

Must a Christian work, or make effort, so as not to lose salvation? Many people who believe in the doctrine of “eternal security” don’t think so. They say all you have to do is believe in Jesus, and “once saved, always saved”, and that your Christian works are completely irrelevant to your salvation. But what does the Bible say? Let’s find out.



Must a Christian put forth any effort so as not to lose salvation?

“Work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away.” (2 Pt 1:10 NLT) The Bible does not say we’re saved by works. However, a “called and chosen” Christian can “fall away” if he does not “work hard.”

“What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” Jesus answered them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.’” (John 6:28-29 ESV) Believing in Jesus is a work that Christians must do.

“For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.” (Romans 13:11 ESV) Christian “salvation is nearer,” but not yet achieved. This is a far cry from the “once saved, always saved” dogma.

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” (Philippians 2:12 ESV) While not being saved by works, a Christian is encouraged to make every effort toward salvation.

“Lord are only a few people going to be saved?’ He said to them, ‘Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter but will not be able to.’” (Luke 13:23-24 NIV) Jesus shows that tremendous effort is needed to finally be granted salvation.

“I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.” (1 Corinthians 9:27 NIV) Paul, obviously a “saved” Christian, was concerned that after all the preaching he had done to and for others, he himself might give in to sin and become “disqualified for the prize” of eternal life or salvation. In other words, he did not want to lose his salvation.

While it is true that there is nothing that we can do to “earn” salvation, that does not mean that our salvation, as Christians, doesn’t depend on our doing Christian work. Jesus said, **“Don’t work for the food that spoils. Instead, work for the food that endures into eternal life” (John 6:27 GWT).** **“Then what must we do,’ they asked him, ‘if our work is to be the work of God?’ Jesus replied, ‘This is the work that God requires: to believe in the one whom he has sent’” (John 6:28,29 REB).** Believing in Jesus is the “work that God requires”. That doesn’t mean just mental acceptance. It means, not only mental belief, but actually putting into practice everything that Jesus taught, which is “work”. This does not mean that we “work our way to salvation”, however, “work” is actually involved in the process of salvation.

“I had intended to write to you about the salvation we share. But something has come up. It demands that I write and encourage you to continue your fight for the Christian faith that was entrusted to God’s holy people once for all time” (Jude 3 GWT). If Christians could not lose their salvation, why would they need to fight for the faith? ‘Fighting for the faith’ is work.

“I want to remind you... the Lord first saved a people out of Egypt and later destroyed those who did not believe.” (Jude 5 CSB) They were “saved,” but later their disbelief and disobedience led to their being “destroyed.” Jude warns Christians of the very same danger. Slipping from belief to unbelief means that a Christian is no longer doing God’s “work” of believing (John 6:27-29). So as we can see from the Bible, believing in Jesus is a requirement for salvation, which involves our being obedient to him, or else we risk losing that salvation. (John 14:23-24)

This is well-illustrated in some of Jesus’ parables, such as:

THE WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD (**Matthew 20:1-16**)—All the workers ‘worked’ for a denarius, some for the entire 12 hour day and some only for one hour. But the point is, they all ‘worked’. This is representative of doing Christian work, and the “denarius” represents the pay of eternal life. No, it is not earned, or deserved. It is a “gift” (**Romans 6:23**).