

CAN A CHRISTIAN FALL FROM GRACE?

INTRODUCTION:

1. Tonight our study concerns a most interesting question: Can a Christian, a child of God, fall from grace?
 - a) Many in the religious world are being taught that once one becomes a Christian it is impossible for him to sin so as to be lost.
 - b) Some refer to this idea as the impossibility of apostasy or as "once saved always saved."
2. Start by quoting from a statement by Sam Morris, an "old-time" Baptist preacher and debater:
 - a) "The sin question is a Son question; salvation is a trust question; damnation is a disbelief question. All the prayers a man may pray, all the Bible he may read, all the churches he may belong to, all the services he may attend, all the sermons he may practice, all the debts he may pay, all the ordinances he may observe, all the laws he may keep, all the benevolent acts he may perform will not make his soul one whit safer; AND, all the sins he may commit, FROM IDOLATRY TO MURDER, will not make his soul in any more danger. The justification of the human soul is through the atonement of Christ and not through the efforts of man. The way a man lives has nothing whatsoever to do with the salvation of his soul."
 - b) What Mr. Morris has set forth in this writing is a very clear expression of the idea that it is impossible for a child of God, one who has been saved from the guilt of sin by the blood of Christ, to sin in such a way as to be eternally lost.
3. Is that what the Bible teaches? Is it really true that one may, after becoming a Christian, embrace idolatry and commit the act of murder and still be acceptable to God and be saved in that condition? Is it true that the way a man lives has nothing whatsoever to do with the salvation of his soul?
4. These are the things I want to look at tonight. OUR PURPOSE in this study is NOT just to keep you from believing what I believe is a false doctrine, **but to help us all to keep from LIVING LIKE WE BELIEVE IT!**

With a positive stance from the very outset, I want to affirm for your consideration, that---

I. THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT IT IS POSSIBLE FOR A CHRISTIAN TO FALL FROM GRACE!

- A. I challenge you to have any other understanding of Paul's statement to Titus than that the GRACE OF GOD presents a STANDARD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS TO WHICH WE MUST SUBSCRIBE, or be found unacceptable in the sight of God! Tit.2:11-12- *"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."*
 1. While "our thoughts" do not establish the determination, **does this even sound as if** God's grace allows one to live a life fraught with immoralities and still be acceptable? **OR**, does God's grace teach us that we must deny ungodly activities WHILE WE SUBSCRIBE TO A MANNER OF LIFE that is sober and righteous and godly?
 2. What selection and order of inspired words could the Lord have used to indicate that the way a man lives does indeed have something to do with the salvation of his soul, **if these don't do it?**
- B. *"It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. 2) Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. 3) And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. 4) You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace." Gal.5:1-4.*
 1. These Galatian Christians were commanded to stand fast in the liberty by which Christ had made them free and not fall back into sinful condition they knew under the law of Moses.

2. As a matter of fact, Paul told his readers that **if they did go back** and try to keep the law of Moses, then they were indebted to keep the whole law, and therefore they would have fallen from grace.
 3. Is the apostle saying that the way these people chose to live had nothing whatsoever to do with the salvation of their souls? **Certainly not!**
- C. Again, from an inspired writer: "For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5) and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6) **AND THEN HAVE FALLEN AWAY**, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame." **Heb.6:4-6.**
1. No more perceptible words could be used to describe the condition of a child of God than the words of **verses 4-5.**
 2. The inspired writer speaks of those once "enlightened," those who have "tasted the heavenly gift," those who have "been made partakers of the Holy Spirit," etc.
 3. These words describe a Christian. And the phrase "**If they fall away**" is concluded by saying that by falling away they "**crucify the Son of God afresh.**"
 4. How serious is it to crucify and shame the Son of God? Is it serious enough that one may lose his soul over it?
- D. The Bible very plainly reveals individuals to us who actually did fall from grace.
1. In **Acts 8** we are introduced to a man by the name of Simon, a sorcerer who had deceived the people in Samaria into believing that he had extraordinary powers.
 2. But when Philip came down to Samaria and preached the gospel to them, Simon was among those who believed and was baptized, and like Jesus said in the commission, **HE WAS SAVED!**
 3. **Mk.16:16.** Since Simon believed and was baptized the only conclusion we can come to is that he was saved.
 4. Later, the apostles Peter and John arrived in Samaria to lay hands on the Christians so they could have miraculous gifts.
 5. When Simon saw the power they had, he tried to buy the ability to pass on gifts from the apostles in **Acts 8:18-19**, but notice the response of the apostles: "*But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! 21) "You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. 22) "Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. 23) "For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity."* **Acts 8:20-23**
 6. If one is in the **gall of bitterness** and the **bond of iniquity**, **SPIRITUALLY**, does he stand justified before God?
 7. Simon was a saved person, a child of God, but he sinned and stood condemned.
 8. All of this clearly shows that a child of God can fall from the grace of God and thereby place his eternal soul in jeopardy.

