

Can saints ever be eternally lost?

The doctrine behind the answer to this question is called ‘the Perseverance of the Saints’, which forms one of the five points of Calvinism (the ‘P’ in TULIP). There are many today teaching the Arminian doctrine that saints can lose their salvation if they do not continue in faith. This makes salvation a work of human merit and destroys all assurance of faith since no one can ever really know if they have done enough, long enough well enough. However, there are also antinomian preachers who declare that once a person has believed in Christ, they are automatically guaranteed salvation, no matter what sins they commit; ‘once saved always saved’. This is also false as many NT texts confirm.

The truth is twofold:

Saints known by their fruit: true believers in Christ will always bear fruit of salvation in their lives (Jn 15:5); indeed they were chosen in eternity to be holy (Eph 1:4). If a person bears no fruit then they cannot be saved. The Gospel always takes root in a believer’s life and, even if slowly, changes that person to be more like Christ. Christians are being sanctified progressively (2 Cor 3:18).

Saints are assured of eternal life: Genuine Christians will certainly be saved unto the end. Why is this true?

1. *True saints belong to God* (Jn 17:6). Who is strong enough to take away God’s possessions? [Jn 10:28-30]
2. *God promises believers eternal life and that they will be saved and kept* (Phil 1:6; 1 Cor 1:8; Jn 17:2; 1 Jn 2:25). God cannot lie.
3. *God cannot do anything imperfectly* (Eccles 3:14; Ps 119:90). If he saves a person, then they must be saved throughout their whole life (Isa 46:10).
4. *If God says we are justified by faith in Christ [judicially pardoned] then we are* (Rm 3:28, 5:1). Who can thus condemn us? (Rm 8:1)
5. *Salvation is a person – Christ*, not a teaching to be held or a discipline to be kept by us. When a sinner is saved they are made a new creation and united with Christ (2 Cor 5:17; 1 Cor 1:30); no longer their own but in Christ. If salvation is being in Christ as a result of being changed, how can anyone take themselves out, or the enemy snatch them away?
6. *The beginning of conversion was God’s work*, not man’s, and thus the continuation of redemption is also God’s work. God gave man faith and repentance and continues to give him grace to do his will (Phil 2:13).
7. *If salvation were in any way dependent upon man, no one would be saved.* This is why salvation is of the Lord (Ps 18:2; 27:1; Rev 19:1).
8. *Saints are God’s sons* (Rm 8:14; Gal 4:6); who can take away God’s family from him?

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. (Jude 1:24)

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Understanding Ministries

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