

## Can A Christian Lose Salvation?

*By Peter Salemi*

***Can A Christian Lose Salvation? Many Mainstream fundamentalist say No! They say it's impossible! A person can no more "work" his way OUT of Salvation, they say, then he can "work" his way into Salvation. But what does the Bible say?***

This doctrine of "eternal security" (commonly known as "once saved always saved") is believed by most fundamentalist, even though a small minority of them do not. But this doctrine seems to be one of the essentials of Protestant Christianity.

They claim that all you have to do is accept Jesus and you are saved. That's it! No matter what you do from that time on, it does not matter what you do, there is no way you can lose salvation. Easier than buying a pair of shoes or going to college, salvation is the easiest thing to obtain. Salvation then, using this kind of thinking is no longer a MATTER OF CHOICE! *But a choice we do have.* God has said, "...I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore *choose life*, that both thou and thy seed may live:" (Deut 30:19). We are free moral agents. If we are once saved, yet then change our minds and do not want to obey God anymore, and go back into the world, *does that mean I am still saved? By my own choice I reject God, want nothing to do with him, then at the resurrection when I stand before the judgment seat of Christ, will God accept me anyways? Is that the way it works? Why does the Bible stress then righteousness, and good deeds? Why did Jesus say, "If thou are to enter into life, KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS" (Matthew 19:17)? And Paul as well, said, "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God" (1 Corinthians 7:19)? Is this doctrine of eternal security valid when put to the test in the scriptures? We will examine that later, but let me first quote what Wilson Ewin says about this doctrine which is believed by Millions, "...the person who places his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and his blood shed at Calvary is eternally secure. He can never lose His salvation. Nor breaking God's or man's Laws or commandments can nullify that status" (There is Therefore Now No Commandment, emphasis added).*

Mr. Ewin did not, when he made this statement take into account the scripture, "the wages of Sin is DEATH" (Romans 6:23). And don't these fire and brimstone preachers preach that all sinners go to hell? "Ah" they say, "Those scriptures are for the unconverted, not the Christian?" Really! Is that what your Bible says about the converted?

### God Has Given Man a Choice

Does God force people to love him? Of course he does not! God will no more force you or me to obey him. If he wanted robots to love him he would have created them. God put into man a human spirit, with free will. God gave us the choice to love and obey, or to hate and disobey. Yes it's God's will to call people. And it's God's will to save people, but it's *your will* to accept his will or reject his will.

When God called Israel out of Egypt, as God said, “Out of Egypt I called my son” (Hosea 12:1). Moses went up into the mountain and God gave him the 10 Commandments to give to Israel. Moses presented the will of God to them, and to make a covenant, with Israel. A Covenant is an agreement between to parties.

Holman’s Bible Dictionary writes under “Covenant,” “*A pact, treaty, alliance, or agreement between two parties of equal or of unequal authority.* The covenant or testament is a central, unifying theme in Scripture, God’s covenants with individuals and the nation Israel finding final fulfillment in the new covenant in Christ Jesus. God’s covenants can be understood by humans because they are modeled on human covenants or treaties” (emphasis added) God offered and Israel HAD TO ACCEPT IT OR REJECT IT! Israel accepted as it says in Exodus 24:3, “And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, *All the words which the LORD hath said will we do.*”

In the New Testament it’s the same thing. God calls us out of the world by his grace, for it is the “goodness [“gracious” Gk. “chrestos” Strong’s #5543-44] of God that leads us to repentance” (Rom 2:14). He presents to us his covenant, the *Renewed* and everlasting Covenant, the same Covenant he presented to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Israel, and we have to ACCEPT IT, OR REJECT IT! If we accept the Covenant, we become “chosen” of God, his people.

