

Matthew 24 The One Who Endures To The End Will Be Saved

Matthew 24:12-13: **Because lawlessness will multiply, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³But the one who endures to the end will be saved.**

These two verses are part of the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24. The question to be addressed is what verse 13 refers to. This discourse is talking about the end times culminating in the Lord's return.

A similar verse is

Matthew 10:22: **You will be hated by everyone because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.**

This second verse however, is not in the context of the end times. It is in a context of Christ sending out the 12 apostles to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God. The passage in Matthew 24 could be speaking of the end as when the Lord returns, but that does not appear to be the case in Matthew 10. In Matthew 10 it appears to be speaking of the end of one's life. I think that in Matthew 24 it could refer to when Christ returns at the end of the 7 year period known as the Tribulation, or it could refer to the end of their lives if they are martyred during that period.

So, what does the phrase "will be saved" referring to. I see four possible answers to this question.

- 1) One common answer is that it means that if you endure to the end of your life faithfully as a Christian, you will be saved from hell.
- 2) Another view is that if you endure to the end of your life it will prove that you were truly a born-again believer and would not go to hell. That view would be more convincing if it read "the one who is saved will endure to the end", which is not what it says.
- 3) Another view is that surviving the Tribulation period is what is meant by being saved. In other words, the one who endures all of the trials of that time until the Lord returns will be rescued from the effects of the Tribulation period and will be welcomed into the 1000 year kingdom.
- 4) There is another way to understand this passage. That is, that it is not talking about being saved from hell, or being saved from the effects of the Tribulation period, but rather the soul being saved in the future kingdom. This will take some further explanation.

We will start with answer number 1, which is that if you endure to the end of your life faithfully as a Christian you will be saved from hell. This is clearly teaching salvation by works. This view would typically say that you are saved by faith in Jesus, but you must continue in good works in order to escape hell. This contradicts what Jesus said in John 5:24:

Truly I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not come under judgment but has passed from death to life.

Jesus says here that the believer has already passed from death to life and will not come under judgment. Romans 3:28 says:

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For we conclude that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

Justified here means “declared righteous”. Also Ephesians 2:8-9 says:

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ESV

So, by grace we have already been saved, once for all. We have eternal life and will not go to hell because we have been saved by God’s grace. It is not a result of works. So, our salvation from hell cannot be dependent on our enduring to the end.

Answer number two is similar. It states that the true Christian will endure faithfully as a Christian until the end of his life. First of all the verse doesn’t state that. If that is what Jesus meant, I believe that it would have read “the one who is saved will endure to the end”. But, it doesn’t say that. There is a lot that could be discussed about that topic, but I won’t get into that here. I don’t believe that this verse is saying that or that it is talking about being saved from hell.

The third answer is that he is saying that if you endure the trials of the Great Tribulation period until the Lord returns, you will be rescued from the effects of that period and be welcomed into the 1000 year kingdom. That seems possible in Matthew 24:13, but not in Matthew 10:22. Matthew 10:22, which contains the same phrase in a similar context of being hated by everyone, is speaking about the time that the Lord sent out the twelve apostles to preach about the kingdom of God. This was while Jesus was still ministering before his crucifixion. It is possible that this could be speaking of when the Lord will establish his kingdom and that their expectation was that it would be in their immediate future. But, the context does not talk about the Great Tribulation period.

Finally, the fourth answer is that the salvation spoken of is not eternal salvation from hell, but rather the salvation of the soul, which we will look into further, after we look at the various meanings of being saved.

First, we will look into the word for “saved” in Matthew 24:13. The word translated “saved” can refer to being saved from various things, based on the context. In Matthew 24:22 it says:

Unless those days were cut short, no one would be saved.

The context of this verse is the Great Tribulation period and speaks of being saved from physical death. In other words, during this time, everyone would die because of all the judgments coming on the earth unless this time of tribulation would end.

It can refer to being saved from disease, as in James 5:15:

And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; NIV

This use of saved is used in many places in the gospels where people were healed. It can also refer to someone being kept safe.

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Let's compare that with 1 Corinthians 9:24-27:

Don't you know that the runners in a stadium all race, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way to win the prize. ²⁵Now everyone who competes exercises self-control in everything. They do it to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable crown. ²⁶So I do not run like one who runs aimlessly or box like one beating the air. ²⁷Instead, I discipline my body and bring it under strict control, so that after preaching to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

Paul was sharing his concern that he might not continue in the race.

