

Saved or Not Saved

Does this matter? Ever wonder if someone you love is truly saved? Perhaps a close friend or your spouse, son or daughter, a distant relative, maybe there are a number of people in your life that fit this category. If they died, you're not quite sure if they would go to heaven. Maybe you're even wondering about yourself. Some people would say it is not for us to know, or it is not for us to be concerned with. It is between them and God. Sometimes parents are skeptical of a child that has gone away from Christ, if they really know Him. Sometimes we are in denial about the situation. They hope that when the person went through a prayer years ago it was authentic. God's Word says; *examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.* **2 Cor. 13:5**

I am not trying to judge people in this article, or to inspire you to judge or be a fruit inspector. The exhortation is always to look at our own life. This article was created because of the many times I see people who, by wishful thinking, hope their loved ones are in heaven. Instead we should give some serious prayer and witness to them. I have been asked to witness to people's family members because of this issue. I am glad to do it. Close friends and family seem to be the hardest people for us to share our faith in Jesus Christ.

In this article we will take a look at "saved or not saved"? The Bible gives us criteria for making distinctions regarding salvation, however; the first thing I want to cover is the reason it isn't always clear cut when it comes to this subject. There maybe situations when you wonder. Below is a list of people groups found in the Bible that would cause deception and confusion when evaluating authentic salvation. We will look at generalities and then individuals in the Bible. Most of these people groups below are counterfeit of true believers, hence the deception and confusion.

False Groups of People

Antichrists: *Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.* **1 John 2:18** – full passage **1 John 2:18-22**

Apostates: *For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.* **Jude 1:4** also see the rest of Jude. **1 Tim. 4:1-2** **Thess. 2:3**

Deceivers: *For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.* **Matt. 24:5** **2 John 1:7**

Enemies of the Cross: *For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.* **Phil. 3:18-19**

Evil Workers: *Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!* **Phil. 3:2** Also see: **Acts 15:1** **Gal. 1:7** and **Rev. 22:15**

False Apostles: *For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.* **2 Cor. 11:13**

False Brethren: *in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;* **2 Cor. 11:26**

False Jews: *and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.* **Rev. 2:9** and **Rev. 3:9**

False Prophets: *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.* **1 John 4:1-3** see also **Matt. 7:15-23** **Acts 13:6**

False Teachers: *But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.* **2 Peter 2:1**

Hypocrites: *Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me,*

Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ Matt. 15:7-9 see also Matt 6:1-16 Matt 23:1-39 Jer. 42:20 Luke 11:44.

Impostors: *But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. 2 Tim. 3:15*

Mockers: *how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. Jude 1:18*

Scoffers: *knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, 2 Peter 3:3*

Were These People Saved?

Alexander — (see Hymenaeus)

Demas —

For Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. 2 Tim. 4:10 Can we love this world and still be saved? Two scriptures come to mind regarding this. **John 15:19 1 John 2:15 James 4:4** Uncertainty in situations like this can be the need of more information. Was this a temporary lapse in faith or evidence of a departure from the faith? I have experienced myself leaving the call of God to be part of the world for a time. You or someone you know may have as well.

Demon-Possessed Slave Girl —

This is the girl that followed Paul and his companions around announcing them as servants of the Most High God. Paul discerned that it was an evil spirit and cast it out. **Acts 16:16-19** It does not say specifically what happened to her after that. Only that the spirit of divination came out of her. This was evidenced by the fact her masters realized their opportunity for profit was gone. This could mean the obvious, that her ability for fortune-telling was gone, or it could indicate also that the girl was now within the group of believers suggesting she was now a believer. All this is speculation however. I would like to think she became saved.

Diotrephes —

I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church. 3 John 9-10 If you notice, this man Diotrephes, was either within the Church or associated with the Church enough that he had authority, or at least popularity, to put people out of the Church. This could be a misguided believer. The fact that he loved to have the “preeminence” would suggest he was full of pride. Not receiving the Apostle John is a huge case against Diotrephes. I would say Diotrephes was in rebellion against the authority that Jesus Christ had established and is not a true believer. There are people today who do not receive the apostle’s teaching thereby rejecting the authority of Christ, who is head of the body.