God says that he would write the law in our hearts. In Jeremiah 31:31 and Hebrews 8 God says, “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (v.33). How is that done? By the Holy Spirit of God! Romans 8:4 says, “That *the righteousness of the law* might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, *but after the Spirit*...But ye are not in the flesh, *but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.* Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (vv.4, 9). When do we receive the Holy Spirit? At Baptism, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). At baptism, when we are washed of our sins, and bury the old man, and live in newness of life, we, when the minister lay’s on hands and we receive the Holy Spirit, *enter and accept the Covenant that God offers us.* We say, like what Israel said, “All that the lord has said we will do.” The New Covenant when we accept it is sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament, Moses said in Exodus 24, “Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.” (v.8). Jesus says the same thing in the gospels, but this time it was his blood that was shed for the remission of sins. Matthew 26 says, “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” (v.28). Now, if we *willfully by our own choice* accept the covenant and are saved by the grace of God when he calls us and presents to us his covenant. Can we willfully fall from grace and lose Salvation?

### **Lose Salvation through Willful Sin**

The writer of the book of Hebrews said, “For 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 of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries” (Hebrews 10:26). Now first of all, this ***does not mean*** people who are trying to overcome and struggle with sins and temptations. That is an overcoming sinner. And those that do sin, because they cannot overcome,

1 John says, “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... If we *confess our sins*, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our sins, and to cleanse us* from all unrighteousness.” (1:7, 9). John was speaking of himself and fellow Christians saying “us” and “we.”

Now the context in Hebrews is “if we sin willfully.” Meaning, not overcoming, but willfully going back into the world and partaking in the world, going back to the old life, willfully in UNBELIEF! Without repentance! If the sinner continues in this path, and does not repent, then when Christ comes, after the sinner dies, (or is still alive when he comes), and is resurrected, then he is subject to the lake of Fire!

The Apostle Paul clearly told the church of God that sins need to be repented of. 2 Corinthians 12:20-21 says, “For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults:

“And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall *bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.*” Sin must be repented of. But if the person **does not have belief anymore** will he repent? Indeed he will not, but all hope is not lost. God promises the sinner that he will save the sinner. God promised he would not forsake us, nor leave us, the only way to lose it, is, *if the sinner forsakes God*. Yes the Bible says that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, *but that is God’s will, the Christian must be willing* to subject themselves to God’s will as well. IT’S A COVENANT RELATIONSHIP! God will help, but the Bible warns, “Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near” (Isaiah 55:6). This shows that there will be a time when God will not be found—a time when there will be no opportunity to repent. How does that happen? By the hardening of the heart of the Christian. Notice what Jeremiah wrote, “Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, *and I will hearken unto you.*”

“And ye shall *seek me, and find me*, when ye shall search for me with **all your heart**.

“And I will be **found** of you, saith the LORD:” (29:12-14). When we seek God with an open and repentant heart, he will be found. But if we reject, and do not believe in our hearts anymore, ***because our hearts are hardened, then there is a limited time when the door of Salvation will close!***

We must remember God searches the hearts of men. “I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts:” (Rev 2:23). When the heart is hard, and there is no more room to repent, God judges. Like Saul in the book of Samuel. Because his heart was hardened after he received the Holy Spirit, God spoke no more to him, and took the Kingdom of Israel away from him, and gave it to a man after his own heart, David. God was not found when Saul looked for him. “...Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not,” (1 Samuel 28:6). He did not answer because Saul’s heart was hardened. *He was just looking for a way out of his troubles; he had no intention of repenting.*

Now fundamentalists try to explain the passage above in Hebrews that Paul was not speaking of truly converted Christians. But, after receiving the knowledge of the truth and they still do not accept the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The context to which Paul was speaking is very clear. The “we” in chapter 10 verse 26 includes both the writer and the readers of the epistle.

Notice the preceding verses: “Let **us** draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

“Let **us** hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

“And let **us** consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves [Sabbath Assembly] together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”(Heb 10:22-25). The writer clearly does not have unconverted people in view! He is speaking to people who have already experienced baptism and spiritual cleansing. He is speaking to the people of faith to hold on to the faith tenaciously that was once delivered. To God’s New Testament Church!

Notice the author’s use of “us” and related terms: “Let Us draw near...Let us hold fast...let us consider one another...Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves [Sabbath assembly]. Then after all this he says, “For if we [God’s Church] *sin willfully*...there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.” Can there be any doubt that the writer is speaking to truly converted Christians? None whatsoever! The context will allow for no other conclusion.

