

Once Saved, Always Saved (OSAS)

Once I am saved I cannot lose my salvation, period. Praise God that He keeps His Word despite my disobedience! This article will look at numerous assurances of OSAS in scripture as well as go through some logical arguments for OSAS.

Consider this, since salvation is a free gift that I don't deserve, how then can I later un-deserve it, and lose it? To suggest that I can somehow un-deserve or lose salvation after it's been given to me means that I did deserve it at one time. Deserving my salvation means I was saved by my good deeds or my works. So, to lose it means I was too bad and now sin has forfeited my eternal life. This would mean there is no eternal security. Additionally, for eternal life to go away, or come to an end for any reason, negates the fact that it's eternal. Something eternal can't end or cease to be.

The gospel says clearly that we are saved, not by our own good works (Ephesians 2:9), and that no one is ever good enough to be saved (Romans 3:23). But, that we are saved only through grace (getting something you don't deserve) only through the work of God in our lives. Therefore, I didn't deserve salvation when I got it, and I certainly can't un-deserve it later; it's never deserved!

I can't lose it, nor can I relinquish it. An example of this can be observed from the comparison of birth and rebirth that Jesus shared with Nicodemus in John 3. An argument using this logic can be said like this –

If I am Bob Johnson, son of Steve Johnson. I may one day choose to hate my dad. I might even go so far as to legally change my name and renounce him as my father. I could spend the rest of my life traveling the world proclaiming that he is a fraud and that I hate him with all my heart. However, nothing that I do can change the fact that I am always and forever Bob Johnson, son of Steve Johnson. It can't be undone, regardless of what I say or do. I can't relinquish that. I can't un-birth myself and be born of a different father. A child born can't be unborn; once that generation of life has taken place, not God, Satan or man can undo it. Likewise, once a person is born again of Spirit, the process called regeneration, nothing that God, Satan or man can do can unregenerate that rebirth. Jesus tells Nicodemus in John 3:6, ***“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”*** That is one example of assurance of our salvation; God can't remove it or reject it, man can't relinquish it and Satan can't snatch it away. Whew! No matter how delusional my perception of God may become...no matter how backslidden or how distant my apostasy may take me, if regeneration has taken place in my life, then I'm going to heaven when I die, period.

Knowing that regeneration can't be reversed and undone, the real question is, did regeneration take place to begin with? This is a legitimate question that is okay to ask and impossible to answer since only God knows a person's heart. But the wrong statement to make would be to say that salvation can, for any reason, come and then go.

What else does the Bible say? Fortunately, it says a lot about the assurance and eternal security of salvation.

Hebrews 3 – Those who are born-again believers are here called “partakers” (vs. 1, 14) and “*Christ's house*” (vs. 6).

Verse six says, ***“We are His house, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.”*** It doesn't say, *“We will someday be His house, if...”* Those who go on holding to the hope are today His house. Holding onto the hope is a demonstration that we are His house now, because at some regenerative point in the past we became partakers of it. Verse fourteen says, ***“we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.”*** It doesn't say we will become partakers in the future so long as we hold fast, but rather it says we have become (in the past) partakers and so today and in the future, we hold fast which is a verification of our salvation, not a means to it. Verse twelve says, ***“Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.”*** First, “brethren” isn't understood throughout the N.T. as only being only those that are saved. There are many false brethren in the N.T. and we are told to examine/test ourselves to see if we are true or false brethren (2 Cor. 13:5). So, the word brethren here does not imply salvation but rather those that gather together as a corporate group; some

saved, some not...just like a church today. So, a brethren that here is warned against falling away doesn't imply a loss of salvation, but a brother that never experienced regeneration. Many brethren have come close to the experiences and goodness of God, yet without being born again. Matthew 7:21 says that some will say before God, "**Lord, did we not prophecy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons and in Your name perform miracles.**" To which Jesus will reply, "**Away from Me, I never knew you.**" Note, Jesus doesn't say, "*You were brethren once, and I knew you for a time, but now you are lost and I know you no more.*"

Secondly, "take care" is the idea that there be vigilance and taking heed in a person's life so as to not be passive or cavalier about sin. The truth isn't that secure Christians have to be vigilant in order to maintain their salvation, but rather that vigilance is evidence of their salvation.