Fickle Crowd —

Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man. John 2:23-25 It appears that the same Greek word here for believed is the same as in other passages referring to saving faith. The context would have to determine if it is genuine. I find this fascinating. The people Jesus is talking about here could be like the ones in the parable of the sower. They believed for awhile. **Luke 8:13** or perhaps they only have an intellectual agreement with the facts, a mental assent. Even the demons believe and tremble. **James 2:19** (same Greek word here in James for believe) No doubt we see the fickle crowds as they hail Jesus as King entering Jerusalem and then a week later are yelling, “crucify, crucify”. Although it may seem hard at the time, we can be glad that our faith is tested to see what kind it is. **James 1:3 1 Pet. 1:7** The same people exist today. Are you one of them?

Hymenaeus —

...having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme. **1 Tim. 1:19-20** Whatever shipwrecking your faith is, I don't want it. Jesus said that blaspheme against Him would be forgiven. We don't know what exactly this was. Some more clues may be in **2 Tim. 2:17-18** *...And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.* Here we have Hymenaeus and Philetus straying from the truth and are actually working contrary to cause of Christ. Is it possible to do these things and still be saved? The strong language that Paul uses here sounds like they are enemies of Jesus.

Jewish Rulers —

Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. **John 12:42-43** Jesus taught that we have to confess Him before men or we will be denied. **Matt. 10:32-33**

Joseph of Arimathea —

After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus. **John 19:38** The two words above, secretly and fear, are the only thing that shed some doubt to the faith of this man. The other Gospel accounts attribute Joseph as a disciple as well **Matt. 27:57** He was waiting for the Kingdom of God. **Mark 15:43** Luke describes Joseph as a good and just man. **Luke 23:50** I think Joseph was saved. Some may disagree based on his fear and secrecy. What about confessing Christ before men? **Matt. 10:32-33** Timothy also struggled with fear however. **1 Cor. 16:10 2 Tim. 1:7**

Judas Iscariot —

Many people speculate on who is definitely in hell. Out of all the people of all time, we can conclude that Judas Iscariot is in hell. Still some people maintain that he was forgiven. I am not sure where they get this other than their own mind. This is one of the most interesting characters in the Bible. Judas was chosen by Jesus Himself. **John 6:70-71** Judas had part in the ministry with the others. **Matt. 10:4 Acts 1:17** Right up until the last supper the other disciples had no idea that Judas was who he was. Even then they did not understand. Once Jesus was betrayed in the garden it was exposed what Judas was about. I believe in the case of Judas, or someone like him, unless the Lord reveals the situation we would have no idea about a fake. It is not recorded that Judas had open conflict with Jesus or the others. His strong objection of Mary anointing Jesus was the only time we see anything like that. **John 12:4-6** He apparently could do the miracles as the other disciples. He was paired up with one of the others. Scripture doesn't mention who it was. However they didn't report that Judas could not perform his authority by using spiritual gifts. Much more could be said about Judas Iscariot but what I want to point out here is that Judas was the exemplar of a fake Christian.

Lot —

Based on the account of Lot and his daughters in Genesis most people really despise Lot and some think he is not saved. In the story he and his two daughters are the only ones who made it out. Lot's sons-in-law thought he was joking and his wife turned into a pillar of salt. Even Lot dragged his feet so to speak. Some comments about how he chose Sodom to live in is an indicator how he was wicked etc. Look at the Scripture in 2 Peter; *and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds* **2 Peter 2:7-8** Despite what I think, based on this passage Lot was a righteous man and I believe he is saved. What do you think?

Simon the Sorcerer —

Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done. **Acts 8:13** On the commentaries I have read, most think Simon was not saved, but in fact was a false convert. This is mainly due to the fact that he had an encounter with the Apostle Peter regarding his motives. Why he wanted the Holy Spirit. Read full passage: **Acts 8:13-24** There is also reliable historic evidence outside the Bible that Simon (Simon Magus) went on to oppose the

teachings of the Apostles and start a counterfeit religion. In the text it says that the people of Samaria believed and were baptized, the same as Simon. The difference is, that the Apostles came and laid hands on the Samaritans to receive the Holy Spirit. Although Simon believed and was baptized it never mentions him receiving the Holy Spirit, only that he wanted to buy it so that he could have that power. If you notice, after the instruction of Peter to pray to God for Simon's wickedness to be forgiven, he doesn't pray but wants someone else to pray for him. Whatever this detail could mean, the lesson here is that we need to be the ones to do "business" with God.