Now some however say, that the writer said, “If” we sin willfully. They reason that it’s a mere hypothesis, and that it would never really happen to the Christian. Nonsense! What’s the point of saying it, if it was a mere hypothesis?

There are more scriptures that show a Christian can lose salvation.

“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 under foot 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?*” (Hebrews 10:28, 29). Notice it’s the “sanctified” person he is speaking to. The one set apart and forgiven. The one in the COVENANT with God, with the indwelling of Holy Spirit. Clearly a member of God’s church.

To “trodden down” the Son of God means “that people tread on what they *despise and contemn*.” (Barnes Notes). God gives us a choice, to love or hate him. These are people who *willfully turn from God in unbelief and hate God*, these are the ones subject to death for all eternity in the lake of fire unless they repent.

In Hebrews 3 we see the author using the experience of Israel in the Exodus and using it as an example of our pilgrimage here on earth. The “rest” is likened unto the rest we will have with

Jesus in the Kingdom of God. The Promise land is a type of the Kingdom, our inheritance. The wilderness is a type of this life in the wilderness of this world. Notice what he says, “*Harden not your hearts*, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

“When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

“Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.

“*So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.*.)

“Take heed, brethren, ***lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.***

“But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be *hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

“For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;

“While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

“For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.

“But with whom was he grieved forty years? ***was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?***

“***And to whom swear he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?***

“***So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief***” (Hebrews 3:8-19). Their choice to reject God, and sin in his sight, by the hardening of their hearts through sin caused them not to inherit the Promise land. They departed from God. The author warned that what happen to them can happen to us if we do the same thing they did during the time of Moses. The time of the Exodus are “ensamples: and they are written *for our* admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Hebrews 6 shows again willing apostasy from the faith and back into the world, rejecting God, “For 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.” (Hebrews 6:4-8). The apostle Paul is saying here that those who have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling in them, “if they fall away,” they must “repent” and “renew” them again. This does not mean that they should go through the baptismal waters again, and receive the Holy Spirit. No, they are already in the Covenant with God. Like Israel of Old, God sent prophets to them to repent, and return to him. God was not going to write the 10 Commandments on stone once again. What it means is for “a renewing of the exercise of the grace of repentance and to be renewed ‘again’” (John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible). To go back into the grace that God has giving you, the imputing of the righteousness that God gave you through his Holy Spirit.

Another example given by The Apostle Paul is in Romans. He was speaking of the Olive Tree, as a symbol of Israel. He spoke of the branches being “cut off” and warned the church that the same can happen to believers if they go into “unbelief,” “Well; *because of unbelief* they were *broken off*, and thou standest by faith. Be not high minded, but fear:

“For if God *spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.*

“Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, *if thou continue in his goodness*: otherwise thou also shalt be *cut off.*” (Romans 11:20-23). We must continue in the “goodness” of God. Continue in the law of God, which is righteousness. God’s law is Faith, and breaking it *willingly* shows that you do not have faith; your *unbelief will cause you to lose salvation.*

Again, Jesus uses the example of the vine in the Gospel of John. Jesus said, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

“*Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away*: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

“Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

“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***” (John 15:1-6). The Christian must abide in Jesus Christ. “Christ in You.” We must have faith in Jesus Christ with the “Righteousness” he “imputed” to us by the Holy Spirit. That first Commandment in God’s righteousness is, “I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” (Exodus 20:2-3). What is God saying here? He is basically saying to have faith, believe in your Savior Yahweh. And Jesus Christ is the YAHWEH of the OLD TESTAMENT! Notice other scriptures that are tied with the first commandment. “Yet I am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: *for there is no saviour beside me.*” (Hosea 13:4). God himself quotes the first commandment and says he is the Saviour. The first commandment basically says to believe on your saviour and not ON ANY OTHER GODS!