John 3:1-7 – Here Jesus is talking with Nicodemus, a ruler among the Jews. Jesus says to him, "**You must be born again.**" Nicodemus doesn't understand how he can go back into his mother's womb and be born again. Jesus explains that there are two types of birth; a water birth (womb) which all people experience, and secondly, being born of spirit, which only some people experience. This spirit birth or "*being born again*" is called regeneration. Once regeneration (salvation) takes place it can't be undone...no matter what the recipient does.

John 6:37-40 – "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." These statements are as assuring as anything else that we can read! What God wills and what Jesus promises we can know are true. Jesus speaks these words plainly; without metaphor parable or proverb so as to not be mistaken at all. Christ teaches us, heals us, pays our debt, pleads our cause, prepare us for and preserves us to eternal life; a sufficient grace to sanctify us where we are incapable of securing and preserving ourselves. Those who believe in Jesus have everlasting life and shall be raised up by His power at the last day.

Romans 11:29 – "For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." Irrevocable is a powerful word. We know that salvation is a gift that one receives from God, simply a free gift we don't and can never deserve. Here, we read that the gifts from God are irrevocable. In the Greek the word irrevocable means God is "not repentant of" (doesn't change His mind about), or He is "un-regretted". Here Paul talks of the constancy and unchangeableness of that love of God - those gifts and callings are immutable; whom he so loves, he loves to the end. That being said, we do find God repenting/regretting that he had made man in Genesis 6:6, "It repented the Lord that he had made man". As well the Lord was repenting/regretting that he had given a man honor and power in 1 Samuel 15:11, "It repented Me that I have set up Saul to be king". But we never find God repenting/regretting that he had given a man grace, or effectually called him; those gifts and callings are without repentance/regret.

Titus 3:5 – "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Here, we see that "regeneration" is mentioned, and also that we never deserved salvation at all ("not on the basis of deeds..."), reiterating what has already been mentioned. It goes on to say that we are heirs who have been justified. Being justified and becoming an heir are, in the heavenly context, a permanent order. Not subject to being stripped away as we assume certain rights can be here on earth. The Holy Spirit, as mentioned here, is the security of this truth which we will mention in the following verses.

Ephesians 1:13-14 – “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.” Here Paul is addressing people who have converted over to the Christian faith. He says that they, having believed the gospel, were “sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance”. Words like sealed, promise, pledge, inheritance, and possession...all declare a permanent state. We are owned and guaranteed by God. **Ephesians 4:30** reminds us again that we are “sealed” by the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 – “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.” Again, similar to the verses in Ephesians 1...we are sealed and pledged by the Holy Spirit; guaranteeing our salvation.

Romans 8:1-2 – “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.” No condemnation should be taken literally...period, not to be taken conditionally (loss or relinquishing our salvation).

1 Peter 1:3-5 – “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” Here, the words “imperishable”, “undefiled” and “will not fade away” are powerful words expressed about our salvation. These certainly are direct to the fact that salvation can’t come and go. Furthermore, it says we “are protected by the power of God”, isn’t that more powerful than the power of Satan or any sin or waywardness in our lives? Certainly!

Revelation 3:5 – “He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.” Here, we see that a believer’s name is written in the book of life...not able to be removed, deleted or altered in any way!

John 17:11-12 – Here Jesus is praying to the Father in Heaven. He says, “Father keep them, as I have kept them while I was here.” Jesus refers to the disciples that He Himself kept in the Father’s name while Jesus Himself was with them on earth. But now Jesus asks of the whole body of Christ, the whole church, that the Father would keep them Himself. The idea is that, because we are wayward we need to be kept.

I as an earthly father have the responsibility to keep my kids in my presence, near me and protected by me. When I go to the mall or to Disneyland or someplace “unsafe”, I’m keeping my kids. It’s because my kids are wayward and if I don’t keep them then they’ll run off, get snatched away by an enemy, or get lost. Just as I as an earthly father keep my kids under watchful eye and protection, and keep them close to me, how much more capable can the Heavenly Father keep those that are his children? It’s because of the fact that we continue to be wayward after we’re saved that requires the Father to keep us to Himself. Not because we don’t stray, but because we stray. If we lose our salvation, then it implies that God stops keeping us.

