

Greek scholars and Greek lexicons agree that John is saying a Christian cannot *continue in sin* and be pleasing to God. John is not discussing a one-time act, but a continual lifestyle of sin. The NIV translates 1 John 3:9 accurately by saying, “No one who is born of God will continue to sin...he cannot go on sinning.” Isn’t it interesting that the verse that some have used to try to prove the idea of once saved, always saved actually teaches that a Christian *can sin so as to be lost*?

John 6:37 [“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.”] Some claim that this passage teaches that once you are in Christ, you can never leave Him. In context, this is not at all what Jesus is teaching. Jesus is teaching the exact opposite of that. Jesus is saying that *nothing can remove Him from us, not us from Him*. This is very important. Jesus is teaching us that nothing *external* (e.g., the world, the devil, persecution, etc.) can take Christians out of His care and protection. But, we *can* remove ourselves from Christ’s love—by living a life of sin. Nothing can *force* us to leave Christ, but we can *freely choose to leave* Christ and be lost. Jesus clarified this idea in John 10:2 by saying (of Christians) that “...no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.” Those who believe that John 6:37 teaches the idea of eternal security (once saved, always saved) must affirm that we are mere robots or drones. *If nothing can remove us from eternal life* (including our own decisions to leave), *then we do not possess free will*. The Bible teaches that we *do* have the free will to choose (Josh. 24:15; Jn. 5:39-40). John 6:37 teaches that Jesus does not want us to be lost, and that He has done all He can to protect us. But we can turn our backs on Him—and be lost as a result.

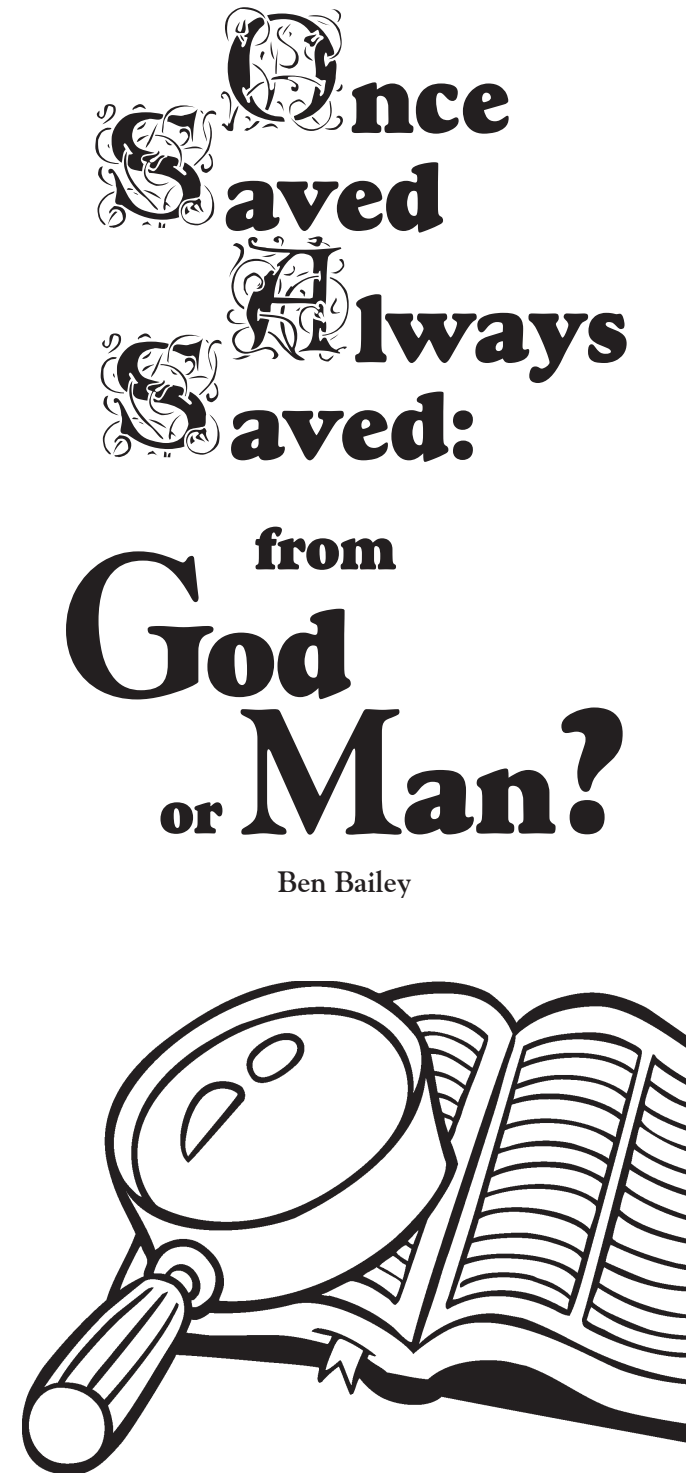
The Bible does not teach a person can never be lost once he is saved. In fact, the parable of the prodigal son (Lk. 15:24) provides a perfect example of a son who, in sinful rebellion, left the Father and was dead and lost as a result. The younger son

chose to leave the safety of his father’s house to lead a life of sin and profligacy. To return to the father, the son had to make a willful decision to repent and return to his father. While the son was leading an ungodly life, he was considered by his father as being “lost.” The application for us today is that once we are Christians, *we can choose to leave the security of the house of God* and be separated from our heavenly Father.

