

Text: Heb 3.14-15

There is hardly a more vexing question for Christians than the question, “Can a believer lose his salvation?”

Many different answers are proposed. Some will say that if you don’t persevere (*i.e.*, keep walking with the Lord), you will lose your salvation.

According to A. T. Robertson, Jonathan Edwards was in this category.

“Jonathan Edwards once said that the sure proof of election is that one holds out to the end.”¹

Others will say “You can’t lose it, but you can reject it.”

Still others say, “Once saved, always saved.” (Then comes the question, “No matter what you do?”)

Proponents of each view will point to passages that seem to support their position.

Those who teach you can lose your salvation sometimes point to our text, so let’s read it at this point.

Read Heb 3.12-15, text 14-15

Before we get into our text, we must look at one more text which is unambiguous and emphatic, John 10.27-30. Jesus himself is speaking.

Read Jn 10.27-30

Some key points from John 10:

1. Jesus gives eternal life to his sheep (27-28a)
2. His sheep will never perish (very strong negative, “not not”)

“John uses the double negative οὐ μὴ (*ou mē*) with the aorist subjunctive, which is a very emphatic way of declaring that something will not happen in the future. Jesus is categorically excluding the slightest chance of an apostasy by his sheep. A literal translation would be something like, ‘They shall not, repeat, shall not ever perish in the slightest.’”²

¹ A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Heb 3.14.

² Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1998), 1003.

3. Jesus says “no one can snatch them out of my hand” (28)
4. Jesus strengthens the stmt: “no one can snatch them out of the Father’s hand” (29)

“‘No one’ means no one, including the individual himself. The promise does not say that no one, except yourself, can seize the believer out of God’s hand. It says no one.”³

Jesus is very emphatic about the security of the true sheep, the believer.

Consequently, with such a strong statement from our Lord, Jesus Christ, all other passages must resolve themselves to his statement.

Considering all that, we can now look at our passage in Hebrews and understand what the author is saying to us.

Proposition: The reason we can’t turn back on Christ is because of the firm assurance he gave us when we became partakers of him.

I. The logic of our passage

- A. Take care brethren... [a warning against falling away] (12)
- B. Encourage one another... [a ministry of encouragement to faithfulness] (13)
- C. For we have become partakers ... [the reason to stay faithful] (14)

II. The nature of our relationship to Christ (“partakers of Christ”)

- A. The word our version translates “partakers”

1. Other versions:

ESV Heb 3:14 For we have come to share in Christ

NET Heb 3:14 For we have become partners with Christ

DBY Heb 3:14 For we are become companions of the Christ

KJV uses “partakers,” these are the other options

³ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press, 1999), 382.

2. A reference where the word is used as a noun

Lk 5.7 so they signaled to their **partners** in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink.

3. In common Gk usage, the word has nuance of “partner” (like a business partner)

4. Our translations make it more personal: “sharer, companion, partaker”

This kind of relationship with Christ is very close (it is the Christian relationship)

If you are a believer...

- You share in his joys (see someone get saved, see the church grow)
- You share in his sufferings (as you serve and the world hates you)
- You share in his hope (looking for the blessed return)
- And more

B. The text says, “we have become”

1. The verb is perfect tense — past action, ongoing results

2. David Allen cites Stanley Porter in *Verbal Aspect: a “timeless conclusion”*⁴

3. The fact of our conversion is a permanent settled thing

4. And, it is the ground of the whole warning of v. 12

a. “Take care, brethren...” (12)

b. “For we have become...” (14)

The reason turning away from the church for a “safer” spot is so dangerous is that we are already partakers of Christ.

⁴ Stanley Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 269, cited in David Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary 35 (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Publ. Group, 2010), 265.

III. The enablement of our relationship to Christ (“if we hold fast”)

A. This is a complicated sentence in Greek

1. It takes the form of conditional sentence, as if it is doubtful (English connotation)
2. The construction makes it less doubtful than it appears in English

B. First, the kind of assurance that is in view

1. The word for assurance has to do with the basis of confidence
 - a. Used in a legal sense in the Greek literature
 - b. Related to confidence in legal title over property

“ὑπόστασις stands for ‘the whole body of documents bearing on the ownership of a person’s property, deposited in the archives, and forming the evidence of ownership.’ ... in all cases there is the same central idea of something that *underlies* visible conditions and guarantees a future possession.”⁵

- 1) Legal survey
- 2) Physical corner pegs on your property
- 3) Registered plot plan in the Gazetteer
- 4) Registered ownership at Land Titles
- 5) Transfer of land documents (Agreement to purchase, condition removals, legal packet you get from the lawyer)

In terms of land ownership, when you have all this documentation, you have strong confidence you can prove your title.

2. What kind of assurance does our verse talk about?

- a. The confidence of a faith begun “the beginning of our assurance”
- b. The confidence of a faith completed “until the end”

⁵ Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, 660.

c. In other words, I call it a “beginning-to-end” confidence

Someone who truly puts their faith in Christ has this kind of faith

C. The conditional element

1. If: “if indeed,” “if surely,” “if at all events”
2. If we hold fast: the verb has the sense of “hold fast,” “retain,” “not let go”
3. If we hold fast firmly: another business term, a firm guarantee

D. Putting it all together:

1. We are partakers with Christ
2. If indeed we hold fast firmly to a “beginning-to-end” confidence [title deed]

In other words, are you committed firmly to Christ?

Do you have the title deed? Do you have the promise of Scripture?

“Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rm 10.13, KJV)

IV. The timing of our firm faith (15)

A. When do we hold fast firm until the end?

Today!

Ps 95.7-8 For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. **Today**, if you would hear His voice,⁸ Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, As in the day of Massah in the wilderness,

B. As long as it is today, we hold fast to the title deeds:

1. We don’t stop our ears to him
2. We don’t harden our hearts to him
3. We don’t provoke him

Why?

We are partakers of Christ: we have too much to lose to give up on him now.

C. What does the conditional statement question?

1. Does it assume you could fail to hold fast your guarantee?
2. Or does it question if you have the guarantee

If we go back to the Land Title illustration:

- If you own property, you keep documents on that property for years, you don't just throw it away.
- You register your documents properly at the Land Titles office.
- You make sure all the proper documentation is properly executed.

When it comes to proving your title, you have assured yourself of its validity.

3. When it comes to this question: Should we go back on Christ?
 - a. And put all this in jeopardy
 - b. Throw away our title deed?
 - c. Harden our hearts to him?

Never!

Conclusion:

Proposition: The reason we can't turn back on Christ is because of the firm assurance he gave us when we became partakers of him.

The real question for each of us today is this, "Have you become a partaker of Christ?"

- Do you have the firm guarantee of a "beginning-to-end" assurance?

If you do not, make today the day you turn to him in faith.