the tent he saw a chart with many strange-looking pictures on it. When he reached home, he told his mother what the man had said and what he had seen.

"The men at the tent are false prophets," the mother said. "Why should I go near them?"

But she kept wondering about the pictures. At last, she decided to go and see them, and hear what these men would talk about.

At first, she did not have courage to go inside the tent, but only peeped in as she went past. The face of the speaker seemed familiar. She looked in again on her way back. She knew that she had seen that face before. The third time she managed to get courage enough to go in. Then she recognized the speaker as the one she had seen about thirty years before in a dream.

After the meeting, she told him that she had seen him thirty years ago. He wondered what she meant, for he was but a child then, and had never thought of such a thing as being a minister. But the Lord who knows our down sittings and our uprisings, and who understands our thoughts afar off, not only saw him in His work but also saw just how he would dress thirty years later. The mother, related her dream, and it made a deep impression upon the minister.

As a result of these meetings, the mother accepted the third angel's message. Next year, she went to camp meeting. Here she recognized a number of the speakers by voice and appearance, those she had seen in her second dream.

Does this not show us that although our heavenly Father is clothed with majesty, yet He is not too great to speak to a little child and lead him to the light in His own good time and way? He never forgets even the smallest of His creatures. While to us the future is clothed in darkness, to Him it is as an open book. We are His children, and we should cast all our trials upon Him, knowing that His eye is upon us and that He will never forsake us. Adapted from Review and Herald, before 1933.

May we individually determine to remain loyal to God now and in every conflict that will arise in the future. Now that you have determined to prove faithful to Him, as one of His loyal, obedient children, you can expect intense opposition from many around you, both in the home and out of it. But God loves you and, if you will cling to Him in faith to the very end, you will share in the rewards of that heavenly home that Christ is preparing for those that love Him. "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. —2 Corinthians 12:9