II. CONSIDER THIS: IF A CHILD OF GOD, ONCE SAVED, CAN DO NOTHING TO BE LOST, THEN THERE IS LITTLE MOTIVATION FOR LIVING AS THE GRACE OF GOD TEACHES US TO LIVE.

- A. As we read earlier from **Titus 2:11-12**, "...the grace of God teaches us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."
1. Now suppose one who is a Christian, a recipient of the grace and mercy of God, decides to live an ungodly life?
 2. Suppose he decides that he will participate in the sin of adultery, and then lying about it!

3. Some say this person will be saved, but his reward will not be as great as one who chooses to live a godly life.
 4. But listen to what Paul wrote in **Romans 1:18**: *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness."*
 5. Does the phrase *"all ungodliness and unrighteousness"* exclude that which is participated in by one who is a Christian?
 6. This would have to be the case if the teaching of once saved always saved is true, yet the Bible uses the word "all" in this passage, and all excludes none.
- B. The Bible is equally clear in the statement concerning adultery and numerous other works of the flesh in **Galatians 5:19-21**.
1. And in **verse 21** Paul declares that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.
 2. Does that exclude the Christian who chooses to involve himself in these sins?
- C. When Paul wrote to Christians in Corinth he spoke of their past in **1 Cor.6:9-11**- *"Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10) nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. 11) **Such were some of you**; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."*
1. Notice in particular the phrase *"such were some of you."*
 2. Does this not imply that these Christians were no longer participating in the sins in which they had participated before they had become Christians?
 3. Would they have fallen from grace and lost the hope of inheriting the kingdom of God if they returned to the practice of these sins? ABSOLUTELY!
- D. One's actions before God do have something to do with his salvation.
1. Notice the word "if" in **1 John 1:7**: *"But **IF** we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."*
 2. What if we refuse to walk in the light? Then His blood does not continue to cleanse us of our sins.
 3. Notice **John 15:6**: *"If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."*
 4. Is it possible for a man to **NOT ABIDE IN CHRIST**? Obviously, it IS, and if one does not abide in Christ he is cast forth as a branch. **Rom.11:22**- *"Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off."*

III. WHERE DID A DOCTRINE LIKE THIS ORIGINATE?

- A. This false doctrine came into its greatest prominence through a man by the name of John Calvin, who lived from 1509 to 1564. John Calvin had 5 major points of his doctrine. (T.U.L.I.P.)
1. The first major teaching of Calvin fits the "T" -- Total hereditary depravity -- teaching that infants are born into the world totally depraved.
 - a) He believed that infants are *wholly removed from good and totally inclined to do evil*.
 - b) He believed that infants are sinners before God because *they inherited the sin of Adam*.
 2. The second major teaching of Calvin fits the "U" -- Unconditional election -- He believed that God has elected certain individuals to be saved and others to be lost, regardless of any response to the gospel or efforts the individual might make **TO DO THE WILL OF GOD**.
 - a) His idea was that the **NUMBER** of **THE LOST AND THE SAVED** is so **SET AND DEFINITE** that it can **NEVER BE INCREASED OR DIMINISHED**.

