

Once Saved, Always Saved? Teaching

Good morning everyone. This morning we will be examining the ‘once saved, always saved’ doctrine. In doing so, we will look at what the scriptures say regarding a person’s salvation. Not what a denomination teaches or what a popular Christian figure in the media says about it. The scriptures are where we draw our theology from. Therefore, our theology should be in agreement with what read in the scriptures.

Meat of the Study

What propelled me to look further into the ‘once saved, always saved’ doctrine is what I read in 1 Tim. 6:20-21(w/focus on the first part of v. 21). 1 Tim. 6:20-21 = ²⁰O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called “knowledge,”(ESV) ²¹which some have professed and in so doing have departed from the faith. Grace be with you all.(NIV) You can see right away that there’s a contradiction with the inspired words Paul wrote in 1 Tim. 6:21 and the doctrine of ‘once saved, always saved.’

For the sake of clarity, I’ll define ‘once saved, always saved’ as it was taught to me. ‘Once saved, always saved’ means that once you’ve accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior/once you’re a believer of the gospel of Christ, you cannot lose your salvation. The problem with this doctrine, is that it is incomplete. Yes, it is true that you cannot *lose* your salvation. Why? Answer = Because that which cannot be earned by moral perfection, therefore cannot be lost by moral imperfection. You cannot lose your salvation *so long as you believe*. Your salvation is eternally secure *so long as you believe*. Just because you’ve become a believer, doesn’t mean you have lost your free will. A real-time example of this would be the high school student who is a genuine believer & follower of Jesus Christ who goes to college and then begins to believe the lies they

have been taught about Christianity. Some of those lies being that Jesus was just another Mythra; Jesus was just another dying and rising god; Jesus never said that He was God; Jesus didn't exist; the bible is full of contradictions; the biblical writers copied stories and laws from surrounding cultures so the bible can't be a work of inspiration etc. etc. That person then forsakes the faith because they have believed the lies they were told about Christianity(i.e. = they were led astray). An Old Testament example of this would be the Exile. The Israelites who entered the promised land were worshippers of YHWH. Their belief in YHWH is the reason why they were allowed to enter into the promised land, not because of their moral perfection(which they weren't) nor because of their adherence to the Mosaic Law/Torah. Some time goes by, Israel commits apostasy by worshiping other gods(idolatry)(Jer. 25:5-7), then YHWH kicks them out of/Exiles them from the promised land.

My critique of the 'once saved, always saved' doctrine: In short, the 'once saved, always saved' doctrine is error because it is incomplete. It is an incorrect doctrine because it doesn't conform to what we read in the biblical text. Therefore, it needs to be abandoned and a biblical view regarding a person's salvation status needs to be adopted. The biblical view being that: 1.) A person has until they take their final breath on earth to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior/a person has until they take their final breath on earth to believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. 2.) If the spiritual status of a person is that of a genuine believer in Jesus Christ at the moment they take their last breath on earth, then they are going to heaven.

We'll now transition into criticisms/pushback against my critique of the 'once saved, always saved' doctrine.

Criticism/Pushback #1

The first criticism of/pushback against my critique of the ‘once saved, always saved’ doctrine is the statement: “People who stop believing in Jesus weren’t actually believers to begin with. They were never *truly* saved. So therefore, a true believer in & follower of Jesus Christ can’t lose their salvation.”

