

# The Danger of Losing Salvation

by Charles Ewing Brown

*Charles Ewing Brown preaches about the importance of finding a balance between timidity and self-confidence in the Christian faith. He emphasizes that the only way to keep from falling away is to keep from sinning, as sin leads to separation from God. Brown uses various Old and New Testament passages to illustrate that Christians can indeed fall away into sin and be lost forever if they do not repent and return to a life of obedience and faith.*

## Description

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## Transcript

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 true oneLinerSummary: "The sermon warns that Christians can lose their salvation through sin and emphasizes the importance of obedience to God." sermonType: "topical" topics: - name: "Perseverance Of Faith" slug: "perseverance-of-faith" - name: "Repentance And Obedience" slug: "repentance-and-obedience" bibleRefs: - text: "Ezekiel 18:24" bookId: "EZK" chapter: "18" verse: "24" outline: - heading: "I" points: - "Introduction to the debate on eternal security" - "The dangers of complacency" - "The necessity of adhering to the Word of God" - heading: "II" points: - "The relationship between sin and falling away" - "Scriptural evidence from the Old Testament" - "The consequences of forsaking God" - heading: "III" points: - "New Testament teachings on falling from grace" - "Warnings from the Book of Hebrews" - "The implications of apostasy" - heading: "IV" points: - "Examples of biblical figures who fell away" - "The case of Judas Iscariot" - "Lessons from the Israelites in the wilderness" - heading: "V" points: - "The importance of diligence in faith" - "The role of obedience in maintaining salvation" - "Final thoughts on the nature of true righteousness" faq: - q: "Can a Christian lose their salvation?" a: "Yes, the sermon argues that Christians can fall away through sin and disobedience." - q: "What does the Bible say about eternal security?" a: "The Bible warns that those who forsake God or live in disobedience risk being cast off forever." - q: "What examples are given of apostasy?" a: "Examples include Judas Iscariot, King Saul, and the Israelites who fell in the wilderness." - q: "How can one ensure they do not fall away?" a: "By living in obedience and making one's calling and election sure through diligent faith." - q: "What is the

significance of Hebrews in this discussion?" a: "Hebrews provides solemn warnings that imply believers can fall away and lose their salvation." quotes: - "To sin is to fall away from God." - "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered." - "It would have been better for them never to have been converted." applicationPoints: - "Stay vigilant in your faith to avoid complacency." - "Regularly examine your life for areas of disobedience." - "Commit to living in accordance with God's Word to ensure your salvation." keywords: - "salvation" - "apostasy" - "eternal security" - "obedience" - "disobedience" - "Scripture" - "warnings" - "faith" ---

There are those who tell us that a Christian once saved can never fall away. Over the radio, through the press, and from the pulpit we hear it repeated thousands of times that Christians are eternally secure, that they cannot fall away if ever they have been truly converted. Now, it is a bad thing to be too timid and fearful. Christians should not live under such a bondage, but all our experience shows that it is also a bad thing to be too self-confident. Complacency is a dangerous attitude in a time of warfare such as we always have with Satan. Somewhere we as Christians must find a safe place between these two extremes. That place is in the written Word of God. There we learn that we can indeed keep from falling, but only in one way.

The Word of God teaches plainly that the only way to keep from falling is to keep from sinning. On the very face of it, this assertion seems so plain that we cannot see how anyone could possibly deny it. To sin is to fall away from God. There are no means by which anyone ever did fall away from God except through sin. I Chronicles 28:9 reads: "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever." This text shows plainly that no one can be secure if he forsakes God. Even though that person were accepted of God, he will, when he forsakes God, be cast off forever unless he repents.

The Scriptures plainly teach that the righteous may fall away into sin and be lost forever. "But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live?" Here is a question for those who believe that eternal security is possible for a soul living in disobedience. In the same verse the prophet answers his own question: "All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die" (Ezek. 18:24).

Observe closely that there is no promise of some kind of compulsory repentance overtaking this man. He will die in his sin if he proves stubborn. This text seems to be written especially for believers in final perseverance in order to show them the error of their way. The reply is sometimes made that this is the self-righteousness of professed Christians and not true righteousness, but it is certainly true righteousness from which the man in question turns. In the first place, it is a righteousness which would save him if he continued in it, because we read in the twenty-second verse of the same chapter: "In his righteousness that he hath done he shall live." Therefore, it is not self-righteousness but true righteousness, a righteousness unto life and not unto death.

