



# Preparing Souls To Serve The Lord

Volume XVIII

March 1998

Number 8

## Four Reasons Why a Christian Can Fall From Grace

By

Gene Burgett

I realize that based on the title alone some readers may be prepared to take issue with what I have to say in this little article. All I dare ask of anyone is that he take the time to read and fairly consider the thoughts presented. If after careful consideration you still find the matter unproven, do not be afraid to write me and let me know why you believe I am mistaken.

It may be that the title bares terminology unfamiliar to some. The phrase "fall from grace" may not really convey a meaning to people not familiar with the idea. We are going to be examining an idea that travels under several different names. Sometimes it is called the *perseverance of the saints*. Other names used are *once saved always saved*, the *impossibility of apostasy*, and, sometimes you might hear someone say, "A Christian can't fall from grace."

I recently read a book on the subject in which the author claimed that a Christian could actually turn to atheism, die in that state, and still be saved. This

idea may provide comfort to some, but I find no proof of that in the Bible. I hope you will prayerfully and patiently bear with me as I present the four reasons from the Bible that have caused me to reject the view that once a person is saved he are always saved.

### Reason One:

#### Conditional Statements

Most of us understand that the little word *if* is more powerful than its size might lead one to expect. Your boss might say, "If you get the job done on time you will get a raise." In that case the word *if* makes the raise conditional. The word *if* is used in this same way in the Bible. For example, in First John 1:7 the Bible says: "But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."

Please notice that this verse makes a promise that the blood of Jesus will cleanse the child of God of all sin. However, there is a condition to be met: the

child of God must "walk in the light." The little word, *if* appears at the very beginning of this passage, signifying that what is about to follow is a condition. "If we walk in the light," John writes, "the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." But, what if we do not walk in the light? Does the blood of Jesus cleanse those who do not walk in the light? Unless we are to turn John's words into a kind of empty threat, the Christian who does not "walk in the light" does not have his sins cleansed by the blood of Jesus.

Another one of these conditional statements is contained in Hebrews 4:14, where the Bible states, "For we are become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end."

How does one become a partaker of Christ? Only by holding fast until the end. What happens if a person does not "hold fast until the end?" What if a person lets go of his faith before he reaches the end? According to what we have just read that

person is not a partaker of Christ. It is difficult to conceive of a person getting into heaven without partaking of Christ.

Another conditional statement can be found in Second Peter 2:20-22. Here Peter writes: "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: A dog returns to his own vomit, and, a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

Peter clearly has Christians in mind for he speaks of people who have "escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." If that does not describe a Christian, then who does it describe?

With regard to those who have escaped the defilements of the world Peter says: (1) they can become entangled in the world again; (2) when they become entangled in the world again their spiritual condition is worse than it was before they left the world (were they lost before they left the world?); (3) they have turned their back on the holy commandments; and (4) that their return is like a washed pig returning to the muck.

I believe this is one of the

ugliest pictures of a man presented in the Bible, and it refers to a Christian who has turned his back on God. I believe this teaches that a Christian can fall from grace.

## Reason Two: Warnings And Exhortations

The second reason why I believe the Bible teaches that a Christian can fall from grace is the warnings and exhortations for Christians against falling away. Throughout the New Testament we find statements warning Christians about the possibility of their conduct leading to their losing their soul. Are we to view these statements as merely hypothetical situations with no real possibility of occurrence? If this is the case, then why are they in the Bible at all?

In First Corinthians 9:27, Paul recognizes that it was possible for him to fall from grace when he writes: "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified."

In the context Paul is comparing the Christian life to a race. Those who involve themselves in athletics must practice self-control in order to maintain top physical condition. Paul says that he also must control his appetites lest he be rejected by God.

In First Corinthians 10:12, Paul again warns, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall"

The Christian who becomes so self-assured that he

could never fall away is just the one, Paul says, most likely to fall away.

In Hebrews 3:12 the Bible warns, "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God."

I find this one of the most difficult passages in the word of God to reconcile with the idea that it is impossible for a child of God to be lost. The book of Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians who were considering returning to their former religion because of the persecution they were enduring since their conversion. First, is this passage referring to Christians? Undoubtedly it is as it speaks of them as "brethren." What sin were they in danger of committing? Well, they are warned against having an "evil heart of unbelief." If they become unbelievers what will their status be as far as God is concerned? They will have "departed from the living God." Can one depart from God and still be saved? I don't see how.

## The Harvesters

Published Monthly  
Florida School of Preaching  
1807 South Florida Avenue  
Lakeland, Florida 33803  
(941) 683-4043

Editor: Jackie M. Stearsman

### Board of Directors

Gordon Methvin, President	Carl Faltes
Paul Thornhill, Vice President	George K. French
J. H. Blackman, Jr., Secretary	Allen Gardner
E. Robert McAnally, Treasurer	Dick Meehling, Jr.
B. C. Carr, Director Emeritus	Samuel J. Roney
Oleyn Burgess	Dale Spung
Elmer Burgett	David Spurlock
Jack C. Cronk	Gene Stibwell
Maruice Davis	Jackie M. Stearsman

TRAINING PREACHERS SINCE 1969

## Reason Three:

### Example

The Bible also gives us an example of a person falling from grace. In Galatians 2:11 Paul says that he, "withstood" Peter "to his face, because he was to be blamed." To say Peter "was to be blamed" is a very kind translation. The American Standard Version says "he stood condemned." This is the same word Jesus used in Mark 16:16 when he said, "He who does not believe will be condemned." When Jesus said unbelievers stood condemned I think most would agree that it means they would be lost. When Paul said Peter stood condemned what reason is there for believing it meant something different than when Jesus used the term?