Rebuttal: What is at the heart of this first criticism/pushback is the misguided notion that a person who forsakes the faith was never truly saved. That is incorrect and the following passages of scripture are examples of passages that refute this criticism because they encourage believers to continue in their belief in Jesus Christ and also warn believers against forsaking the faith (this list is not exhaustive and remember: You encourage someone to keep going/to persevere/to stay steadfast in something because there is a chance that the person may cease continuing in the endeavor they are involved in. Example: You are in really good shape. You eat right and exercise daily. You love to run and you can run a mile with ease. Your friend, who hasn’t worked out in years, decides one day that he is going to run a mile with you. You and your friend start running and ¼ mile into the run, he’s breathing heavy and says to you, “Bro, I don’t think I’m going to be able to make it for 1 mile.” You then reply to him by speaking words of encouragement in that you tell him, “You can do it brotha! Just keep putting one foot in front of the other bro! You got this!” Why are you providing encouragement to your friend? Answer = Because there is a real possibility that he might quit. He may say, “Screw this. I’m done. This was a bad idea. I’m going home.” This is why we read passages of scripture that encourage believers to continue on in the faith; i.e. = do not stop believing the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is just like how you don’t warn against something that can’t happen because that would be nonsensical and illogical. Thus, it is possible for believers to forsake the faith after they’ve been saved. Said bluntly: The following

passages communicate to us that a person can reject Jesus as their Lord and Savior after they have been saved(Col. 1:21-23, 1 Tim. 6:10, 2 Tim. 2:18, Heb. 3:12-14; 10:39, Rev. 2:10).

- Col. 1:21-23 = ²¹And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²²he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ²³*if indeed you continue in the faith(my italics added)*, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.
- 1 Tim. 6:10 = ¹⁰For 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(my italics added)* and pierced themselves with many pangs. You can't wander away from something, if you weren't there to begin with.
- 2 Tim. 2:18 = ¹⁸who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some. ^{AA}“Swerved” in the Greek is ἀστοχέω(*os(as in “ostomy”)-toe-hey-oh*), and it communicates: to go astray by *departing* from moral or spiritual standards. You can't depart from something if you weren't first there to begin with. Said differently via example: You can't depart on a flight from Detroit, Michigan to Orlando, Florida unless you were first in Detroit, Michigan. Likewise you can't leave/forsake/depart from the faith unless you were once in the faith/unless you were once a part of the faith/unless you were once a believer in/of the faith. The word “upsetting” here, in 2 Tim. 2:18, isn't communicating that some people were getting offended or angry or becoming emotionally saddened by what they were hearing or by what they were being taught. ^{BB}“Upsetting” in the Greek is ἀνατρέπω(*Anna(both “A’s” are to be phonated as in “father”)-trep-oh*), and it can also be translated “ruin.” What is causing the faith of some people to be ruined? Answer = What Hymenaeus, Philetus, and others have been teaching, of which

Hymenaeus, Philetus, and others have “swerved(ἄστοχέω(os(as in “ostomy”)-toe-hey-oh)) from the truth(2 Tim. 2:16-18).” Question: Is what Hymenaeus, Philetus, and others have been teaching good? Answer = No, because what they have been teaching has caused people to swerve from the faith. In other words, what Hymenaeus, Philetus, and others have been teaching has caused the faith of some people to be ruined; i.e. = they have departed from the faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Additionally, the Greek word translated “swerved” in 2 Tim. 2:18 is the same word(and even the same tense – the words are identical) that is translated “swerved” in 1 Tim. 6:21, of which ἄστοχέω(os(as in “ostomy”)-toe-hey-oh) has a nuanced meaning: ^{AA}to go astray by departing from moral or spiritual standards *with regards to the faith*(my italics added).

- **APPLICATION ONE START** Heb. 3:12-14 = ¹²Take care, *brothers*[my italics added for emphasis], lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴For we have come to share in Christ, *if* [my italics added for emphasis] indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. The people the writer is addressing are believers because the writer addresses them as brothers(this is family language). As believers, we are all part of the family of God(1 John 3:1, Eph. 3:14-15, Eph. 2:19 are a few examples). Also, notice there is a condition attached to believing the gospel(which is communicated in the phrase: “have come to share in Christ”). That condition being that the person *keep believing*(communicated in the phrase: “hold our original confidence firm to the end”).
- Heb. 10:39 = ³⁹But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

