

Does “Keep in Memory” Mean You Can Lose Salvation?

Quick Answer Summary Sheet

1 Corinthians 15:2

At a Glance

Answer: No. First Corinthians 15:2 does not teach that a saved person must maintain uninterrupted conscious memory of the Gospel in order to remain saved. It also does not teach that later forgetfulness proves the person was never saved.

1 Corinthians 15:2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

The key distinction: Paul is dealing with retaining the Gospel he preached in the face of doctrinal contradiction, especially denial of the resurrection. The passage is not discussing dementia, brain injury, aging, or other involuntary memory loss.

The key context: The Corinthians had received the Gospel and were standing in it. Some among them were now saying there was no resurrection of the dead. Paul therefore brings them back to what he originally preached.

Key Scriptures

1 Corinthians 15:1 — The Corinthians had received the Gospel and stood in it.

1 Corinthians 15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

1 Corinthians 15:2 — The controlling passage.

1 Corinthians 15:2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

The Gospel is what Paul connects with salvation. The condition concerns retaining what he preached; the verse does not say that memory itself is what saves.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 — What Paul had preached.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; **4** And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

Christ's resurrection was part of the Gospel Paul had delivered to them.

1 Corinthians 15:12 — The doctrinal problem at Corinth.

1 Corinthians 15:12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

This shows why retaining Paul's original message mattered. Some among them were contradicting its resurrection truth.

1 Corinthians 15:14 — When faith would be vain.

1 Corinthians 15:14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

1 Corinthians 15:17 — Paul repeats the same argument.

1 Corinthians 15:17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

These verses strongly explain the language of believed in vain in verse 2. If Christ had not actually risen, the Gospel proclamation and the faith placed in it would be vain.

Key Distinctions / What to Remember

Question	What the Passage Supports
Must a saved person maintain perfect mental recall of the Gospel?	No. First Corinthians 15 does not address involuntary cognitive memory loss.
Does forgetting the Gospel prove someone was never saved?	The passage does not say that.
Can memory failure cause a person to lose eternal life?	The passage does not teach that.
Does keep in memory matter?	Yes. Paul genuinely calls the Corinthians to retain what he preached.
What were they in danger of departing from?	The apostolic Gospel, especially its resurrection truth.
What does believed in vain most naturally connect with?	Paul's later argument that faith would be vain if Christ were not risen.
Who is Paul addressing?	The Corinthian church collectively as people who had received the Gospel, stood in it, and believed it.

Doctrinal retention is not the same thing as neurological recollection. Paul is correcting people who were contradicting part of the Gospel they had received. He is not describing a believer who becomes unable to remember because of age, disease, or injury.

A real warning does not have to mean loss of salvation. The word if should not be ignored. Believers really are to hold fast to Gospel truth. But the passage never says that failure to remember causes someone to cease possessing eternal life.

Believed in vain does not automatically mean never really believed. In the same chapter, Paul explicitly connects vain faith with the hypothetical possibility that Christ was not raised. First Corinthians 15:14 and 15:17 therefore provide essential context for understanding verse 2.

The Gospel remains central. Paul says, "By which also ye are saved." Salvation is connected with the Gospel he preached, not with human memory treated as an additional saving work.

Bottom Line

First Corinthians 15:2 is not teaching salvation by the strength of your memory.

Paul is reminding the Corinthians to retain the Gospel they had received, particularly its resurrection truth, because some among them were denying the resurrection of the dead. If Christ were not risen, their faith truly would be vain—but Christ did rise.

A person who genuinely believes the Gospel and later loses the ability to remember it has not been shown by this passage to have lost salvation, nor does such forgetfulness prove that he was never saved.

The believer should hold fast to Gospel truth. But eternal life is not maintained by perfect cognitive recall.

If this helped you, please consider giving to this ministry.

True Words Baptist Church | truewordsbaptist.org