If he was disqualified because of failing to follow the Lord, he would be like the person in 1 Corinthians 3:15:

If anyone's work is burned up, he will experience loss, but he himself will be saved—but only as through fire. In this case, saved would mean saved from condemnation to hell.

Let's look at Matthew 24:13 again:

But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

Now, let's compare this with Mark 13:12-13:

Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. ¹³You will be hated by everyone because of my name, but the one who endures to the end will be saved.

Just before the phrase "**but the one who endures to the end will be saved.**", Jesus talks about persecution by family members and that everyone will hate you because of Christ. This endurance is related to being faithful to Christ during persecution.

2 Timothy 2:12a says:

if we endure, we will also reign with him;

Here, endurance is related to our ruling with Christ in his kingdom. Our ruling with Christ is dependent on whether we endure as faithful ones to Christ. We don't earn eternal life, but we do earn rewards.

For an illustration, let's look at Hebrews 11:24-26:

²⁴By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter ²⁵and chose to suffer with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasure of sin. ²⁶For he considered reproach for the sake of Christ to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, since he was looking ahead to the reward.

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We see here that Moses **“was looking ahead to the reward.”** This was in contrast to what he had while he was ruling in Egypt. He gave up the life that he had in Egypt to obtain the future reward.

We need to be careful not to confuse the gift of eternal life with following after Christ which earns rewards. They are distinct in scripture and are obtained by different means. Eternal life is a gift as we saw in Ephesians 2:8-9. Discipleship is required to obtain the rewards. If we mix them up, then we will try to earn eternal life by works. We saw in Ephesians 2:8-9 that it is not by works. Rewards however, are realized by works.

Now let's turn to Matthew 16:24-27

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. ²⁵For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me will find it. ²⁶For what will it benefit someone if he gains the whole world yet loses his life? Or what will anyone give in exchange for his life? ²⁷For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will reward each according to what he has done.

These are definitely discipleship verses. These are talking about following Christ. The word translated “life” in verse 25 is literally “soul”. I believe that soul here is referring to our earthly life now and our heavenly life in the future. In this understanding, to save his life would mean to pursue or keep what satisfies himself in this life. Now the ultimate saving his life would be to keep himself from physically dying. That may be required of a disciple, but the main point is how we live. The second half of verse 25 **“whoever loses his life”** speaks about denying himself and following Christ. It is related to our obedience to Christ. When we see something that Christ wants us to do, it may be in conflict with what we think might benefit us. We may face persecution if we speak up for Christ. When we make decisions about what we are going to do, we may have family members or friends that disapprove of what we want to do. In the example of Moses earlier, he gave up all that Egypt offered because he looked forward to the reward. In Matthew 16:25 above, Jesus said that **“whoever loses his life because of me will find it.”** I think that finding his life can even apply to this life. God may bless us in different ways as we follow him. But, I think as in the cases of Moses, we will obtain a future reward.

Matthew 10:37-39:

The one who loves a father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; the one who loves a son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸And whoever doesn't take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Anyone who finds his life will lose it, and anyone who loses his life because of me will find it.

Here, the taking up of the cross and losing his life is related to family matters. As a disciple, there may be conflicts between what the Lord wants and what our family wants.

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Mark 8:34-35:

Calling the crowd along with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. ³⁵For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me and the gospel will save it.

The word translated “life” in this passage can also be translated “soul” with the idea of soul-life or natural life. So, we see that losing his soul-life here is related to Christ and the gospel.

Notice the use of “save your souls” in James 1:21.

In Hebrews 11:35 it says that **other people were tortured, not accepting release so that they might gain a better resurrection.**

See also Hebrews 10:32-36 – they needed endurance so that they might receive what was promised, after doing God’s will. Verses 37-38 show that this is related to Christ’s return. They needed to endure to the end as in Matthew 24:13.

In Hebrews 11:8-10 it says that Abraham lived in tents as a foreigner in the land of promise, as he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Hebrews 11:13 says **These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced *them* and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.** NKJV

The people in Hebrews 11 are examples of people who lived by faith with their view to the future instead of satisfying their desires now. So, I think that they are examples of “losing their souls”, that is, not having their natural life satisfied now. However, in the future they will have great rewards because of their faithfulness now.

In Hebrews 12:16-17 there is a warning about people like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. I think that this is a picture of a Christian who would rather be satisfied now, and is not concerned about obeying Christ and receiving future rewards.