- Rev. 2:10 = ¹⁰Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. *Be faithful*(my italics added) unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. Commands aren't given to warn against impossibilities. Example(and forgive me for being silly): When you were a kid getting ready to go outside and play, your parents didn't tell you, "Don't flap your arms too fast because you'll fly away." Why didn't they tell you that? Answer = Because it is impossible for humans to fly on their own. But they did tell you, "Look both ways before you cross the street." Why? Answer = Because it *is* possible that you could get hit by a car. Therefore, the command we read in Rev. 2:10 to "...Be faithful..." is given to us as a warning because there is a legitimate possibility that a believer can fall into a state of unfaithfulness(unbelief). And there is a consequence for falling into a state of unfaithfulness(unbelief). That consequence being eternal separation from God after death because those who's heart is found to be in a state of unfaithfulness(unbelief) to Jesus Christ at the time of their death will result in eternal damnation. Said bluntly: The unbeliever will spend eternity in hell. There are no second chances in the sense of reincarnation(Heb. 9:27. Heb. 9:27 = ²⁷And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment). Also: The idea of purgatory is not a biblical doctrine, nor is it a Christian doctrine. All roads do not eventually lead to heaven(John 14:6). John 14:6 = ⁶Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

APPLICATION
ONE END

Now, the context regarding the people mentioned in Mt. 7:21-23 is that of people who thought they were believers/they thought they were saved, but actually weren't. So that aspect of the stated pushback is correct and there is scripture to back that part of the pushback up.

However, that is still not enough to validate the ‘once saved, always saved’ doctrine because it fails to take into consideration the passages of scripture that encourage believers to continue in their belief and passages that tell us that believers can reject the faith. Mt. 7:21-23 = ²¹“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’ Once more, Mt. 7:21-23 is speaking of people who thought they were believers, but actually weren’t; i.e. = They were never saved to begin with, though they thought they were. Why? Answer = Because they thought they would go to heaven due to their performance. They thought they would go to heaven because of the good things/deeds/works that they did, but their hearts weren’t right with God. Their hearts weren’t right with God because they thought they could earn/merit their salvation. They were believing a different gospel. They didn’t do God’s will. What’s God’s will? Answer = John 6:40. John 6:40 = ⁴⁰For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and *believes*(my italics added) in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. So we see the first set of scripture passages that we looked at(Col. 1:21-23, 1 Tim. 6:10, etc. etc. through Rev. 2:10) are communicative of people who are genuine believers in & followers of Jesus Christ who are warned and encouraged not to forsake the faith, whereas Mt. 7:21-23 is communicative of people who *thought* they were followers of Jesus Christ, but were not truly saved; they were not true believers in Jesus.

I would also like to add one last thought before addressing additional criticisms. That thought being: **APPLICATION TWO START** What about people who were truly believers at one point and then denied the faith? Are they eternally condemned, or can they still turn back? Can

they return to the one true God? Can they cast their believing loyalty back to Jesus Christ after they have forsaken the faith? Answer = Absolutely yes. So long as Jesus Christ gave you breath this day, He isn't done pursuing you with the hope of you returning to Him. Your eternal fate isn't final until He removes you from this earth. Some pushback against this is Hebrews 6:4-6. Heb. 6:4-6 = ⁴For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. This passage of scripture seems to communicate that once a genuine believer in/follower of Jesus Christ has forsaken the faith, their eternal fate is sealed. This cannot be the case due to the parable of the prodigal son in Lk. 15:11-32. We're not going to read the entire parable here, but in short, what happens is: A man has two sons and the younger son took all that he had, left his father's household, went out into a country that was far away, and squandered all that he had. A severe famine hits the country where he was staying and he hires himself out to a citizen of that country of which his job is to feed the pigs (this is a gentile country b/c pigs were unclean to Jews (Lev. 11:7-8, Deut. 14:8) i.e. = there were no pigs in Israel.) After that, in Lk. 15:17, he comes to his senses and in Lk. 15:18-20, he repents, goes back to his father with a humble heart, and his father embraces him with a celebration. Immediately upon his son's arrival back to him, the son's father says, in Lk. 15:24 = ²⁴For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate. Not to state the obvious, but the son never loses his life in the entire parable, thus the language of the father's son being "dead" must be understood to be a spiritual application. ^{CC}The Greek word translated "hire" (when the son hires himself to a citizen of that country in Lk. 15:15) is

