

THE POSSIBILITY OF APOSTASY: FALLING FROM GRACE

I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. No Other Doctrine Is More Clearly Set Forth In The Scriptures Than The Possibility Of Apostasy.
- B. The Question Is, "Is It POSSIBLE For A Person, After Becoming A Child Of God, To So Sin As To Be Eternally Lost?"
- C. No More Fearful Question Can Be Considered, And The Answer Should Be Treated As A Personal Exhortation Rather Than A Theological Argument.
 1. Using these scriptures merely for argumentation, "takes the edge off" these alarming admonitions and makes them ineffectual in our own lives.
 2. Using these scriptures merely for argumentation might cause us to become less vigilant than the advocates of the impossibility of apostasy!

II. AIM.

- A. To Show That Jesus And All The Inspired Writers Of The Epistles To Christians Warned Against The Possibility Of Apostasy.
- B. To Deal With Scriptures Concerning The Subject Of Having Eternal Life And Those Which Warn Against Apostasy, Which May Appear To Be Contradictory.

III. OUTLINE.

- A. JESUS AND ALL THE INSPIRED WRITERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT EPISTLES TO CHRISTIANS, WARNED OF THE POSSIBILITY OF APOSTASY.
 1. Jesus warned that it is possible for some to fall away and be eternally lost.
 - a. Parable of the sower or soils. (*Matt. 13: 3-9, 18-23; Mark 4:14-20; Luke 8:4-15*)
 - 1) Some received the word with joy, but in time of tribulation or persecution fell

away. (Matt. 13:20-21; Mark 4:16-17;
Luke 8:13)

2) Some became unfruitful because of "worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the desire for other things." (N.I.V.) (Mark 4:19; Matt. 13:22)

b. In the parable of the tares, Jesus taught that in the end He will gather evildoers out of His Kingdom. (Matt. 13:40-43)

c. In the parable of the dragnet, Jesus taught that "every kind" will be gathered into the net, or kingdom, but in the end He will sever the wicked from among the just. (Matt. 13:47-50)

d. In the parable of the unmerciful servant, Jesus taught that some who had been forgiven much were cast out because of their unwillingness to forgive others. (Matt. 18:23-34)

e. In the parable of the talents, Jesus taught that His own unprofitable servant is to be cast into outer darkness. (Matt. 25:14-30)

f. Jesus used the conditional IF in teaching on the security of the believer. (John 15:6)

2. Paul warned of the possibility of some falling away and being lost.

a. Paul used the following examples:

1) Paul used himself as an example of the possibility of apostasy. (1 Cor. 9:27)

2) Paul used some of his coworkers as examples of apostasy.

a) Hymenaeus and Alexander. (1 Tim. 1:19-20)

b) Demas. (2 Tim. 4:10)

3) Paul used God's chosen people as an example of the possibility of apostasy.

a) Even though the Israelites were God's chosen people - figuratively baptized unto Moses, miraculously fed by God -

some were overthrown in the wilderness. (1 Cor. 10:1-11)

(1) God's chosen people did not have God's unconditional blessing. (Deut. 11:26-28; 28:1, 15)

(2) The entire history of God's dealing with His people gives a permanent record to substantiate the fact that only obedient children of God remain in God's favor.

b) Paul used Israel as an example to issue a solemn warning to Christians against the foolish assumption that because we have been baptized our salvation is therefore eternally secure. (1 Cor. 10:11-12)

b. Paul specified some causes of apostasy:

1) Love of money. (1 Tim. 6:9-10)

2) False doctrine. (1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 2:18; 4:3-4)

3) Seeking justification under the old law. (Gal. 5:4)

4) Careless use of Christian liberty can cause others to fall. (Rom. 14:15, 23; 1 Cor. 8:9-13)

5) Sowing to the flesh (Gal. 6:8), living after the flesh (Rom. 8:6, 12-13), and serving sin. (Rom. 6:16-19)

c. Paul used the conditional *IF* in teaching on eternal security.

