

Read also Deuteronomy 29:1-19. Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

Have you heard the saying "once saved always saved?" Depending on your focus, you may say it is true; you may say it is not true; you may say, I have no clue.

Okay, let's start with "once saved." I prayed the sinner's prayer, I'm IN! "Once saved always saved." It's a church tag line.

Salvation is "out there" – *When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be!*

But maybe you can't remember a certain time you prayed to accept Jesus. Maybe you have been raised in the church and you have always believed. It was easy for you. Or, something inside made you go to church as a child when your family didn't go—with your neighbor or a friend or you just showed up.

Or perhaps your faith has evolved little by little as an adult, as you have walked it.

There are many ways people come to Jesus. There is not a set pattern. People are different and are moved differently, depending on the time and place in life.

Today we are talking about the truth of this saying. It is like a hashtag for the Christian faith.
#oncesavedalwaysaved

The problem is, hashtags and tag lines are reductionistic and simplistic. They often create more problems than they solve. So to unpack the truth of "once saved always saved" we are looking at a verse in Timothy, as well as the passage in Deuteronomy 29 which you heard.

Let's read 2 Timothy 2:19:

But God's truth stands firm like a foundation stone with this inscription: "The LORD knows those who are his," and "All who call on the name of the LORD must turn away from evil."

What are the similarities between Timothy and Deuteronomy 29?

These are the terms of the covenant the LORD commanded Moses to make with the Israelites. . . Moses said, "You have seen with your own eyes everything the LORD did . . . all the great tests of strength, the miraculous signs, and the amazing wonders. . . . For forty years [God] led you through the wilderness, yet your clothes and sandals did not wear out. You ate no bread and drank no wine . . . , but he gave you food so you would know that he is the LORD your God.

Did you notice what they saw? Miracles, tests of strength, amazing God wonders. They were provided for; they had the food of faith. The Lord knew who was his and he was watching over them. What signs of God have you seen in your life? What challenges has he brought you through?

Last month I wrote down all my recent blessings—the list is huge. God has provided, opened doors, taught me, helped me grow, allowed me to see miracles, just like the signs and testings he brought Israel through.

Our God is powerful; much more resourceful than anything else we could rely on.

Moses continues:

*Therefore, obey the terms of this covenant so that you will prosper in everything you do. . . . By entering into the covenant today, **he will establish you as his people and confirm that he is your God, just as he promised you.** (God's Part) . . . You remember how we lived in Egypt and how we traveled through enemy nations as we left. You have seen their detestable practices . . . I am making this covenant with you so that **no one among you . . . will turn away from the LORD our God to worship these gods of other nations** (Our Part). Those who hear the warnings of this curse should not congratulate themselves, thinking, 'I am safe, even though I am following the desires of my own stubborn heart.' This would lead to utter ruin!*

Do you hear our part? We are to obey—turn away from evil. Not follow false gods. Is God pretty clear on that?

So the covenant is conditional: once you enter in—once saved—you have something you do.

This does not negate at all the fact that the covenant was COMPLETELY made by grace. You are saved by God's initiative:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God -- not the result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph 2:8-9).

So we have this faith. **How do we now live?**

Do you feel like groaning? There's more? Oh . . . I guess I have to *do something* . . .

"Once Saved Always Saved." It seems like being saved is all there is. When we say this we reduce a principle found in Scripture—that God is faithful and he has saved us through no work of our own. But the flip side is the question, *is our salvation summed up by a one-time decision to follow Christ?*

This is sort of a difficult question. I went on the internet and looked up the saying. Some people responded to "Once Saved Always Saved" with, "Why I'm not saved anymore." Then other people responded, "Well, then, you weren't really saved in the first place!"

So all these Christians start judging each other and that is not a good place to be.

Well now, this is becoming a hard and complicated topic! Faith is never as black and white as it seems. Faith is also not a gift that we receive that can be tied in a package, set on a shelf, as if it is insurance. Dust it off every once in a while by going to church.

Won't you think that's dull, dull, dull? Who wants faith like that?

Years ago there was a Roman Emperor named Trajan. At that time people were required to make sacrifices to the emperor. Pliny the Younger, Governor of Bithynia, wrote Trajan to ask what to do with Christians. He writes:

I have never participated in trials of Christians. I therefore do not know what offenses it is the practice to punish or investigate, and to what extent. . . . [I]n the case of those who were denounced to me as Christians, I have observed the following procedure: I interrogated these as to whether they were Christians; those who confessed (Christ) I interrogated a second and a third time, threatening them with punishment; those who persisted I ordered executed. For I had no doubt that, whatever the nature of their creed, stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy surely deserve to be punished. . . .

He described these earliest Christians who lived in the first century:

[Christians] were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god, and to bind themselves by oath, not to some crime, but not to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, not falsify their trust, nor to refuse to return a trust when called upon to do so. When this was over, it was their custom to depart and to assemble again to partake of food--but ordinary and innocent food.

They pledged every week to turn from evil. Does that describe your faith? Would your friends and co-workers identify you in that way? Those Christians must have seen Jesus as so precious, so interesting, so vital and “real life” that they couldn't live without him and they themselves lived for him.

C. S. Lewis describes living the Christian faith as a door we step through into a new way of life with a new agenda. We don't see its beauty from the outside. But once we step through the door, this beautiful adventurous world opens up. (Perhaps that is why it's called a kingdom.)

In your life do you experience what it is like to walk closely with Him? Do you see miracles and amazing God wonders? Do you value the opportunity to grow strong so that you can “conquer kingdoms, or rebuild cities, or your family, or make it through hard circumstances with great hope?”

Don't focus on “Once Saved Always Saved” as all there is. You miss the power of God, the presence of the Holy Spirit, and knowing Jesus, the most interesting person you could ever possibly meet, who fights for you with all of his heart.

What if our saying was changed to:

Once saved, always carried through
Once saved, always loved
Once saved, always have an eternal resource
Once saved, gaining everything important

When we acquiesce to his leadership, his guidance, his Lordship, Jesus can make you stand. Like Peter. He fell—denied the Lord—yet Jesus picked him back up and he became a leader, even a

significant leader who leads us today. And then there was Abraham. Even though he made LOTS of mistakes, he began this whole nation of believers. For them we can say, *Once Saved, God built faith into them which allowed them to stand well.*

Once saved, we cling to that wonderful new life that gives us strength now, and we know we are headed for an eternal future.

“For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life” (Eph 2:10).

“Once saved always saved” is true but it is deceiving—there is so much more! And it’s ETERNALLY GOOD.

AMEN