

## “Proof Texts” That You Can “Lose” Your Salvation

In preparing for this study, I asked for input from you concerning passages in Scripture that seem to say or allude to the possibility a true born again believer can lose his salvation. And I got plenty! In the interest of keeping this from turning into a year long series, I intend to handle them as briefly as I safely can. Some will get blown off easily, but, with others, I will spend a lot more time developing in detail. As we go through this list, keep in mind such things as CONTEXT, which is the most common reason they are misinterpreted.

And Revelation is up to bat...

**Rev 21:8** But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.

This supposedly demonstrates that anyone who does these things is going to hell. Yes and no. The list is **characteristic** of those condemned (the unsaved), but many of these sins are often committed by believers and even the ones we think of as the worst of them, murder, can be committed by a believer—King David, for example. And I guarantee all of you have committed at least one of these sins. Who has not told a lie in their lives, even if it is a little “white lie”? I have said it before and will say it again, “A believer is capable of committing any sin an unbeliever can commit.” If anyone who ever commits these sins is condemned because of them, then not committing them” for salvation equates to salvation by works and not grace.

**John 8:21** So he said to them again, “I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come.”

Context! Jesus is speaking to unbelieving national Israel through the Pharisees (v13 So the Pharisees said to him, “You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true.”). Jesus is answering that charge. He tells them inverse 19 “Jesus answered, ‘You know neither me

nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.” Then in verse 24 he makes it even clearer he is speaking to an unbelieving nation, “I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.”

There were some who believed and followed. Some followed and wanted to believe but walked away when He didn’t assume the Kingship. But most of Israel, especially the religious leadership, rejected His claim. As a result national Israel faced destruction for rejecting their Messiah. And the nation did “die in their sin” of rejecting and murdering their Messiah in 70 AD when Jerusalem fell to the Roman Legions under Titus after a long and bloody siege and were taken into slavery.

If you apply this to individual Jews, then the only conclusion one can draw is that they are unsaved for not believing the claims of Jesus. This passage has nothing to do with saved Jews losing their salvation.

**John 3:36** Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

That little term “does not obey” is used to charge that unless one is a “good Christian” and obeys all that God commands then you are not saved. If you believe that, then you believe in salvation by human works, and we know that isn’t the way it works. The problem is that English word “obey”. It is the Greek *apeitheo* /ap·i·**theh**·o, which means not to allow one’s self to be persuaded, to refuse or withhold belief, implying non obedience to or compliance with some possibility. It is the source of our English word “apathy,” which means a lack of interest or concern. Technically “obey” is a legitimate translation, but a better and more accurate translation might be “whoever *shows no interest* in the Son shall not see life” or “whoever is not persuaded shall not see life”. Such an unbeliever does indeed remain in his condemned status.

**Gal 5:4** You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.

Context! Paul is chastising the Galatians because they have adopted “another gospel” that claims experiential righteousness through keeping the

Law, specifically focused on circumcision. The grace they will fall away from is the grace-produced spiritual life of a Church Age believer if they go back to the Law. They will be rejecting those grace provisions in favor of human works. That act will indeed “sever” them from the Christ life they would have experienced had they continued to “walk by means of the Spirit” (Gal 5:16) and experience the fruit of the Spirit—Christ life formed in them (Gal 5:22-23). All that grace will be lost. The spiritual life of a Church Age believer is a walk of faith, NOT WORKS; it is grace. To become involved in works, in this case the Law of Moses, means you have cut yourself off from the grace provisions for the spiritual life of a Church Age believer.

**Gal 5:1** For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

Context! See above. The Galatians were being drawn back into the Law —“yoke of slavery” and spirituality by works (circumcision v2). This is warning against that. Don’t be sucked back into observing the Law to achieve spirituality. The Law was a works system. True spirituality is a grace system appropriated by faith through grace.

**2 Peter 2:18** For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. <sup>21</sup> For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.