1) *IF* we put to death the deeds of the body. (Rom. 8:13)

2) *IF* we hold firmly to the word. (1 Cor. 15:1-2)

3) *IF* we continue in the faith. (Col. 1:23)

4) *IF* we faint not. (Gal. 6:9)

3. The Hebrew writer warned of the possibility of some falling away and being eternally lost.

- a. God's dealing with Israel under the old covenant is used to illustrate our fearful position in neglecting or turning from the great salvation we have in Christ. (*Heb. 2:1-3; 3:12-19; 4:1, 11; 12:25*)
 - b. Emphatic warnings against apostasy. (*Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26-29*)
 - c. The Hebrew writer used the conditional *IF*:
 - 1) *IF* we hold fast until the end. (*Heb. 3:6, 14*)
 - 2) *IF* we draw back - destroyed. (*Heb. 10:38-39*)
4. James warned of the possibility of some falling away and being eternally lost:
- a. James taught that continued friendship with the world makes the Christian an enemy of God. (*James 4:4-10*)
 - b. James taught that an erring brother recovered from sin is a soul saved from death. (*James 5:19-20*)
5. Peter warned that it is possible for some to fall away and be eternally lost.
- a. Peter used the following examples:
 - 1) God spared not the angels that sinned. (*2 Pet. 2:4*)
 - 2) God spared not the old world, but saved Noah. (*2 Pet. 2:5*)
 - 3) God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, but saved Lot. (*2 Pet. 2:6-9*)
 - b. Peter gave a graphic description of the state of the apostate. (*2 Pet. 2:20-22*)
 - c. Peter warned his beloved brethren not to fall. (*2 Pet. 3:17*)
 - d. Peter used the conditional *IF* in teaching eternal security. (*2 Pet. 1:10-11*)

6. John warned that it is possible for some to fall away and be eternally lost.

a. John taught that we must abide in the doctrine of Christ or lose both the Father and the Son. (2 John 9)

b. John used the conditional *IF*. (1 John 2:24)

7. Jude warned that it is possible for some to fall away and be eternally lost.

a. Jude used the following examples:

1) The Lord having saved His people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who disobeyed. (*ver. 5*)

2) Angels who sinned are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment. (*ver. 6*)

3) Sodom and Gomorrah suffered the vengeance of eternal fire. (*ver. 7*)

4) There were some living among them who were following the disobedient ways of self-righteous Cain, greedy Balaam, and presumptuous Korah. (*vs. 10-11*)

b. Jude exhorted them (us) to build themselves (ourselves) in the love of God. (*vs. 20-21*)

B. DO THESE INSPIRED WRITERS CONTRADICT THEMSELVES?

1. Does Jesus teach in *John 5:24* that the believer is in actual possession of eternal life and cannot lose it, thus contradicting A., 1., above?

a. The Greek verb in this passage is in the present tense.

1) Continued action, or a state of incompleteness, is denoted by the present tense.

2) The action of the verb is shown in progress, as "going on."

3) The believer is in the process of having eternal life - the keeping it until death, is conditional upon continued faithfulness.

b. Paul said in *Titus 1:2*, that he was "in hope of eternal life..."

- 1) A man does not hope for that which he already has (*Rom. 8:24-25*),
- 2) But Paul hoped for eternal life.
- 3) Therefore Paul was not, at the time he wrote, in actual possession of eternal life.

c. If life eternal is not a present possession, in what sense do we have it here?

- 1) In *1 John 1:2*, Christ is called "eternal life."
- 2) If we are in Christ, then we have life in the Son. (*1 John 5:12; Col. 1:27*)
- 3) The abiding in the Son (life), however, is conditional. (*1 John 2:24*)
- 4) Unless we abide in Him and He in us, we lose "life." (*1 John 5:12*)
- 5) In losing "life," we cut ourselves off from that eternal life of *1 John 1:2*. (*cf. John 15:6*)

IV. CONCLUSION.

A. It Is God's Desire That Man Should Have Eternal Life. (*John 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:9*)

B. God Has Made Eternal Life Possible For All Through His Son Jesus. (*John 3:16; 10:10*)

C. Obtaining And Retaining The Life Provided By God Is Conditional Upon Man's Attitude And Obedience To His Commandments, As Seen In The Warnings Of This Lesson.