κολλάω(coe-lao(as in “Laos”), and ^{DD}it communicates: “to bind oneself closely to another, unite with, cleave to.” The boy identifies with “that country” in such a way that his Jewish identity is not only defiled but expunged. κολλάω(coe-lao(as in “Laos”), appears only once elsewhere in the gospel of Luke and it is in reference to the defiling dust of unbelief that must be shaken from the feet of missionaries(Lk. 10:11). This is an intertextual link that provides us with the context of which κολλάω(coe-lao(as in “Laos”) is used – that context being unbelief. Said bluntly: Part of what the story of the prodigal son communicates is that those who were once believers will be welcomed back by God with open arms and a loving, joyous embrace.**END**

APPLICATION TWO Additionally, the first part of Lk. 15:17 reads = ¹⁷But when he came to himself(^{EE} can also be translated “senses”). ^{EE}The Greek expression behind “came to his senses,” is a translation of the Hebrew (forgive me if I mispronounce this)bilebo, meaning “in his heart.” Luke uses this phrase to signify inner ruminations that result in resolutions to act. Said differently: After the son has a change of heart(“he came to his senses”), he decides to believe the truth.(The father’s youngest son is symbolized as a believer who forsakes the faith because he leaves his father’s house and the father symbolically represents God.) He decided to face the fact that he screwed up and that he should have never left his father’s house. The erring son made a mistake by severing ties with his father and now he wants to be accepted back by his father; he wants to be part of his father’s household again; he wants to be a part of his father’s family again because he has had a change of heart. Furthermore, Lk. 15:20 reads = ²⁰And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ^{FF}His father ran to meet him, embraced

him, and kissed him. This action is a sign of forgiveness and of the restoration of a broken relationship.

And the character of God is consistent throughout the Old and New Testaments. Here are a few Old Testament examples that communicate YHWH's forgiveness and acceptance of repentant Israel.

Side note before we read the following passages from Jeremiah and Hosea: ^{GG}The ten northern tribes of Israel who get scattered to the wind are called Ephraim because Ephraim was the capitol of the ten northern tribes. The ten northern tribes also go apostate by worshipping other gods. Remember: You can't go apostate from the worship of YHWH if you weren't first a worshipper of YHWH.

Jer. 31:18-20 = ¹⁸I have heard Ephraim grieving, 'You have disciplined me, and I was disciplined, like an untrained calf; bring me back that I may be restored, for you are the LORD my God. ¹⁹For after I had turned away, I relented, and after I was instructed, I struck my thigh; I was ashamed, and I was confounded, because I bore the disgrace of my youth.' ²⁰Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he my darling child? For as often as I speak against him, I do remember him still. Therefore my heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, declares the LORD. These verses essentially describe the father and the father's youngest son in the parable of the prodigal son.

Hosea 11:8 = ⁸How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. ^{HH}Admah and Zeboiim are two of the "cities of the plain" that are associated with Sodom and Gomorrah(Gen. 14:2, 8). Admah and Zeboiim were destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah(Deut. 29:23), thus they function as proverbial symbols of

divine judgment. ¹¹In metaphorical terms, Hosea 11:8 shows YHWH as an anguished parent, asking profound questions of himself, with the future of his people at stake. YHWH has historical experience in handing out punishment to the disobedient, but the matter of deserved punishment is overwhelmed by commitment to restoring the repeatedly offending child, whom we might call a “prodigal son.”