The subject is false teachers who are encouraging licentious behavior(2:1-2) called “the sensual conduct of the wicked” (V7) and apostate “Christians” that follow them (2:2). For them or the false teachers to have known the truth and then fallen back into licentious carnal behavior is to be entangled in what they came out of (carnality). Of the believer much is expected (Luke 12:48). “It would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness,” implies that they face extreme chastisement for their apostasy and resulting sinfulness. Nothing here suggests loss of salvation for a believer.

**Heb 10:38** ...but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.

Context! The Epistle to the Hebrews is about saved Jews being drawn back into the Law by their fellow unsaved Jews who are arguing their saved fellow Jews must be wrong and Jesus is not the Messiah. (More on this when we get to Hebrews 6 later in this study.) The “live by faith” is not a reference to positional sanctification. It is a reference to experiential sanctification (present tense saved) or living (experiencing) a vitally alive spiritual life, which is lived by faith just as the passage states. The born again Jews have that but will lose it if they go back to a works system (the Law) to find judicial righteousness. But, **if he shrinks back**, that is, if the “righteous one” commits apostasy, denouncing his Christian profession in favor of a return to the works covenant of the Law, God’s favor cannot rest on his life. “God’s favor” refers to the grace blessings of a vitally alive spiritual walk, the **inflow** (grace) after the believer’s **outflow** (faith in the source of that vitally alive spiritual life). This is not about losing your past tense salvation but is about losing your present tense salvation (experiential sanctification) and being delivered from the power of sin in the life.

**1 Tim 6:10** For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

Context! This is about the deception by false teachers (v3). “Wandered away” means to slip into apostasy, which is following the “different doctrine” of these false teachers. The warning against “cravings” (*oregomai* / or·eg·om·ahee, which means desire or covet) in verse 10 suggests this may be something resembling a prosperity doctrine being taught by these false teachers, or it is simply that some believers are more focused on their prosperity to the neglect of their faith. What are they “wandering away from”? True faith and into apostasy. Does it say they lose their salvation? No, but their actions will result in pain (chastisement).

**2 John 6** And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it. <sup>7</sup> For many deceivers have gone out into the

world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. **8 Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.** **9** Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God.

Our focus is on the highlighted verse 8, which some suggest is referring to a loss of salvation. But notice In verse 6 we have a reference to “walk” and “abide” in verse 9. These are calls to “live” or “abide,” as in a lifestyle, the lifestyle seen in Galatians 5:22-23, Fruit of the Spirit—the lifestyle of Christ formed in you. Failure to do so will result in a failed spiritual walk (“does not have God” v9), failing to fulfill the plan of God for your life, and loss of the believer’s “full reward” at the Bema judgment. Nothing about losing your salvation is stated here, only losing a functioning spiritual walk and any potential rewards in eternity.

**Col 2:8** See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

This is simply a warning against apostasy by a believer. Paul was concerned that no false teacher take the Colossi believers captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy (v. 4). Such a philosophy is demonic and worldly, not godly or Christ-like. Unless believers are careful, such philosophy may ensnare them, taking them “captive,” damaging their Christian testimony. No threat of losing your salvation is mentioned or even implied.

**Rev 3:16** So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

From one of the seven letters to the churches in Revelation, this to Laodicea. In referring to the **church** as “lukewarm” Christ had in mind that this was its permanent condition. This rebuke would have been especially meaningful to this church, for warm spring water was piped to the city from Hierapolis, a few miles north. By the time the water reached Laodicea, it was lukewarm!

Their being lukewarm spiritually was evidenced by their being content with their material **wealth** (v17) but being unaware of their spiritual poverty, much like the Church in America today. Christ used strong words to describe them: wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked (v17). They did not have a meaningful spiritual life and did not even realize their spiritual poverty. As such, they had no fellowship (spiritual walk) with God. Verses 18-22 speaks of spiritual fellowship and not loss of salvation.

**Col 1:21** And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, <sup>22</sup> he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, <sup>23</sup> if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard ...