In Deuteronomy 32, God shows that the ***first two commandments are commandments of faith!*** In this chapter he speaks of Israel going into idolatry, and calls them “children in whom is no faith” (v.20). The first two commandments are commandments of faith, in which *we must have faith in our saviour Jesus Christ.*

If we do not, and break these two commands *willingly going back into the world*, we are then not “abiding” in Jesus Christ our saviour, and therefore if we do not repent, Jesus says we are cast into the “fire” and are “burned.” Why? Because we did not produce “fruits.” These fruits are the fruits of “righteousness” (see Philippians 1:11). And what is righteousness? “all thy commandments are righteousness” (Psalm 119:172).

In the book of Revelation, the church of Ephesus was on the verge of doing just that, they have “left thy first love” (Rev 2:4), and Jesus told them to “repent, and do the first works;” (v.5). The Love of God is to keep his commandments, 1 John 5:3. They were breaking the first Commandment in the Law, to love God with all your heart. Jesus told them to do the “first works;” which was to keep that first commandment in the law of God.

The book of James shows the same theme throughout the Bible, that the Christian must stay in the faith or, without repentance suffer the death penalty, for the “wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). He writes, “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” (James 5:19-20). The repentance of the sinner saved him from suffering the death of Gehenna fire! Repentance is needed, of coming back into the faith and obedience of God, with your whole heart and mind, and being, God through his grace will forgive and cleanse you through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Now, one last scripture out of the letter of Peter that makes very clear, what happens to the believers if he goes back into the world and does not repent of his sins. Peter writes, “For if after they have *escaped the pollutions of the world* through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour 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.***

“But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, *The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire*” (2 Peter 2:20-22)

This scripture speaks volumes! Peter says, after escaping the pollutions of this world, meaning after God has saved you from your sins, and you become “entangled” therein once again, meaning, “the pollutions of the world, in worldly lusts, which are as gins, pits and snares.” (Gill’s). **Again, not an overcoming sinner**, but going right back into the pit, into which God saved you out of without repentance!

Now we are “escaped” “through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” Peter says. The word “Knowledge” in the Greek is “epignosis” and it means, “From G1921; *recognition*, that is, (by implication) full *discernment, acknowledgement*: - (ac-) knowledge (-ing, -ment).” (Strong’s # 1922).

This word comes from the Strong’s 1921 number word, “epiginosko” which means, “From G1909 and **G1097**; **to know upon** some mark, that is, *recognise*; by implication to *become fully acquainted with*, to *acknowledge*: - (ac-, have, take) know (-ledge, well), perceive.” (Strong’s # 1921). The Strong’s number 1097 “ginosko” “to know” is used, in 1 John 2:3 that tells us how *we know, acknowledge, and recognize* God, “And hereby we do know that we **know him**, if we *keep his commandments*.” To Know Jesus Christ is *to keep his Commandments*. This is the faith that we must have. Keeping the Commandments of God is showing and demonstrating our faith in God. As James says, “Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, **and I will show thee my faith by my works**.”

“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

“But wilt thou know, O vain man, *that faith without works is dead?*” (James 2;18-20). The devils believe in God BUT TREMBLES because he does not obey, so his FAITH IS DEAD! Keeping the law of God shows your faith is alive and you believe in God by obeying what he says, anything less is a dead faith!

So the apostle Peter is saying in that scripture that we escaped out of the world through the knowledge of God, by obeying him, because he gave us the Holy Spirit, see Romans 8:4, then “entangle” ourselves once again, and “overcome” by them meaning “conquered” (Good News Bible), by sin, the *“latter end is worse with them than the beginning.”* Or, “their last condition is worse than their former one” (International Standard Version). The first condition was subject to the wrath of God, being under the law, but God was willing to give them grace, just like the Christian now. But those who have received the grace, and have rejected it, going back into the world and sinning in their old state, the latter end is worse, because they will be burnt up, and there is NO MORE RESURRECTION! THEIR CHANCE IS OVER!

Notice what Peter says in the next verse, “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.”