- b) He believed that if you are a part of the saved or the elect, then there is nothing you can do to be lost; and if you are a part of the lost, non-elect, then there is nothing you can do to be saved.
- c) He taught there was no choice for man in the matter of his salvation. [Calvin's forced interpretation of verses like **Isa.55:6-7**- *"Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near. 7) Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon."*
- 3. The third major teaching of Calvin fits the "L" -- Limited atonement -- This is the idea that Jesus Christ died only for those individuals who are the elect.
- 4. The fourth major teaching of Calvin fits the "I" -- Irresistible grace.
 - a) Calvin believed that since man is born into this world as a sinner and is wholly inclined to do evil, that it is necessary for the Holy Spirit to come miraculously upon him and remove his old sinful nature and give him a new heart so he can be saved, if he is a part of the elect.
 - b) When this occurs, according to Calvin, the person is saved.
- 5. And the fifth major teaching is the one we have been dealing with and fits the "P" -- Perseverance of the saints.
- B. As one studies the five cardinal doctrines of Calvinism he can see that they logically go together and depend upon one another. If one disproves any one of the five, he has broken the chain and they all go down together.
 - 1. Now think with me for a moment of the consequences of accepting these.
 - 2. If they are true, man is little more than a machine, dependent completely upon God for his obedience, and therefore cannot choose to be saved or lost.
 - 3. So, if you are lost, you can blame God.
 - 4. Doesn't that completely ignore **2 Pet.3:9**: *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."*
 - 5. And further, why waste time following the command of Jesus to evangelize the world if they will not be saved regardless of the response they make?
- C. What about the doctrine of total depravity?
 - 1. If one is TOTALLY depraved, then he is as depraved AS MUCH AS he can possibly be.
 - 2. If one believes this error, then he needs to explain what the Bible means in **2 Timothy 3:13** where it speaks of wicked men waxing worse and worse.
 - 3. If one is born just as depraved as he can be, then how can he get any worse?
 - 4. The most common phrase used to support this doctrine is **Psalm 51:5**.
 - a) But look closely at this passage. David was talking about the **condition of his mother** at the time of his conception, NOT that HE was born a SINNER!
 - b) Unless you are reading a perverted translation, David says *"in sin did my mother conceive me."*
 - c) David was the tenth generation from Pharez, who was an illegitimate child.
 - d) The law of Moses prohibited the descendants of those like Pharez from entering into the congregation of the Lord unto the tenth generation. **Deut.23:2**- *"No one of illegitimate birth shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of his descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall enter the assembly of the LORD."*
 - e) It could be that this is what David was referring to in this verse – we don't really know!
 - f) But regardless if it is this or something else, it is still evident that David is referring to the **condition of his mother** at the time of his conception rather than to his own spiritual condition as an infant.
 - 5. Sin is not something inherited from Adam or anyone else.

- a) In **1 John 3:4** we are told that *sin is a transgression of the law*.
- b) What sin is there that can be inherited? Adultery? Murder?
- c) **Ezekiel 18:20** *clearly shows that man doesn't inherit sin: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."*
- d) Each of us is responsible and accountable for our own actions.

CONCLUSION:

1. We could deal with the other doctrines of Calvin which are upheld in denominationalism, but we do not have the time in this lesson, but they have all fallen by showing these two false.
2. God made man a free moral agent. **Rom.6:16-** *"Do you not know that **when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?"***
3. The choice belongs to each of us as individuals.
4. God wants all men to be saved, and Jesus invites all who will to come. **2 Pet.3:9; Mt.11:28-30.**
5. If anyone is lost it will not be because he could not be saved, but rather because he would not.
6. WE are masters of our own eternal destiny! WE have the power of the person religious choice as to whether we're going to serve God. Tonight, I hope that you will choose to obey God.