## Reason Four:

### Direct Statement

The final line of evidence I present to you concerning the possibility of the child of God falling from grace is that of direct statement. In Galatians 5:4 the Bible says: "You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by the law; you have fallen from grace."

The reference is to Jewish Christians who were attempting to mix their Jewish religious heritage with Christianity. Paul tells them that in doing such they are "estranged from Christ." The American Standard Version says they are "severed from

Christ." And they are plainly told that should they leave Jesus for Judaism they have "fallen away from grace."

If God wanted to say it is possible to fall from grace I do not know what else he could have said to get that message across.

## Conclusion

Finally, friends, I would like to point-out the only verse in the Bible that really mentions the impossibility of a Christian falling from grace. The place is Second Peter 1:10, where Peter writes: "Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble."

There it is, beloved. Peter tells us how a Christian may insure his never falling away, never stumbling. But what Peter tells us is a far cry from the once saved always saved doctrine we hear taught in the religious world. Peter says if you want to make sure you never stumble then you must give the more diligence and do these things. Never falling from grace, according to Peter, requires effort on the part of the Christian to "do these things."

(GENE BURGETT is the preacher for the church in High Springs Florida. He is a graduate of the Florida School of Preaching and an instructor of Florida School of Preaching. We want our readers to become familiar with our teaching staff. We are proud of them and believe you will appreciate them more when you read materials written by them., Editor).

*Salvation by Grace, Foundations of Baptist Heritage* is a Pamphlet written by Doyle L. Young. The Pamphlet states that Mr. Young is assistant professor of church history, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Wroth, Texas. The Pamphlet is Copyrighted 1989 and published by The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Lynn E. May, Jr., Executive Director, 901 Commerce Street, Suite 400, Nashville, Tennessee 37203-3620.

The following quotations are from the section entitled "Can A Person Lose Salvation?"

*"In England and America, . . . Particular Baptist emphasized perseverance of the saints, that believers cannot fall from grace and become lost again.*

*"In the First London Confession of 1644, Particular Baptists in London asserted that one who is truly a Christian can never finally or totally fall away. His salvation will be sustained by the power of God. This doctrine was expounded upon in the influential Second London Confession of 1677 and 1688.*

*"In America, the 1742 Philadelphia Confession exerted tremendous influence among Baptists in the 1700's. By 1800, the majority of Baptist in America believed in the perseverance of the saints.*

*". . . Moreover, when New Hampshire Baptists moderated their Calvinistic views in their confession of faith of 1833, they retained the Calvinistic idea of perseverance."*

This Pamphlet is quoted to show that there are those who differ with the position that Gene is affirming. It is hoped that honest souls will consider both statements in view of what their Bible teaches and abide with the teaching of the Bible. Editor

## Editorial Reflections

In the previous pages, Gene presented principles that apply to Creeds, Disciplines, Manuals, Prayer Books and/or Documents designed to regulate religious activities.

The Bible has these words that must be considered: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good; abstain from every form of evil" (I Thess. 5:21-22). "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9).

Please reflect upon the following observations made by respected Church History Texts. These are not written by members of the churches of Christ.

"A creed is a statement of faith for public use; it contains articles needful for salvation and the theological well-being of the church. Creeds have been used to test orthodoxy, to recognize fellow believers and to serve as a convenient summary of the essential doctrines of faith. . . . Denominational creeds appeared during the Reformation period. Conciliar or universal creeds made by representatives of the whole church emerged during the period of theological controversy between 313 and 451" (Earl L. Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries* [Second revised edition, 28th printing, 1982], p. 117).

Creeds "still shape and regulate the theological thinking and public teaching of the churches of Christendom. They keep alive sectarian strifes and antagonisms, . . ." (Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, I, p. 4).

Who can deny what these men have written? We must have a standard to evaluate any given Creed. Is a given Creed good or bad? Where may we find an

objective standard? No Creed can stand alone. If a Creed is more than the Bible it is too much. If a Creed is less than the Bible it is not enough. If a Creed contains only the Bible (and none do) it is not needed, because it would be a mere duplication of the Bible.

### Exhortation and Affirmation

If it is the case that the Bible is the word of God, and it is; and if it is the case that, being the word of God, it is perfect, complete, and all-sufficient to furnish men unto every good work, and it is; and if it is the case that the Bible can be understood, and it is (Eph. 3:3-4; 5:17); and if it is the case that the Bible can be obeyed, and it is (Rom. 2:8; II Thess. 1:8-10); and if it is the case that a component part of the teaching of the Bible is to oppose that which contradicts the Bible (religious error), and it is (Jude 3; Eph. 5:11); and if it is the case that Christianity existed before the religious creeds of uninspired men, and it is (see the New Testament); and if it is the case that some creeds teach religious error, and it is; and if it is the case that no creed teaches all religious truth, and it is; and if it is the case that no creed or group of creeds originated by man is sufficient to unite men under the banner of Christ, and it is; and if it is the case that creeds contribute to religious division and often hinder a return to the Bible for study and interpretation, and it is; and if it is the case that religious division (which is the product of creeds) is condemned in every book of the New Testament, and it is; **THEN**, for the sake of Biblical truth and Biblical unity, and the God of the Bible, men ought to reject the religious creeds of men, and return to the study and application of the Bible for justification of all religious action.

## FLORIDA SCHOOL OF PREACHING

1807 SOUTH FLORIDA AVENUE  
LAKELAND, FLORIDA 33803-2653  
PHONE (941) 683-4043 (800) 320-9780  
FAX: 941-683-0750  
E-MAIL: fsop@gte.net  
WEB SITE: <http://chdi.com/fsop/>

Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Lakeland, FL  
PERMIT #235

*Return Service Requested*