Now “all thy commandments are righteousness” (Psalm 119:172). And the “the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (Romans 8:4). So it was better not to receive the way of God, his law, then to have known it, and then turn back to sin, for “sin is the transgression of the law.” (1 John 3:4). This is what Peter is saying when he



said, that they have “*turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.*” It is when we receive the Holy Spirit, that God “imputes” to us HIS righteousness, the faith in our Saviour Jesus Christ. We turn from that, we have no faith.

This Holy Commandment is the first commandment in the Law of God to believe on your Saviour, Yahweh, who is Jesus Christ! Welsley writes, “The commandment - The whole law of God, once not only delivered to their ears, but written in their hearts.” (Explanatory Notes on Whole Bible).

Clarks Commentary says, “The whole religion of Christ is contained in this one commandment, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; [Deuteronomy 6:5] and thy neighbor as thyself. [Leviticus 19:18]’ He who obeys this great commandment, and this by the grace of Christ is possible to every man, is saved from sinning either against his God or against his neighbor. Nothing less than this does the religion of Christ require.”

Thayers Definition of Commandment writes which Commandment it actually is:

“1) an order, command, charge, precept, injunction

1a) that which is prescribed to one by reason of his office

2) a commandment

2a) a prescribed rule in accordance with which a thing is done

2a1) a precept relating to lineage, of the Mosaic precept concerning the priesthood

2a2) *ethically used of the commandments in the Mosaic law or Jewish tradition” (emphasis added).*

The Apostle Peter Makes clear how one can lose one’s salvation, by as Jesus said, by leaving, “thy first love.” (Revelation 2:4). The Love of God, which is keeping his Commandments. The Love of God must be in us, and if we “leave” that first love, Jesus says, “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.” (Rev 2:5). Jesus tells us to repent and do the first works, the works of God, that work that is working in us, by the Holy Spirit, of faith in our Saviour by keeping the Commandments of God.

### **The Third Resurrection.**

Now religions preach that there is a place called hell, where people go to be tortured and tormented forever in a fiery place. This however is NOT a doctrine of the Bible. Ever burning Hell is not in the Bible. God shows that the wicked will be burnt up and become ash, notice Malachi, “For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; *and all the proud, yea, and all*

*that do wickedly, shall be stubble:* and the day that cometh **shall burn them up**, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

“But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

“And ye [the Righteous] shall tread down the wicked; *for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet* in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts.”(Malachi 4:1, 3). This is the fate of the wicked. They are to be consumed and not to exist anymore. God is going to use the agent of fire to do it. The wages of sin is DEATH, *not everlasting life in hell*. When does this happen? The Bible speaks of 3 resurrections. One, the resurrection of the Christians who have been converted and receive the Holy Spirit in this life and have overcome. These, “the second death hath no power,” (Revelation 20:6). The second death is the death that is to take place where the wicked are burned.

The second resurrection is the resurrection of the entire human race who was not saved and receive their *first chance for salvation*. Rev 20:11-12, explains, “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.” It’s their time of Judgment. The house of God, the church is being judged now. This judgment is the judgment of correction. Learning God’s ways and laws. “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:17). It starts at the church of God.

There are two Greek words rendered “condemnation” or “Judgment.” The word “krisis,” translated “condemnation” is judgment, as it is usually translated. This word refers to a process of evaluation rather than an act of punishment. “Krisis” means “the process of investigation, the act of distinguishing and separating, . . . a judging, a passing of judgment upon a person or thing” (W.E. Vine, Vine’s Complete

Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1985, p.119). *Krisis is to be distinguished from krima, which refers to “the sentence pronounced, a verdict, a condemnation, the decision resulting from an investigation” (ibid.).*

Notice the scripture: “”But when **we are judged**, we are **chastened of the Lord**, that we should not **be condemned** [“krima”] with the world” (1 Corinthians 11:32). Notice we are “judged” and “chastened” so we would not be “condemned.” The time of judgment is a time of correction, to correct our ways, God will teach us his way out of his laws. The Old Testament says the same thing in Psalms 94:12 “Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest (**Heb. yacar-correct**), O LORD, and **teachest him out of thy law;**” Habakkuk 1:12 says, “Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O LORD, *thou hast ordained them for*

*judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction.*” This is what the second resurrection is, a time of Judgment or correction.