Hosea 14:1-4 = ¹Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God[YHWH pleading with Israel to *return to Him communicates that at some point Israel was loyal to Him, but then forsook Him; You can't return to something unless you were first there. Example: I can't return to my apartment from the grocery store unless I was at my apartment before I went to the grocery store.*] for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. ²Take with you words and return to the LORD; say to him, “Take away all iniquity; accept what is good, and we will pay with bulls the vows of our lips. ³Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride on horses; and we will say no more, ‘Our God,’ to the work of our hands[*this is speaking of the worship of idols(idolatry)*]. In you the orphan finds mercy.”[*vv. 2 & 3 describe repentance; vv. 2 & 3 are behaviors of repentance. And how does YHWH respond to genuine/authentic repentance? Answer = Verse 4*] ⁴I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them. YHWH will love Israel freely because YHWH’s love can’t be earned/bought/purchased. Israel isn’t earning or meriting YHWH’s love via the bulls they sacrifice or the vows(promises) they make to YHWH. Psalm 51:16-17 confirms this and tells us why. Psalm 51:16-17 = ¹⁶For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. ¹⁷The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Recall what Jesus Christ(YHWH in the flesh) went through so that all humanity of all time(that includes you and me) could be reconciled back to Him; i.e. = so that He could spend

eternity with all humans. He was mocked(Mt. 27:31), spit on(Mt. 27:30), struck in His head(Mt. 27:30), had a crown of thorns forced upon his head(Mt. 27:29), was tortured when He was scourged at the pillar(Mt. 27:26), and had nails driven through His hands and feet that affixed Him to the cross while He was totally nude(Mt. 27:35). Not to mention that He asked God to forgive those who did all of those things to Him while He was hanging on the cross(Lk. 23:34). AND He didn't deserve to have this happen to Him because He never committed a moral offense(sin)(2 Cor. 5:21, Heb. 4:15, 1 Peter 2:22). To say Jesus *prevents* a person from returning to Him is absurd because it goes against the character of God communicated in Jer. 31:18-20, Hosea 11:8; 14:1-4, John 10:11, 16-18, 1 Tim. 2:6, John 3:16 and many other passages.

The only time a person is spoken of being lost forever while they are alive as a human on earth are those who have become reprobates – i.e. = they are now of a reprobate mind. And that is how the impossibility language of Heb. 6:4-6 needs to be understood. It's not that God isn't allowing a person to repent and return to worship Him, rather God is honoring that persons free will choice to permanently reject Him.

And yes, there is the eternal judgment of God, but when is that judgment handed out? Answer = AFTER DEATH, not during a person's life(Rev. 20:11-15). That is why there is language of God pleading with apostate Israel to return to Him in Jeremiah, Hosea, and other places in the scriptures. Therefore, all of the language of unbelief of any form that we read in the scriptures needs to be balanced with: 1.) *When* the scriptures say the eternal judgment of God will be handed out - which is *after* a person dies. This is important because it tells us that a person has until they take their final breath on this earth to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. 2.) A person's free will. 3.) God's desire that the unbeliever return to believing in/following Him – i.e. = God's desire that all humanity be saved(1 Tim. 2:3-6). And 4.) The

context of Heb. 6:4-6, which is the Hebrews distortion of the doctrine of Christ, which has led to their misunderstanding of Christ(of which includes the gospel of Christ) and the stagnation of their “walk” with Christ(which is tied to a person’s sanctification process), thus rendering the writer of Hebrews to warn his readers about becoming apostate. That is what Heb. 5:11-Heb. 6:8 is about. It’s about rejecting the gospel of Christ which is: Believe. Okay? Have faith that Jesus Christ accomplished your salvation and because of what He did on your behalf/because of what He did for you is how your sins are forgiven, which results in you being allowed to enter heaven when you die. Repentance and faith towards God are tied together in Heb. 6:1. Therefore, it is impossible to restore a person’s faith towards God when they have permanently rejected the only means of salvation. A person can choose to reject the gospel of Christ at any time, for any reason, because they have free will. Once a person becomes a true, genuine, authentic believer/follower of Jesus Christ, they don’t all of a sudden lose their free will. Example: A true follower of Christ goes off to war, experiences the horrors of combat, and incorrectly concludes that “If Jesus was truly a loving, God, He wouldn’t allow all of the atrocities of war to occur. Therefore I do not believe in Jesus anymore.” Question: Is the eternal fate of this soldier sealed? Answer = No. Why? Answer = Because the eternal judgment of God is handed out *after* a person dies. Question: Can this soldier choose to turn back to the worship of Jesus? Answer = Absolutely yes. Why? Answer = Because they still have free will. In short, the impossibility language of Heb. 6:4-6 is a warning of the writer of Hebrews to say (in so many words), “You Hebrews better take a good look in the mirror at yourselves because you aren’t in as good of shape as you think you are and if you continue down this road of garbage thinking about Jesus and His gospel, you could unknowingly find yourself in a reprobate spiritual state because you have come to reject the only means of salvation.” Rom. 1:21-32(w/focus on vv. 24-25(TJ – verbally state vv. 24 & 25 when