Moreover, it is impossible to turn from self-righteousness to iniquity, for the simple reason that self-righteousness is iniquity in and of itself. It is impossible to turn from dishonesty to thievery because thievery is dishonesty, and by the same rule one cannot turn from self-righteousness to iniquity because self-righteousness is iniquity.

Furthermore, if the righteousness here mentioned were self-righteousness and not true righteousness, then turning from this self-righteousness would be a real reformation and, as such, would be worthy of reward and not of death.

The whole thirty-third chapter of Ezekiel is a God-inspired sermon against the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints; that is, against the doctrine that the saints will be saved even if they enter upon a life of disobedience. We read: "When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it" (vs. 13). We see here that God distinguishes very carefully between man's own self-righteousness and true righteousness, and the Word says that if man trust in his own righteousness, then his true righteousness will not be remembered.

Ezekiel says that man will die in his trespass and in his sins that he hath sinned (18:24); and that he will die for his iniquities (33:13). That is, he dies in his iniquity and he dies for his iniquity.

## NEW TESTAMENT TEACHINGS

The solemn prophetic message of Ezekiel is by no means the only teaching of the Old Testament on this subject, but for the sake of brevity let us turn to the New Testament. In the Gospel of John (15:4-6) we read: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. 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."

Here the Lord Jesus teaches that individual Christians are the branches of the vine of Christ. He says, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered." Each of these branches is a member equal with every other member of the body of Christ and an inheritor of the grace of salvation. One is as fully saved as another; each has an equal claim to the hope of eternal security. But some of these branches fail to bring forth fruit. They cease to abide in Christ, and by that act of disobedience and sin they are cut off and withered. There is no promise that they will be grafted back into the holy vine in the future before they die. Quite the contrary, it is said plainly that they will be burned and be thus hopelessly lost to the vine forever.

The Scriptures plainly teach that Christians may fall from grace. When the Apostle addressed the churches of Galatia he warned them of this very thing: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (5:4). He did not say that they seem to be fallen, or that he thought they were fallen, but they "ARE fallen from grace."

In the sixth and tenth chapters of Hebrews we read what I think are the most solemn warnings in the New Testament: Many poor souls have been troubled by these stern and solemn warnings and have rushed to the conclusion that they have sinned against the Holy Spirit and can never be saved again. The meaning of the two passages is plain enough when they are properly understood. The Book of Hebrews was addressed to Christians of the Jewish race who were entering into a period of persecutions. They were being pressed on every side to desert the religion of Christ and go back into the religion of their childhood. The Apostle solemnly warned them that to do so is to apostatize from the Christian religion and to put themselves outside any further hope.

The point to remember is, however, that if it were impossible for Christians to fall away, then the warning of the Book of Hebrews would be altogether unnecessary; and if true believers cannot fall away into sin and be lost, then the Book of Hebrews is positively untrue. Of course, we believe that the book is God-inspired and that to say it is untrue is the same as to call God a liar. However, it states positively that believers can fall away. We shall stand by the book, and shall believe that the doctrine is untrue.

Turn to Hebrews 6 and read: "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned" (vss. 4-8).

Notice that here is a case of believers who were once enlightened, who had tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost. They had tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the world to come, and yet it was possible for them to fall away.

Teachers of the final perseverance doctrine claim that these were not real Christians, but I put it up to any fair-minded persons to try to find words which will describe a true Christian more accurately than these foregoing expressions taken from that passage. How can a man be a partaker of the Holy Ghost without being truly saved?

The same doctrine is taught in the tenth chapter as follows: "But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (vss. 27-31).

In this passage the thought is made even more plain, if that is possible. Everything that human language can say to make this point plain is written in this passage. Previously, in verse 19, he has called them "brethren." He also said: "Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (vs. 22). Then he warned them that "if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for a judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (vss. 26-27).

Note carefully that the apostates are those who have trodden under foot the Son of God and have counted the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified an unholy thing. Here are people who have been sanctified and then trod that blood under foot. Though they were once converted and sanctified, such people cannot be saved in an apostate condition; and unless they repent they will perish in hell forever. If these words from Hebrews do not teach this, then human language has no meaning.

We find the same doctrine taught by the Apostle Peter: "He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (II Pet. 1:9-10). Here is an example of a man who was once purged from his old sins and has forgotten that

experience. Now he is blind. Would a person who was spiritually blind and had forgotten that he was ever saved be any kind of Christian at all? We think not. Nevertheless, there is a way to insure eternal security and that is to give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for, "if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." In other words, living in obedience and faith we stand; living in disobedience and unbelief we fall.

Further along in the same epistle Peter emphasizes this lesson: "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbade the madness of the prophet. These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. 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 therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (2:14-21).