Now the third resurrection is the time of the unrepentant wicked people who know the truth and refuse to repent and obey God. *“And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were **judged** every man according to their works.*

*“And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.*

*“And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”* (Rev 20:13-15). These people notice, “they were judged” past tense. They received their chance for salvation and rejected it. How do we know? Their names were “not found written in the book of life.” God said to Moses,

*“Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.”* (Exodus 32:33). These were cast into the “lake of fire” and do not exist anymore. This is the second death! The everlasting permanent death. This death, the people in the first resurrection will not be subject to, they will have everlasting life. But the people in the second resurrection, they still, will be subject to it till they overcome, and receive eternal life.

### **What about “Predestination”?**

The doctrine of “irresistible grace” states that human will cannot resist the will of God; therefore, when God draws an individual to Himself, the individual *will* submit. Those who hold this belief say that all the saved, from the time of Adam to the end of the age, were “predestined” to salvation before the world began. Those not chosen for salvation before the foundation of the world cannot be saved, no matter how diligently they seek it. But the predestined, those chosen of God from the beginning, cannot escape salvation. Their eternal destiny was secured eons before they were born.

One of the chief “proof texts” used to support this doctrine is Romans 8:29,30: “For whom He [God] did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.”

Does “foreknowledge” suggest that God determined thousands of years ago who would be saved and who would not? No! The term simply suggests that God knew us before we knew Him, that His knowing us was essential to our knowing Him. John wrote, “We love Him, because He first loved us” (I John 4:19). Paul asked, “Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?” (Romans 11:35, NIV).

In his epistle to the Galatians, he said, “But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God...” (4:9), meaning that a person can come to know God in a personal, intimate way only after God has known him.

The above passages show that God's people came to know and love God because God first knew and loved them. Once we were "known of Him," we had the opportunity to "know" Him as our Heavenly

Father-hence, He "foreknew" us. Those foreknown of Him were *predestined* to be "conformed to the image of His Son." Does this mean that the eternal destiny of those chosen of God is sealed, and that the "predestined" person has no choice but to enter the Kingdom of God? No, it does not! The term "predestination" simply suggests that God has *predetermined the destiny of those He calls*, but does not indicate that He has predetermined whether they will remain faithful to their calling. Our destiny is to be "conformed to the image of His Son." But just as it is possible for an airplane "predestined" to land in a given place within a given time frame, to crash and never reach its intended destination, so it is possible for those "predestined" to God's Kingdom to "fall away" and never reach the destination God had established for them.

Much of the misunderstanding seems to stem from preconceived ideas about such terms as "foreknowledge" and "predestination." Some modern English translators give clarity to the passage by replacing these terms with words more meaningful to the modern reader.

Notice how Williams translates Romans 8:29,30: "For those on whom He set His heart beforehand He marked off as His own to be made like His Son, that He might be the eldest of many brothers; and those whom He marked off as His own He also calls; and those whom He calls He brings into right standing with Himself; those who He brings into right standing with Himself He also glorifies" (*New Testament in the Language of the People*). This passage gives no support to the "irresistible grace" theory. Rather, it agrees perfectly with the many scriptures that speak of conditions believers must meet in order to continue in justification.

### **The Righteous scarcely be saved**

Some of the elites in the U.S.A., Canada and Britain say that Christianity is for "wimps." They think that Christianity is a way for people who can't hack it in the real world, they are not strong enough to cope so they turn to religion, and the way of Christ. Is this line of thinking true? Of course not! Many Christians now are persecuted for their faith and they never wavered. They kept the faith in Jesus and "loved not their lives unto the death." (Revelation 12:11). The challenges of Christianity are challenges that our world today does not want to face. Christ said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and *broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:*

"Because strait is the gate, and *narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*" (Matthew 7:13-14). The majority of people in the world take the easy way, and that leads to nowhere.