John 10:27-29 – Jesus says, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.”

This reassures us of what Jesus prayed in John 17...that while Jesus was here, He kept his sheep (followers/people), and while they are in the Father’s hand, the Father keeps them, and in His grip, they cannot be lost or taken away.

Another question that is asked is, “Can someone partake of the Holy Spirit without being saved?” What about people like King Saul, was he saved? He prophesied under the power of the Holy Spirit. Yet he also lived wickedly. Would it be said that he is an unregenerate (unsaved) person used by God, or a regenerated and saved brother who struggles against his flesh as we all do?

King Saul could be an example of a person that can partake of the Holy Spirit, but not have experienced regeneration. My understanding is that the Holy Spirit, pre-Pentecost (Acts), was either a rare gift (John the Baptist), or a temporal gift (kings of Israel). For example, David, having the gift of the Holy Spirit as a counselor and being active in his life, understood that the Holy Spirit could be taken away from him if he continued with his lack of obedience. David cries out in Psalm 51, “Do not take your Holy Spirit from me.” We know that David and Saul were anointed, thus providing the opportunity for the temporal gift of the Holy Spirit. But a distinction we see with Saul and David is that David is a man whose faith was credited to him (Hebrews 11). So, I understand that David was given the gift of the Holy Spirit because of his anointing as king, which wasn’t David’s choice, but God’s choice through Samuel who anointed him. And we also know that one can’t receive salvation through someone else’s choice...so at some point, outside the anointing with oil and apart from the gifting of the Holy Spirit, David is credited as a man of faith, so I conclude that he was regenerated. However, I don’t see that Saul was credited as a man of faith...like other wicked kings of Israel, perhaps the gifting of the Holy Spirit was only temporal with Saul and he partook of the Holy Spirit but didn’t have a regenerative experience that David had.

1 Samuel 10 shares Saul’s appointment and anointing as king (again by Samuel), but the story continues on past his anointing and says that later, after Saul had traveled and been met by certain people, that **then** the Holy Spirit would come upon him (10:5-6) and work through him. So, it appears to me that anointing kings with oil afforded them the occasional and temporal partnership/partaking with the Holy Spirit, but didn’t appear to insist that they had experienced a regeneration process. I think Saul abused his gifting, authority and privileges and I can’t assure myself through scripture that he was saved or not. 1 Samuel 13:14 says that Saul was not a man after God’s own heart, but we do see that David was given this label. I’m not suggesting that this fact alone points to salvation for David and not for Saul, but I think it’s an interesting truth.

Another common question is, “What about people who take the doctrine of OSAS as a license to live sinfully?” Luther got slammed for this a lot by the Catholics who said “free grace” is just an opening to sin. Some ask, “I’m forgiven for all my sins; past present and future, right? So, if I sin, ultimately, it’s no big deal, right?”

Although, eternal forgiveness is given at the point of regeneration this doesn’t negate the need to stay in a mindset of forgiveness and confession of sin as we are commanded (James 5:16). Romans 6:1-2 is a good scripture to look at where Paul talks about the abuse of grace; to simply live with a cavalier attitude toward sin since we have so much grace from God. There are born again believers that display a cavalier attitude toward sin. However, this is usually due to a lack of conviction toward sin due to a weak relationship with Christ, not because they think their salvation gives them permission to sin. They display a lack of understanding and obedience to what God has commanded us to do – live a life of abandonment to sin and run a “race” of diligence and daily pursuit of righteousness. To repent means to think differently about a sin, not simply to acknowledge its presence and continue in its wickedness by resting in grace.

Arguments for “conditional salvation”: losing salvation based on choice (sinful behavior, or relinquishing).

Proponents of conditional salvation (CS) argue that salvation is maintained by the believer through perseverance and obedience and reversely salvation can be relinquished if a saved person chooses to cease his commitment to God or his pursuit of godliness. Below are some passages of scripture that allegedly make this argument, as well as my counterarguments against them being interpreted as teaching CS.