you record this.)) illustrates the impossibility language of Heb. 6:4-6 very, very well. Rom. 1:21-32 = ²¹For although they knew God[past tense; the people Paul is speaking of here were once believers], they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²²Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. ²⁴Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. ²⁶For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. ²⁸And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³²Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. These people didn't merely slip into unbelief. They have whole heartedly rejected the only means of salvation(the gospel of Christ) after they once believed it(Rom. 1:21). They have set their heart, their believing loyalty, on something else so fervently/so passionately/with such dedication; they are so consumed with sin, that they will never turn back to Jesus. They will never again pledge their believing loyalty to Jesus because their hearts have

become hardened. And only God knows when a person has become of a reprobate mind. Said differently: Only God knows when a person has gone past the point of no return and that is what the writer of Hebrews is warning about. He doesn't want this to happen those who are going to hear or read his letter thus he issues them the warning that we read in Hebrews 6:4-6.

BEGIN APPLICATION THREEA question usually arises regarding the eternal security of the believer. The question being something to the tune of, "What about the eternal security of the believer? I thought my salvation was secure in Christ and I didn't have to worry about anything?" Answer = Yes, your salvation is eternally secure, *so long as you believe*. You can't pledge your believing loyalty to Jesus and then go off and worship another god, or no god at all. To do either of those things would be to reject Jesus and His offer of salvation.**END**

APPLICATION THREE

Criticism/Pushback #2

What about John 5:24? Specifically the part of the verse that says, "...he who has passed from death into life." John 5:24 = ²⁴Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

Rebuttal: Yes, this is 100% true. But what Jesus says here has to be balanced with the rest of the scripture text, specifically the verses that encourage believers to continue believing and the verses that communicate that a believer can reject the faith (we have covered some of those verses earlier in this teaching). When you don't balance the rest of the scripture text with what Jesus says here, you arrive at the incorrect conclusion of 'once saved, always saved.' You also have a theological contradiction because if you are using this verse as the basis for the 'once

saved, always saved' doctrine, then Paul and other New Testament writers are wrong when they communicate that a believer can turn away from the faith.

The part of John 5:24 that says, ²⁴“...he who has passed from death to life” requires a bit of unpacking. We'll unpack it first by looking at how the phrases “sons of God” and “firstborn” were understood in their ancient contexts and how that ties into the part of John 5:24 that reads, ²⁴“...he who has passed from death to life.”

^{JJ}Bene elohim(sons of God) = This is a hierarchical rank phrase in the family of God. The jobs/tasks/assignments given to the members of this rank are the most trusted jobs because members of this rank are family members. This is modeled off of pharaoh's household(par-ah-ah is ancient Egyptian for “great house(hold)”). This concept and structure was well known throughout the ancient world. ^{KK}The term “firstborn” is a term of status that communicates “preeminence.” Exod. 4:22 and Psalm 89:20, 27 are a couple passages that communicate this idea. Exodus 4:22 = ²²Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son. Question – Was Israel God's chronologically “firstborn” son? Answer = No. Adam was. And it doesn't matter if you take Israel's birth in the literal or figurative(spiritual) sense because Adam was the first human and his birth was supernatural. So either way, Israel being described as God's “firstborn” must be understood as a status of preeminence. Psalm 89:20, 27 = ²⁰I have found David, my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him. ²⁷And I will make him[David] the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. This can't be referring to David being born chronologically first as in before everyone else because David wasn't even born chronologically first in his own family(1 Sam. 17:12-14). So here also, “firstborn” must be understood as a status of preeminence. Now yes, in certain contexts, “firstborn” can refer to chronological birth order(Exod. 11:5), but that is not the case in Exod. 4:22 or Psalm 89:20, 27.