No purpose, no reward. It's the difficult way of salvation of Christianity that leads to life everlasting with everlasting rewards. *The people that take Christ's way are the strong ones, not the other way around.*

People these days don't want to even keep one of the Commandments of God let alone all of them. They can't or they will not, it's too hard for them to overcome. Jesus said, "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." (Matthew 24:13). "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." (Rev 3:21). We must overcome this world, as Jesus overcame this world, and receive eternal life. The Bible does not teach once saved always saved, but a life of overcoming, to develop the divine nature, the Godly character for the kingdom of God.

The Apostle Peter said, "And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Peter 4:18). John Gill puts it this way, "but they are said to be 'scarcely' saved, because of their *difficulty of it*, both with respect to Christ, who met with difficulties in working out their salvation; by reason of the strictness of divine justice, and the demands of the righteous law, which would make no abatement; the sins of his people he had to bear, and make atonement for; the many enemies he had to grapple with, and the accursed death of the cross, he had to undergo; though they were such he was able to surmount, and did: *and especially with respect to the saints themselves; for though their salvation is certain and complete, being finished by Christ, yet their enjoyment of it is attended with many difficulties; by reason of the corruptions of nature, a law in their members warring against the law of their minds; the frequent temptations of Satan, who seeks to devour them, and their wrestlings with principalities and powers, which are above their match; and also by reason of various afflictions and persecutions, and many tribulations, which make their way to eternal life a strait way, and through which they must enter into the kingdom of heaven: and if this be their case, as it is,*" (emphasis added). God's way builds the best character for the Christian. Difficult Yes, impossible, No! Christ is with us and in us by his Spirit. He overcame the world, and so will we and be victorious, as John said, "For whatsoever is born ["begotten"] of God overcometh the world: *and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*" (1 John 5:4). Jesus said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33). Be of good cheer God is on our side and we can overcome and have victory because of Jesus Christ and what he did for us on the cross, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom 8:31).

In another positive light, Is it not a good thing that the Christian know that one can lose salvation? Think of it. If you know you can lose it, if you willfully go back into the world without repentance, and you know what the end result is going to be, would that not make you realize that, that is NOT what you want, and bring you closer to God, and not the world? Of course it does. If it were impossible for you to lose salvation as the fundamentalist preach, then that line of thinking, brings you closer to the world knowing that it does not matter what you do, you will always be saved, therefore it will entice the Christian to sin, *because there are no consequences!*

## Arguments

### 1) The Father wills that Christ "Should Lose Nothing"

Jesus Christ said: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of

Him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (John 6:37-39).

Fundamentalists force at least two assumptions into this passage to make it fit their "once saved, always saved" doctrine. First, they assume that Christ's statement, "I will in no wise cast [him] out," is unconditional. Second, they assume that "the Father's will" is God's unconditional decree, rather than simply His desire.

Notice that Jesus describes His followers as "all which He [the Father] hath given me." The same description is found in Jesus' prayer on the night of His betrayal.

Notice: "And now I am no more in the world, but these [His disciples] are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost..." (John 17:11,12).

Now, if we stop right there, after the phrase "none of them is lost," and apply the fundamentalists' way of reasoning to this passage, we would conclude that all Christ's disciples, having been kept in the Father's name, were to be everlastingly one in spirit and purpose, and none would ever be lost. However, the remaining words of verse 12 leave no room for such an interpretation: "...and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition [Judas]; that the scripture might be fulfilled." Clearly, Judas had been one of those the

Father had given to Christ; yet, he was "lost." He did not go on to become one of the foundational "stones" of the New Testament church; did not become an apostle who, like Peter, John, Paul, and others, went out and preached the Gospel powerfully, calling on thousands to "Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins!"