“Continuing in the faith, stable and stedfast” refers to the believer’s spiritual walk and the potential loss of rewards at the Bema judgment. “If” is in the Greek first class condition and assumed to be true—“if indeed you continue (and you will)”. It expresses confidence and would be better translated “since” in this case. The passage below establishes the context.

**Col 1:9** And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be **filled with the knowledge** of his will in **all spiritual wisdom and understanding**, <sup>10</sup> so as to **walk in a manner worthy** of the Lord, **fully pleasing** to him: bearing **fruit in every good work** and **increasing in the knowledge** of God; <sup>11</sup> **being strengthened with all power**, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; <sup>12</sup> giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

The believer who is “filled with knowledge” and “all spiritual wisdom and understanding,” “walks in a worthy manner,” “is fully pleasing,” bearing fruit” (of the Spirit), and “being strengthened in all power (of the Holy Spirit)” is one who will be presented “holy and blameless and above reproach before him”. This is concerning the believer’s spiritual walk and its subsequent evaluation and rewards at the Bema judgment of Church Age believers.

This passage has nothing to do with salvation being dependent on the believer’s perseverance in the faith. Rather, it expresses the believer’s

assurance in terms of the sure hope that God will keep His promise in the Gospel. The message is clear: Stay grounded in the grace and hope of the Gospel.

**1 Tim 4:1** Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, <sup>2</sup> through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, <sup>3</sup> who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. <sup>4</sup> For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, <sup>5</sup> for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

The Spirit warns “in latter times” (or in the End Times) some will “depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons”. Sounds like what we have been studying in our series on the Angelic Conflict. These are believers who are led astray by false teachings (passivity of the mind) and living in deception by demons. They are in spiritual apostasy—have deviated from the true faith. Verses 2-3 describes these false teachings they have bought into. Apostasy (departing from the true faith) is not about the loss of salvation. It is simply believing something that is false. If you believe someone saved can lose their salvation, then you are, by definition, apostate, because that belief is not biblically accurate.

**Phil 2:12** Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling...

Context! If this isn't about earning your salvation by human works, and it isn't, what does it mean? The believers in Philippi were not told to work *for* their salvation but to **work out the salvation God had already given them**. The Greek for “work out” is *katergazomai* *kat·er·gad·zom·ahee*, which means to do that from which something results. They were told to put into practice in their daily living what God had worked in them by His Spirit, which is the great potential for a vitally alive spiritual life. What this “working out” is referring to is “walking by means of the Spirit,” living the spiritual life that their salvation has made possible. It is possible only if and when they

choose to use the spiritual assets Christ left for believers to use, and that is expressed in the very next verse that no one ever mentions: Verse 13 "... for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."

This is a call for a vitally alive spiritual walk that produces fruit (Gal 5:16, 22-23). If you believe this is telling you have to "work out" your salvation in order to be saved, **then you believe in salvation by works.**

**2 Tim 2:11** The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; 12 if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; 13 if we are faithless, he remains faithful...

All of the "if" statements in this passage are in the Greek first class condition. They are assumed to be true. "If we died with him (true statement, and we did), we also live with Him". The result of our identification with Christ's death is having a vitally alive spiritual life—"we live with Him," meaning we live with His life formed in us through the power of the indwelling HS. "If we endure," (and we will—Greek first class condition) "we will reign with him". Believers who have productive spiritual lives will also have positions of authority in the Kingdom. "If we deny him" speaks of the possibility of apostasy by the believer, and the resulting break in fellowship, NOT loss of salvation. And here is the proof of that in verse 13. Even "if we are faithless, He remains faithful." Christ **cannot disown Himself**; therefore He will not deny even unprofitable members of His own body. True children of God cannot become something other than children, even when disobedient and weak. Christ's faithfulness to Christians is not contingent on their faithfulness to Him.

**Rom 11:17** But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, <sup>18</sup> do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. <sup>19</sup> Then you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." <sup>20</sup> That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. <sup>21</sup> For if God did not spare the natural

branches, neither will he spare you. <sup>22</sup> Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. <sup>23</sup> And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. <sup>24</sup> For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.