Exod. 11:5 = ⁵and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the cattle. Not to be silly here, but cattle can't inherit anything. ^{LL}The concept of birthright alludes to the privileges and expectations of the primogeniture([prime-oh-gen-i](#)(“i” as in “Tim”)-tore). ^{MM}Primogeniture([prime-oh-gen-i](#)(“i” as in “Tim”)-tore) refers specifically to the exclusive right of inheritance which belonged to the firstborn male. Now, just because the exclusive right of inheritance belonged to the male who was born chronologically first, doesn't mean that the father gave his oldest son the status of “firstborn.” This is evident when Jacob gave the blessing of/the status of the firstborn to Ephraim instead of Manasseh(Gen. 48:17-20). Manasseh was Ephraim's older brother because Manasseh was born before Ephraim(Gen. 48:14). This is just like Adam and Jesus. 1 Cor. 15:21-22 = ²¹For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. Recall the last part of John 5:24 that reads ²⁴“...he who has passed from death to life.” “Death” = The “one old man”(Gen. 1:27); Adam(^{NN}“man” in Gen. 1:26 & 27 is the Hebrew word אָדָם); those who aren't born of the Spirit; non-believers). “Life” = The “one new man”(Eph. 2:14-16); Jesus; those who are born of the Spirit; believers. This is important because “sons of God” is referring to believers in Rom. 8:14-17. TJ – tell the audience this: “When we read “children of God” in Rom. 8:16, “children of God” is to be understood as members of God's spiritual family(i.e. = believers) as in Gal. 3:29, not in the sense of all humans are God's kids because all humans are created in the image of God(Gen. 1:26-27). Gal. 3:29 = ²⁹And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring([Abraham's children](#)), heirs according to promise.” Rom. 8:14-17 = ¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as

sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. Rev. 21:1-7(w/focus on vv. 1-4, 7.* *Notice that v. 7 utilizes both heritage(inheritance) and firstborn language. TJ – when you are teaching this, verbally tell the audience when you are about to read v. 7.). Rev. 21:1-7 = ¹Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” ⁵And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” ⁶And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. ⁷The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. Question: What’s being inherited? Answer = The new heavens and new earth(Rev. 21:1). Where is the new heavens and new earth located(of which believers will be inheriting)? Answer = Mt. 5:5. Mt. 5:5 = ⁵blessed are the meek for they will *inherit the earth*. We started out in Eden, and we’re going to end in Eden. Except this time, Eden isn’t going to be a plot of land surrounded by the Pishon, Gihon, Tigris, and Euphrates rivers – it’s going to be global.

So the part of John 5:24 that reads ²⁴“...he who has passed from death to life” communicates a status change. A person’s status of being one of God’s kids is changed to the status of “firstborn” when they accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior – i.e. = when they believe the gospel of Christ. Thus, to use this passage as a defense of the ‘once saved, always saved’ doctrine would be a misapplication of the verse.

Criticism/Pushback #3

The relationship between God and believers is described as a marriage. Marriage is a covenant that is never meant to be broken. Therefore, once a person enters into the covenant of marriage with Jesus (when a person becomes a believer) they can’t lose their salvation because they are eternally secure.