Here are persons who were real Christians, because they were in the right way before they went astray. Now they have fallen into final and ruinous apostasy. Having once escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they have become again entangled therein and overcome, and the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. Once they knew the way of righteousness, and now they have turned from the holy commandment delivered unto them. It would have been better for them never to have been converted; though they were once in the right way, now there is reserved for them the mists of darkness forever. Surely, in the face of these solemn warnings it is impossible longer to believe that Christians cannot fall away into sin and apostasy and be lost forever.

#### EXAMPLES OF FINAL APOSTASY

The Scriptures abound with examples of those who fell away from the grace of God into hopeless apostasy and an eternally lost condition. First of all, we read of the angels who were created holy by God's hand but fell away into sin through disobedience. The Apostle Peter tells us the story: "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (II Pet. 2:4).

Eve, the mother of all living, was created holy, without sin, but she fell into transgression. The Apostle Paul warns the Corinthian brethren against apostasy by her example. He said: "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (II Cor. 11:3). The children of Israel who came out of Egypt were all godly, as described by the Apostle Paul: "And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" (I Cor. 10:2-4). These verses show that these people were saved at the time. They drank of the spiritual rock; and they ate the spiritual meat. The Apostle continues: "But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye

idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (vss. 5-12). Here the Apostle shows that although they were all partakers of the spiritual drink of Christ, nevertheless many of them fell into sin and were punished by death while in an apostate state.

In I Samuel 10:6 we read concerning Saul: "The Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man." Here we see a man who was turned into another man by the Spirit of God, and yet we read in I Samuel 16:14 how this same man apostatized and went away into hopeless sin and rebellion against God: "The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him." Here we see plainly where the Spirit of God deserted him. And why did it desert him? For the same reason that it will desert any Christian who trifles with God and goes into sin. (Read also I Samuel 15:19.) "Thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel" (vs. 26).

In I Kings 11:4 are these words: "It came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father." Here we see how Solomon, the wisest of men, became an apostate through unbelief and disobedience.

While we recognize that the mode of salvation under the Old Testament was different from that under the New, we have not felt it necessary to go into that part, as the essential principle of apostasy through disobedience holds true in both; and that is the point we wish to emphasize.

We find one of the most striking of all apostates mentioned in Acts 1:17: "He was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry." It was Judas who was here said to have obtained part of the holy ministry of Christ. Many people say that Judas was never saved. In saying this they deny flatly the plain statement of the Word of God: "That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place" (Acts 1:25). Here we see plainly that Judas fell from his ministry and apostleship, and if one of the apostles of Jesus Christ could fall, there is no minister living today who cannot also fall through unbelief and sin.

In I Timothy 1:19-20 we read: "Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme." Here we see that Hymenaeus and Alexander made shipwreck of their faith by putting away faith and a good conscience. If they did that, so will any disobedient Christian today. In Revelation 2:4-5 is this admonition: "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." Here we read of people who have left their first love, have fallen, and must repent and do their first works or have their light extinguished forever.

One of the greatest fallacies of the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints is found in the supposition that a Christian can wander off into sin and still be a Christian, that he can sin and yet not fall.

People who teach this doctrine would shudder at the thought of teaching that it is impossible to sin. But we assert that to say it is impossible to fall away from grace is exactly the same thing as saying that it is impossible to sin, for to sin is to fall, as the Apostle John plainly teaches us in I John 3:8-10: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."

This text does not mean that it is physically impossible for a Christian to sin; it simply means that it is morally impossible for a Christian to sin and remain a Christian in a state of salvation. This is emphasized in I John 5:24: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." If more evidence were needed from the Word of God, it is plainly shown us where the Scriptures teach the possibility of the reclamation of backsliders. In James 5:19-20 we read: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." The Apostle here views the possibility of one of the members of the church, a saved follower of Christ, erring from the truth. If such a calamity befalls, this person should be converted. Before he is reclaimed he is a sinner covered with a multitude of sins and in a state of spiritual death. The Apostle John taught the same truth when he said: "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death" (I John 5:16-17). Here we have an exhortation to pray for the reclamation and restoration of backsliders.

The material available is so abundant that we have been compelled to select only a small part of the possible texts which lie before us. But we feel convinced that these texts have made it perfectly plain that there is eternal security for all believers only in the life of obedience and faith. If they live such a life, nobody, not even Satan, can snatch them out of the Father's hand. But if they fail to live this life of faith and of obedience, they will cut themselves off from the grace of God and, if unrepentant, will perish forever.

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