Our focus is on verse 22 "Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off." The charge is the statement "you will be cut off" means that you (the believer) will lose his salvation unless you "continue in His (God's) kindness."

The focus of this passage is NOT on individual believers but on Israel as the "natural branches" that were "broken off" of the root because of unbelief, meaning rejecting their Messiah and the nation's ultimate destruction in 70AD, and Gentile believers as the "wild branches" grafted on in their place when God took the rejected Messiah and gave Him to the Gentiles.

Look at verse 24 "For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree."

The fact that the Gentiles, seen as wild olive branches, can be grafted on to the root (God) not natural to them (contrary to nature), then wouldn't it be even easier for God to graft back on the natural olive branches (Israel)? This is a warning to Gentile believers in general not to become arrogant (and also possibly antisemitic) because of their currently favored relationship with God. The Jewish race was a creation of God. He reminded them, **For if God did not spare the natural branches**, Israel, **He will not spare you either**. In the Greek, this is a first-class condition in which the conditional statement beginning with "if" is assumed to be true. As clearly stated in the previous verses, this speaks of Israel's "fall" (11:11), "loss" (v12), and "rejection" (v15), for "the branches have been broken

off” (v17) “because of unbelief” (v20). This section (vv 11–21) explains the righteousness of God’s sovereign choice. If God is righteous in temporarily putting aside Israel as a whole for their unbelief, He certainly could put aside the Gentiles for boasting and haughtiness. This is not a warning that an individual believer can lose his salvation.

**John 6:47** Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. <sup>48</sup> I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup> Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. <sup>50</sup> This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. <sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

“He who believes” is in Greek a participial construction in the present tense, meaning that a believer is characterized by his continuing trust. He has everlasting life, which is a present and abiding possession. Manna met only a limited need. It provided temporary physical sustenance. The Israelites came to loathe it, and ultimately they died. Jesus is a Bread of a different kind. He is from heaven and gives life, meaning spiritual life. A person who eats of that Bread will not die.

What does “eating” this Bread mean? Many commentators assume that Jesus was talking about the Lord’s Table, but He was not. This passage is not saying someone cannot have eternal life unless he partakes of the Lord’s Table, as some denominations teach. This is true because the Last Supper occurred one year later than the incidents recorded in this chapter. Therefore, were it intended to be a claim that salvation required the observance of the Lord’s Table, the hearers would not have made that connection, and eating His flesh and drinking His blood would not have been thought of in that context.

**“Eating,” meaning to consume something, the living Bread, is a figure of speech meaning to believe on Him, like the figures of coming to Him (v. 35), listening to Him, (v. 45), and seeing Him (v. 40). To “eat of this Bread” (believe in Him) is to live forever. Jesus’ revelation about the Bread is saying that not only is the Father giving the Bread (Jesus), but also Jesus is giving Himself: **This Bread is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.** Salvation is by the sacrificial death of the Lamb of God**

(1:29). To consume this bread also implies sustaining the believers spiritual walk.

**Mark 16:16** Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Some argue that you are not truly saved unless you have been baptized and use this passage to prove it. Baptism is a ritual to express publicly the reality of a person's full faith and trust in what Christ did on the Cross. Though the New Testament writers generally assume that under normal circumstances each believer will be baptized, Mark 16:16 does not mean that baptism is a necessary requirement for personal salvation. The second half of the verse indicates by contrast that one who **does not believe** the gospel **will be condemned** in the day of final judgment. The basis for condemnation is stated as simply unbelief, not the lack of any ritual baptism observance. The only requirement for personally appropriating God's salvation is faith in Him (cf. Rom. 3:21–28; Eph. 2:8–10).

It is also entirely possible the baptism referred to here is the baptism of the Spirit, an action by the Holy Spirit that accompanies belief/salvation for the believer.