Argument 1 – The parable of the sower (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23. Luke 8:11-15)

Proponents of CS interpret to “believe only temporarily” (vs. 13), to mean that one can be saved for a time, but then lose or relinquish their salvation. Jesus uses the words, “believed for a while”, but what does it mean? It doesn’t suggest a loss of salvation. At look at each of the four types of soil (different conditions of a man’s heart) gives a true understanding. Jesus tells us to be careful how we listen, “He who has ears let him hear.” Three warnings followed by an example of conversion; three types of people who think they’re in the kingdom and they’re not...they think they heard, but they haven’t.

1st - Hard heart - theoretical/intellectual – it’s possible to be in contact with the Word regularly (come to church, read Christian books, etc., but no personal penetration to the heart. Fell on the path, snatched by Satan; the devil does all he can lest we should believe and be saved, lest we should believe and rejoice, while he believes and trembles (James 2:19).

2nd - Shallow heart - “Believe for a while”; only an emotional response; gets excited yet no conviction of sin, “no firm root” to show they understood. When they lose important things/blessings, they expose their real motives – wanting help/blessings/relief, not salvation. Excited at the idea of what they can get from Jesus as a service provider. What they really worshipped was what they lost in the heat. The word made some impressions, but they are not deep and durable ones, their hypocrisy shows in a time of trial; temporary faith, which reveals no true faith at all. Observe the differences of the words receive and believe; “When they hear, **receive...**” Receive: (Greek - Dechomai) to take with the hand – Strong’s #1209. “They **believe...**” Believe: (Greek - Pisteuo) to think to be true – Strong’s #4100. One can willingly turn an attentive ear to a message and “receive” it with graciousness, and “believe” it to the extent of acknowledging its truth, but yet not trust the Word personally and experience regeneration through faith.

3rd - Divided heart – Easier to see that the first two aren’t Christians; this group, harder to tell. They hear, but before a conversion can take place what believe is choked out, and no fruit is a demonstration of their unregenerate state. They may worship Jesus and other things; division. These are like church attenders that are always anxious, always in doubt; no surrender, no Lordship. Not saved. “Fruitless” (like vine/branches) a mark of unbelief.

4th - Actual conversion - Hears, understands, and produces fruit. “Heard the word in an honest and good heart”: with an honest and good intention, and faithfully keep it, “hold it fast”. We cannot be saved unless we believe, but the word of the gospel will not be a saving word to us, unless the belief is mixed with faith.

Hold onto the Word - Not like the roadside soil

With perseverance - Not like the rocky soil

Bear fruit - Not like the thorny soil

Argument #2 – The parable of the faithful and sensible steward (Luke 12:41-48)

CS proponents argue that in this passage there is a slave who knew the Lord’s will and was entrusted with responsibilities, thus making him a saved person, and that after he was disobedient with those responsibilities was punished by God having his salvation revoked and consequently damned with those who are non-saved. CS proponents hold this view believing that any man entrusted with responsibilities (such as the man in verses 45-

46) can only be a person who is saved. In his book, *Life in the Son*, Shank (a CS proponent) states this opinion by saying that Christ Himself “cannot personally entrust responsibilities in His holy service to men who are not His.”

Shank also argues that in this passage only one person, one slave, is in view. However, Shank only records the passage through verse 46. The passage extends through verse 48. Verse 47 and 48 clearly describe two people; one who knew the master’s will (47) and one who didn’t know the master’s will (48). A closer look at the verses in this passage will provide a true understanding.

Vs. 42 – “Steward” - This parable appears to speak of ministers in the church and how followers of Christ can spot the fakes - the hypocrites falsely calling themselves "servants." The term steward here means one who ministers over a responsibility and whose role it is to disperse portions; similar to Judas Iscariots stewardship over the treasury for Christ and the disciples...responsible for giving monetary rations. Judas walked with Christ, had a close earthly relationship with Him and participated in Christ’s ministries and yet was a non-regenerate (Acts 1:15-26, Matthew 26:24, John 17:12). So, it’s possible for Christ to entrust someone with responsibilities without that person being regenerated.