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One of the most destructive doctrines, both to the teachings of the Bible and to Christian character, is the false concept of “once saved, always saved.” This doctrine states that once a person has been saved, he can never lose his salvation. A denominational preacher in Louisville, Kentucky, made this statement concerning the doctrine of once saved, always saved: “If I killed my wife and mother and debauched a thousand women, I couldn’t go to hell—in fact, I couldn’t go to hell if I wanted to.” While many who hold to this teaching would not take it this far, this is, in fact, the logical conclusion of the idea of once saved, always saved. No matter what you do, or how badly you live, you cannot go to Hell—even if you want to! This is indeed a tragic doctrine because it permits people to “wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction” (2 Pet. 3:16). It also is destructive to Christian character because it provides a “license to sin.” Does the Bible teach that once a person is saved, he or she can never again be lost? Let us consider what the Bible *really* says about once saved, always saved.

Galatians 5:4 [“You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; *you have fallen from grace.*”] The teaching of Galatians 5:4 utterly repudiates the idea of “once saved, always saved.” In this epistle, Paul is writing to “the churches of Galatia” (Gal. 1:2)—in other words, to all those who have *already been saved*. This is significant, because some have tried to say that these people were not saved in the first place. By saying this, they are saying that Paul, an inspired man of God, did not even know who was, and who was not, in the Lord’s church. Galatians 5:4 clearly teaches that some of those to whom Paul wrote *had been saved* at one point, and therefore *were* in the church. But they later fell out of grace with God. Others have objected to this verse by saying that these people had not fallen out of grace; rather, they had merely “fallen from within the center” of God’s grace. First, we are disposed to ask: What difference is there in the two? Both are without God’s richest grace. Second, the Greek Tes-

tament will not accept this rendering. The literal word for fallen from is the Greek preposition that means “out of.” Paul is not only saying they have “just” fallen from God’s grace, but that they have literally fallen *out of the realm of God’s grace!* The Bible does not teach once saved, always saved. Instead, it clearly refutes it.

Acts 8:20 [“But Peter said to him (Simon), “Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!”] If Galatians 5:4 teaches by principle that the doctrine of once saved, always saved is false, then Acts 8:20 teaches that it is false by case example. Simon was a man who had been converted to the Gospel by an inspired teacher. He then tried to buy the gift of miracles and was found to be in sin as a result of his action. Did Peter say to him, “That’s all right, because you are ‘once saved, always saved?’” Hardly! Peter told Simon that his money *would perish with him*. An inspired apostle (Peter) told a Christian (Simon) that he was about to perish spiritually! Remember, here is a man who has just become a Christian, and then Peter tells him he is about to be lost. There could be no more convincing an example than this that a person can become a Christian, yet then sin and be lost. The Bible does not teach once saved, always saved. Instead, it clearly refutes it.

1 Corinthians 10:12 [“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”] In this passage, Paul clearly teaches that the Corinthian Christians *could* fall away from God. Corinth was a very wicked city, and the church was becoming wicked in some ways as well. The congregation in Corinth was experiencing division, idolatry, immorality, adultery, and other problems that were about to cause some of the members to be lost. Some might object to this passage by suggesting that “fall” does not mean “to be lost forever.” Let the context determine the meaning. Those to whom Paul was speaking were involved in lust, sexual immorality, idolatry, tempting Christ, and complaining (1 Cor. 10:1-11). *Can people with these sins in their lives go to Heaven?* No! In fact, the context defines “fall” as “being destroyed by the destroyer” (1 Cor. 10:10). When Paul says “fall,” he means “to be separated from God for all eternity.” Truly, these Christians were about to be destroyed spiritually by God. The same fate can befall us if

we are not careful.

2 Peter 1:10 [“Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall.”] Once again, Peter tells Christians that they can so sin as to be lost. *Why must a Christian make sure he stays saved if he can never be lost to begin with?* The concept of once saved, always saved completely contradicts this passage of Scripture. There is no need to “make your calling and election sure” if you are *eternally* secure in the first place. Someone might object by saying, “These people were not saved in the first place.” Who among us would be willing to suggest that Peter did not know who his own “brothers” were (2 Pet 1:10)?! Peter knew who was, and who was *not*, a child of God. He also knew that his fellow Christians *could be lost* if they were not careful. This passage undeniably teaches that the possibility exists for Christians to fall from God’s grace and be lost.

In the Bible, there are a number of passages which teach that a Christian *can so sin as to be eternally lost* (see Gal. 5:4; 2 Pet 1:10; 1 Cor. 10:12; Acts 8:20). However, some have tried to distort certain passages to make them teach the false concept of once saved, always saved. Consider the following.

1 John 3:9 [“Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.”] To the detriment of John’s overall message, some have tried to make the text of 1 John 3:9 teach that a person cannot sin after he has become a child of God. But this is in direct contradiction with what John has already said. In 1 John 1:8, John tells Christians, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” Also, in 1 John 2:1-2 John tells Christians that when they *do* sin they have an advocate for their sin: Jesus Christ. From these passages it is evident that John realized that Christians *would* sin and would need help with such sin. What is 1 John 3:9 trying to teach? John is teaching that *a Christian cannot stay saved and continue in sin*. The Greek word for “sin” is continuous in its action. Both