**1 Cor 15:1** Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, <sup>2</sup> and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

This passage seems to teach uncertainty in eternal security. Terms like “being saved,” and “hold fast,” and “believed in vain” (V2). They seem to imply possibly losing your salvation or not being really saved at all.

Though some in the Corinthian church were beginning to deny the resurrection of Christ, it is very clear from the passage that the Apostle Paul is sure about their position: They were “brothers” and had "received" and "believed" the gospel that he had preached to them (the past tenses denote completed action) and they now "stand" in that gospel (the perfect tense denotes past action with continuing results). Their “stand” refers to their positional justification, which is unquestioned and was affirmed earlier: "you

were justified" (1 Cor 6:11). There is no question that Paul's letter addresses the Corinthians as genuine believers.

The confusion comes when one rigidly interprets "are saved" as the past tense version, positional sanctification or saved from condemnation and the fires of Hell. The basic definition of "saved" is being delivered, but from what? The Corinthians had a lot of sin issues to be delivered from.

But to be delivered from sin issues in the life of a believer requires that believer to "hold fast" to the gospel. Paul is saying these Corinthians must continue (hold fast) to follow the truth they learned from the gospel in order to experience its ongoing sanctifying results. This is not a condition of salvation (past tense) but a condition of experiential sanctification (present tense). It is possible for believers not to "hold fast". The result God wants for us is not only to be saved from the penalty of sin (past tense) but also saved (delivered) from the presence of sin (present tense).

Unless the believer holds firmly to this truth he will have "believed in vain". What will be "in vain" is the believer's spiritual life. It will be ineffective, without purpose, without success, which are all definitions of the Greek word used here, *eike* /i·kay. His salvation (past tense) will have produced no fruit (present tense).

The passage is not about losing our salvation (past tense) but is all about not losing our spiritual walk (saved present tense).

### **A Few Others**

Some other passages used to claim you can lose your salvation are: 2 Peter 1:8-10, 2:20-22; Hebrews 10:38-39, 3:12-13; 1 Tim 6:10; 2 John 1:8; 1 Tim 6:10; Gal 5:1; Philippians 2:12; and Colossians 2:8. Go look them up and read the context. All of them are speaking about experiential sanctification and not positional sanctification. They are not about losing your salvation. What is lost or damaged is the believer's spiritual walk and/or potential rewards in eternity.

## Enduring Unto the End

Those who believe you can lose your salvation often point to the following passages and say, “See? Unless you ‘endure to the end’ you will not be saved (past tense) and go into the Lake of Fire.” But is that really what it says?

**Mr 13:13** And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name’s sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

**Mt 10:22** “You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.

**Mt 24:13** But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

Let’s look at the Mark 13 Passage first. If you approach the interpretation with a preconceived notion of what it says, you can usually make the text agree with you. Context, context, context! What is the context of the passage under study, including the speaker, the audience receiving the message, the historical setting, and prophetic setting, if applicable? With this passage you need to consider all four points.

Jesus is speaking here (13:5) and His audience is made up of His disciples outside the Temple (13:1) and later when they are across the Kidron Valley on the Mount of Olives where “Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately” (13:3) about the signs Jesus had spoken of back outside the Temple. In verse 2 Jesus had said of the Temple that it would be destroyed, so the time period to which Jesus is now referring is in the future when the Temple will be destroyed. It was destroyed in 70 AD when Rome destroyed Jerusalem after a long and bloody siege. Is Jesus referring to that event in 70 AD? I don’t think so. He was saying that Israel would be destroyed, and the events He is about to describe in verse 5 and following take place sometime after the destruction of the Temple. Verse 5 begins a monolog of future events that follow the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.

How do I know that? Because the events Jesus describes did not occur in 70 AD and have not yet occurred some 2000 years later, particularly those in verses 12 through 31. These passages describe events that take place during the Tribulation. So the context of verse 13 is not the Church Age but specifically refers to the seven-year period we call the Tribulation, which is a period in which the Church has been removed by the Rapture and God has returned to dealing with Israel and the last seven years (week) of Daniel's 70 Weeks Prophecy.