Philetus — (see Hymenaeus)

Salvation Uncertainty Factors

Sometimes what we would call "baby or infant" believers, because of their immaturity, can be mistaken for a wolf in sheep's clothing. We need to be careful when evaluating situations and people. I think we evaluate other people based on our own experience. For example, I knew a pastor who came to Christ with many tears and sobbing at the front of the church during a meeting. He was convinced that unless someone did the same thing that they were not really saved. He would say, "You really gotta mean it". I would remind you readers that Esau cried tears of sorrow. **Heb. 12:16-17** There is worldly sorrow **2 Cor. 7:10**

No Visible Fruit:

*He also spoke this parable: "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, 'Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?' But he answered and said to him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.'" **Luke 13:6-9*** My point here is that after a profession of faith, there is not always visible fruit, at least not right away. This would shed some doubt on the authenticity of the person's conversion. If this is the case we cannot be sure. Another common point of contention is how fast a person changes. Most of us would agree that after coming to Jesus Christ we become a new person. **2 Cor. 5:17** but how fast should, this happen? I have heard both ends. Someone who never changes over a lifetime may still be considered saved by some people. Also, if the person doesn't change everything overnight he may be pronounced not saved by some. Another danger is comparing someone else to ourselves or vice-versa. **2 Cor. 10:12** Also remember the growth of the fourth kind of soil in the parable of the sower. Some are thirty, sixty, one hundred times as much. **Matt. 13:1-23 Mark 4:1-20 Luke 8:4-13** Not everyone is a hundred fold Christian.

No Rewards:

*If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. **1 Cor. 3:14-15*** Full passage: **1 Cor. 3:5-16**

According to the passage above, some people will be barely saved and have no rewards. They may live a carnal life or have no works. I think the text indicates that they have built with something that will be burned. Maybe this is doing things for God that God does not consider of any value. In this case we could look at someone's life and think they were not saved, but in this case they are.

Religious Claims & Behavior:

*"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" **Matt. 7:21-23*** Here you have those claiming they are Christians. They refer to Jesus as Lord and they claim good works and even miracles in His name. Yet they are not saved. This I am sure will be very shocking. There is a similar group found in **Luke 13:22-30** they are not claiming so much a ministry, but an association. They say, "You taught in our streets" and "we ate and drank in your presence". They apparently are acquainted with the Lord's teachings. The latter claim could be talking about communion or some sort of feast or dinner. The term in your presence would

indicate that it was a Church event of some sort. The response was basically the same; not saved. We may never have the knowledge of their true condition with these kinds of people. Maybe we shouldn't anyway. In both cases it was a matter of practicing lawlessness/iniquity. Let's make sure we are not in these groups. Amen.

Counterfeits:

...but the tares are the sons of the wicked one In the parable of the wheat and the tares **Matt. 13:24-43** the Lord says let both grow together and don't uproot the tares because you will also hurt the wheat. It will all be sorted out at the end of the age. Because of these statements I would not try to figure out who is a tare. This may not be a fruitful endeavor. If the Lord gives knowledge of a person or situation, it may be just for you. Be sure to pray about it. It is worthy to note in this passage, as well as, the two in the last section, there is the phrase "practice lawlessness" This may be the way to evaluate your own salvation and others too.

Summary

Consider these exhortations from God's Word; **2 Pet. 1:10-11 1 John 5:13** A number of people that went to my high school years ago were very committed believers back then, or thought to be. Today many of them seemed to have drifted away from the faith. This is very sad. I was not a Christian back in high school. In fact during my early twenties as a Christian I struggled with sin and commitment. I think the important thing is to finish strong. Since we do not know when we are going to die we have to live our lives abiding in Christ daily. Think about someone who may fit the conditions we discussed above and pray for their soul won't you? Amen!