Christ's statements as recorded in John 6:37-39 are *clearly conditional*. He will not in any wise cast out those who come to Him. On the contrary, He will nurture them, protect them, give them strength enough to resist any adversary that would lead them astray. But if they choose to disobey God, choose to reject the grace by which they were called, choose the way of the Devil and the world over the way of God, then Christ will not force them into submission. He will always be there for them, ready to hear their cries of repentance, ready to intercede on their behalf if and when they turn from their wicked ways and seek to return to God, *but He will not take away their power of will or freedom of choice.*

The "Father's will" is that all His children abide in His will. But He wants each of His children to willingly submit to His will. He refuses to create androids that can only do whatever they are programmed to do. God doesn't want mindless automatons; He wants thoughtful, loving *children!*

It may be a father's will that his son go to college, study hard, and become a doctor. But the father's will does not overpower the son's ability to choose his own road in life. The same is true of the Heavenly Father's will. He "wills" that all His children obey Him, but He does not take away their power of choice, does not force His will upon them.

Fundamentalists are inconsistent in the way they handle the Scriptures. They point to the above passage as “proof” that saved persons cannot lose their salvation. Yet, other texts wherein God’s will is stated are interpreted differently.

Take, for instance, I Timothy 2:3,4: “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved....” Fundamentalists rightly point out that this passage simply means that God desires that all accept His offer of salvation, but does not mean that all *will* be saved. If they would apply the same mode of understanding to John 6:39, they would be able to see that the “Father’s will” is not God’s determinate decree, but is simply His purposeful *desire*.

## 2) Can Christians be “Plucked” from Christ’s Hands

Another scripture fundamentalists often quote as “proof” of indefectability is John 10:27-29: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” Does this passage say that it is impossible for a “sheep” to lose his place in the Good Shepherd’s fold? No, it does not! It simply says that the Father and the Son are stronger than any one who might attempt to “pluck” the believer from the Father’s (or Son’s) hand. But we should not read this scripture as an unconditional promise.

A passage such as this should not be the basis on which a doctrine is developed, but should be understood in the light of other, clearer, texts. Hebrews 10:26-29, for instance, is clear. It tells us that there is “no more sacrifice for sins,” but only “a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation,” for those members of God’s church who deliberately, of their own free will and volition, return to a life of sinful activity.

Now, in light of this clear scripture, how are we to understand John 10:27-29? Let’s take it verse by verse. Verse 27: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” This was said to a group of unbelieving Jews who obviously were not His “sheep.” Jesus did not need to state the fact that it is possible for a sheep who follows Him to turn away from the lead of the Shepherd and stray from the flock. Verse 28: “And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” Jesus was looking beyond this life to the eternal state (“they shall never perish”), and was expressing the ideal outcome for all those God calls to eternal life. God is infinitely stronger than any sheep stealer, whether human or angelic. A Christian who returns to sinful living, perhaps through the influence of others, should realize that his “fall from grace” was not due to God’s inability to protect him.

Verse 29: “My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” Again, the point is that God is greater than any would-be sheep thief. No Christian returns to a life of sin because God was too weak to sustain and protect him. People return to sinful living because they are enticed by their own lusts that war in their members.

James wrote: “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn

away of his *own lusts*, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:13-15).

James was writing to converted, Spirit-filled members of God’s true church! This passage proves that a true Christian is capable of giving-in to his own lusts and returning to sin, which, if unrepented, will result in the “second death” in Gehenna fire! (See Revelation 20:14-15).

Matthew 10:28 throws more light on the words of Jesus (as recorded in John 10:27-29). Jesus said: “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him [God]

which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell [Gehenna].” Jesus simply meant that men can kill the body, but are unable to take away God’s gift of eternal life. Don’t fear them, Jesus said, but fear the One who can destroy *both!*

Just as men cannot take away God’s gift of eternal life, cannot destroy the spiritual “embryo”-the “new creature in Christ”-that is forming and developing within every Spirit- begotten member of God’s church, men cannot “pluck” the true follower of Jesus Christ from the Father’s hand. Remember, Jesus was speaking to

His disciples, those who would become converted on the Day of Pentecost, and who would become part of the foundation of the New Testament church. He plainly told them to fear Him who has the power to destroy them in a lake of fire!

To “fear” God is to stand in absolute awe of Him, with deepest respect, trembling at His Word! If loss of salvation were impossible, why would Jesus tell His disciples to fear the One who has power to take it away?

*Written by Peter Salemi*