Verse 13 restated in correct context, "(During the tribulation) ...ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

"Endure" is hupomeno *hoop-om-en'-o*, a compound Greek word that means literally "to stay under" or figuratively to have fortitude, persevere, abide, or endure.

"He that shall endure unto the end...."

To the end of what? To the end of your life? No! Context! The end of the Tribulation, which is the time context in view here. So, if you endure to the end of the Tribulation "the same will be saved". "The same" refers back to those who "endure".

Now we have this little word "saved" or sozo *sode'-zo* in the Greek, which means to save, i.e. deliver or protect (literally or figuratively). Words can have multiple meanings both in the original text and in the translated language as well. When we see the English word "saved" in Scripture we assume it always refers to salvation (past tense), when in fact its most common usage in Scripture does not have that application at all. Often the word should be more accurately translated "to deliver" as through some temptation or tribulation. Here are just a few examples – Mat 8:25; 14:30; 24:22; 27:40; Mr 3:4; 5:34; 8:35; 13:20; 30; Jo 21:27; Acts 2:40; 27:31; Ro 9:27; 2 Ti 4:18.

As we have previously seen, in Scripture, the word "saved," in the context of the believer, is said to be used in three tenses: past tense, present

tense, and future tense. We have been over that several times during this study so I will assume you got it by now.

Which way it is being used in Scripture is almost always determined by the context. Guess what? There is nothing stated in the text here to suggest that this word translated “saved” is referring to salvation at all. It refers to the believers Jesus is speaking of being *delivered through the Tribulation* to the end.

If that is the case, and it is, then we must go back and reconsider the meaning of the word translated “endure” because there must be more to the word’s meaning than we have gotten so far. First we must understand that “enduring” is not a condition to be saved, rather **it is an asset that is characteristic of those who are saved**. It is exactly the same thing as you and I “enduring” trials and tribulations today during the Church Age. We do so by placing our faith in Christ on a day-by-day basis to see us through what we face. That is exactly what those who “endure” during the Tribulation will do, albeit, their “trials and tribulations” will be far worse than what most of us face today.

The context of the verse is that those “hated of all *men* for my name’s sake” are the ones who “endure” until the end of the Tribulation, which will be those who are professing Christ in both word and deed (faith in action). These Christians will be using the divine provisions of the enabling power of the Spirit of God (Gal 5:16; Phil 4:13) to see them through the extreme tribulations of the period. That is clearly what we have been calling “saved in the present tense,” being delivered from the power of sin and through trials and tribulations.

But I think the passage has yet another meaning, and that is these who survive to the end will be “delivered” (saved) in the sense they will be the remnant of surviving believers who will enter the Kingdom (Millennium) in their physical bodies.

The context does not suggest this word “saved” refers to salvation (saved in the past tense), but the context does strongly suggest this refers to deliverance (saved) through trials and tribulations by the power of God into the Kingdom (Millennium) or saved in the present tense.

If you go back and read the context of the two Matthew passages that reference this “enduring unto the end” you will see the context in both is also the Tribulation.

To charge that unless you “endure” to the end of your life, implying some level of fidelity to God, then and only then will you be saved (past tense) says, in effect, that you aren’t really saved until you have accomplished some acceptable (but unknown to us) level of “enduring”.

That interpretation contradicts other doctrines that clearly support salvation by faith alone apart from any works on the part of man. Because the onus is placed completely on man this error in interpretation renders the Cross unnecessary. If man must do or not do something in order to be saved, **that would be a works-based system of salvation that excludes God from the process**, or as Paul says in Galatians 2:21, then “Christ died for no purpose”. The text and the context of these passages do not support that interpretation. It is not for man and his works to save himself. Salvation is on Christ and His Cross. Salvation is never a product bought or enhanced by human effort; it is a free gift by grace through faith (Eph 2:8-9).