Rebuttal: Yes, marriage is a covenant and it is never to be broken. I agree whole heartedly. But due to humanity’s free will AND fallen nature, humanity can choose to break the marriage covenant and leave to worship a different god(s) or no god at all. And the argument can’t be made that “they were never truly believers or they were never truly saved” because of the scriptural evidence that was presented earlier in this teaching. That argument just isn’t true. In addition to that, there are Old Testament examples that illustrate this. The prophet Ezekiel describes Israel as committing adultery on YHWH(Ezek. 13-16 w/focus on Ezek. 16:32). Ezek. 16:32 = ³²Adulterous wife, who receives strangers instead of her husband! The exile is another example. The Israelites who were allowed to enter the promised land were worshippers of YHWH, but after arriving in the promised land, they apostatized by worshipping other gods and thus is the reason why YHWH exiled them from the promised land. Okay? There are no Baal worshippers in heaven. And yes, I believe in the eternal security of the believer – so long as the believer is in a spiritual state of belief when they die. If the spiritual status of the believer is that

they are in a spiritual state of belief when they die, then the second after a believer dies, they are in heaven for eternity(i.e. = the eternal security of the believer). To use the marriage metaphor as an argument to support the ‘once saved, always saved’ doctrine, is insufficient because it doesn’t take into account the biblical examples of Israel’s apostasy against YHWH, nor does it take into account a person’s free will. A person doesn’t lose their free will the moment they accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Criticism/Pushback #4

Rom. 8:29 tells us that the eternal fate of a believer is unchangeable. Rom. 8:29 = ²⁹For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Rebuttal: Using the predestination language of Rom. 8:29 is not a sufficient rebuttal because to use this passage to defend the ‘once saved, always saved’ doctrine, is to misunderstand the relationship between foreknowledge and predestination. **BEGIN APPLICATION**

FOURForeknowledge does not necessitate predestination. An example of this is 1 Sam. 23:10-13. 1 Sam. 23:10-13 = ¹⁰Then David said, “O LORD, the God of Israel, your servant has surely heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah, to destroy the city on my account. ¹¹Will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will Saul come down, as your servant has heard? O LORD, the God of Israel, please tell your servant.” And the LORD said, “He will come down.” ¹²Then David said, “Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?” And the LORD said, “They will surrender you.” ¹³Then David and his men, who were about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah, and they went wherever they could go. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the expedition. In this passage, God foreknows two things that never happen: 1.) Saul never goes to Keilah, thus Keilah doesn’t get destroyed by

Saul. 2.) The men of Keilah never surrender David over to Saul because David leaves. Therefore, foreknowledge does not necessitate predestination. **END APPLICATION FOUR** Plus, if you take the view that God predestines everyone that goes to heaven, that also means that He predestines all people who go to hell. And if that's the case, how can it be said that you serve a loving God when He creates people of whom He predestines to an eternity of pain, suffering, and torment via damnation in hell? That said, how can you claim that you serve a just and righteous God if He predestines people to go to hell? Answer = You can't. And to say that God predestines people to heaven (and by default, also to hell), is to greatly misrepresent who God is. And that's truly tragic because in doing so, you paint God to be just like any other biased deity when in reality He shows no partiality(Deut. 10:17, Rom. 2:11); He is so indescribably loving that His steadfast love endures forever(All of Psalm 136); He is overflowing with mercy that renews every day(Lam. 3:22-23); and He loves you in such an incommunicable manner that He, perfection in human form as Jesus Christ, allowed Himself to be tortured by being scourged while chained to a granite pillar, stripped naked, and affixed to a wooden cross by having nails driven through His hands and His feet so the souls of all humanity of all time -your soul and my soul – can be redeemed forever. All He asks is that you believe He accomplished the redemption of your soul via His death, burial, and resurrection. That's the gospel.

And that concludes our examination of the 'once saved, always saved' doctrine. In our next session we will continue our study of the Gospel of Mark 1:1-11 which is John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus and Jesus' baptism. Please like, subscribe, and follow us on YouTube(@MessiahMinistriesPodcast), on Instagram(messiahministriespodcast), on TikTok(messiahministriespodcast), and on X(formerly Twitter)(@mmptimmcquillin). If you feel led by the Lord to support this podcast, you can do so by clicking "Support Us" at the top right

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