Vs 45-46 – Christ teaches here that faith is revealed according to works. How can we recognize who is a faithful steward and who is not? When Christ returns and finds the disobedient servant he will count him with all others of no faith. Perhaps this disobedient servant will utter remarks similar to those in Matthew 7:21-23, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out many demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?”, and Jesus will say, “I never knew you.” One can be obedient for a time without faith, but one can’t endure to the end without faith. This is a similar teaching as with the parable of the sower.

Vs. 47-48 – “Knew his masters will”- some knowledge is presupposed both in the name "steward" of Christ, and his being liable to punishment at all. Many or few stripes refer to the degree of future punishment proportioned to the knowledge the servant had sinned against. Even heathens are not without knowledge enough for future judgment. Here, the servants neglect of known duty shall aggravate his punishment, not be the cause of his punishment (the cause is pre-existent by his sin and lack of regenerative faith).

Argument #3 – The parable of the king and the forgiven debt (Matthew 18:23-35)

CS proponents argue that this parable teaches that the forgiveness of God remains conditional according to the individual’s subsequent response to how he/she forgives others. In other words, they argue that you can be saved, but then can have your salvation revoked as a punishment for not forgiving someone else.

However, a true meaning of the parable is this. This parable is not intended to teach us that God reverses his pardons to any, but teaches that His forgiveness is offered to all and ultimately denied to those who are unqualified for it, according to the meaning of the gospel. Here the man whose debt appears to be erased presents himself as being humbled (vs. 26 “fell to the ground and prostrated himself”) but only outwardly. Many appear to be humbled - they convince themselves and even others of their humbled and pardoned condition, even so much as to be presumptuous about it. But God knows a man’s heart. Those that do not forgive their brother’s trespasses, did never truly repent of their own, nor ever truly believe the gospel; and therefore, that which is taken away is only what they seemed to have but never really obtained. The parable answers Peter’s question, “How many times must I forgive my brother?” where Peter was questioning the genuineness of his brother’s repentance. Jesus parable demonstrates that only God can see a man’s heart and judge a man’s sincerity...but as for you Peter, you just forgive always and let God judge hearts...thus “seventy times seven.” It would seem backwards for Jesus to answer Peter’s question with a parable about God (a king)

who only forgives once, but not a second time, but then expects us to forgive indefinitely (seventy times seven). The parable rightly fits the answer – you, Peter, forgive indefinitely, and let God judge the motives of a man's heart since only he can see if a person was ever truly repentant or not.

Another interesting aspect to the parable is that though the wickedness of the unrepentant man was great, his lord laid upon him no other punishment than the payment of his own debt; our debts to God are never compounded - glorified saints in heaven are pardoned all and damned sinners in hell are paying all.

Argument #4 – The vine and the branches (John 15:1-11)

CS proponents argue that all branches here, those abiding in Christ, are born-again believers, at that once a believer ceases to bear fruit, he/she is of no usefulness to the kingdom and is thus pruned and cut off from Christ and counted with unbelievers...thus eternally damned.

However, a true meaning of the parable of the vine and branches is this. Like the branches of the vine, we are weak, and insufficient to stand on our own. The Father is the vinedresser and although the earth is the Lord's, it yields him no fruit unless He work it. He has an eye upon all the branches, and prunes them, and watches over them, that nothing hurt them. Even fruitful branches, in order to their further fruitfulness, have need of purging or pruning. However, the doom of the unfruitful - they are taken away. Many who pass for branches in Christ (as other parables teach about hypocrites) do not bear fruit. If they were really united to Christ by faith, they would bear fruit; but being only tied to him by an outward profession with no inward indwelling, though they seem to be branches, God will discard them for what they are. The duty of the truly enjoined with Christ: abide in Me, and I in you. Christ's disciples need to constantly keep up a dependence upon Christ and communion with Him. Those that abide in Christ, He being their hearts delight, shall have, through Christ, their heart's desire. That is, if we abide in Christ, and His word in us, we shall not ask anything but what is proper to be done for us. The promises abiding in us lie ready to be turned into prayers; and the prayers so regulated by the Spirit will come to pass.