## Overcoming

We have seen how “enduring unto the end” was misinterpreted and is really about having victory over (deliverance through) trials and tribulations and, in some cases, specifically during the Tribulation, but what about the “overcoming” life and passages in Revelation about overcoming?

Here are some samples: Those that overcome “will be allowed to eat of the tree of life” (Rev 2:7), “will not be hurt in the second death” (Rev 2:11), “will be allowed to eat of the hidden manna” (Rev 2:17), “will be given power over nations” (Rev 2:26), “will be clothed in white” (Rev 3:5), “will have a pillar in the Temple” (Rev 3:12), “will sit with Christ on His throne” (Rev 3:21), and “shall inherit all things” (Rev 21:7).

It is charged that only those who “overcome” are saved because these passages all speak of some kind of reward, which is received in eternity. It

assumes only those who “overcome” will go to heaven. But is that what this really means?

Nope.

The first clue is the location of the passages – Revelation, which is mostly about a future period in history of extreme judgment and tribulation called appropriately enough the Tribulation. These passages do not imply that only those who overcome are saved—where does it say that?—but they do suggest that those who overcome do see some kind of special treatment or reward.

The word “overcome” is *nikao* *nik-ah'-o*, which means to subdue, conquer or prevail or gain a victory. It comes from the root word *nike* *nee'-kay*, which means success or victory. The word is sometimes used with reference to litigations or trials in a court of justice in the context of the one who was accused and acquitted, or who was adjudged to be innocent might be said to *overcome* or to gain the victory in the case. *Overcomers* are victorious. They have been adjudged righteous by the possession of the righteousness of God imputed at salvation, as the following passage makes clear:

**1 John 5:5** Who is it that **overcomes** the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

*Overcomers* have spiritual advantages because of their relationship with Christ, which gives them the potential for victory over sin and tribulations.

The Revelation 2 and 3 passages are speaking to the seven churches, each of which have some sort of problem, and those who overcome the problem will be granted some reward. It is believed the seven churches represent seven periods in Church history from the time of Christ until the beginning of the Tribulation and are in chronological order. Many theologians believe the present church period is represented by the seventh church, therefore we are near the end of the Church Age.

These rewards are pictured as heavenly (Rev 2:7; 11; 3:5; 21) as well as earthly (Rev 2:17; 3:12). This would make sense because the raptured

Church will enter the Millennium in resurrection bodies and will have access to heaven as well as been given positions of rulership over earthly kingdoms during the Millennium (1 Co 6:2; 2 Ti 2:12; Rev 20:4).

The Revelation 21:7 passage is a picture of rewards to overcoming believers in eternity after the Millennium – “shall inherit all things”. Go read the context of the passage and you will see this is about eternity *after* the Last Judgment.

*Overcomers*, those who have victory in this life, will see rewards as described in the mentioned passages. But these rewards are generally related to the period we call the Millennium, when Christ reigns for 1,000 years. In some few cases, it also refers to rewards in eternity.

It is a stretch to suggest that these passages are saying that only believers who are *overcomers* are saved, and any believers who do not *overcome* are not saved. There is nothing in any of these passages that even implies that, unless one resorts to connecting “overcoming” to the misinterpretation of the “enduring unto the end” (which we have already debunked). And that is exactly what some expositors attempt to do in order to make the passage mean what they want it to mean. Revelation 21:18 and 19 specifically warns against such error in very strong language.

But if “enduring unto the end” has nothing to do with salvation or losing one’s salvation, the connection to overcoming becomes really bad exposition and very unsound teaching that only confuses the truth of God’s Word and perverts it into a false doctrine of salvation by works.

God does not take away a believer’s salvation because he does not “overcome” or “endure unto the end”. Neither term refers to salvation at all. Salvation cannot be earned or deserved by any human effort. Neither can it be lost by any human effort, which would be the same as earning or deserving it. If that were the case, every single one of us would be lost, because every single one of us has failed and abused God’s grace—every single one of us!

As a famous Bible teacher once said, “If we could lose our salvation, we would.”