

Arlington Church of Christ

Wednesday Bible study

“Can a Christian fall?”

Following the Scriptural Trail



Calvinism – ‘once saved, always saved’



John Calvin

- ✦ The most important Protestant reformer to follow Martin Luther was John Calvin.
- ✦ Calvin followed most of the teachings of Martin Luther.
- ✦ He also preached predestination, the idea that God had long ago determined who would gain salvation.
- ✦ In 1541, Calvin set up a theocracy in Geneva.
 - A theocracy is a government run by Church leaders.
- ✦ By the late 1500s, Calvinism had taken root in Germany, France, the Netherlands, England, and Scotland.
- ✦ In several of these countries, Calvinists faced opposition and persecution from other religious groups.

God has predetermined whether a person will be lost or saved before they were born. Those who are to be saved cannot do anything to lose their salvation.

Those who are predestined to be lost cannot do anything to be saved.

The world is made up of saints and sinners. And only certain people have been given by God the faith to believe.

Calvin said that a person cannot know whether they are predestined to be saved or lost- only God knows what He had planned for that person.

This caused so many questions that it was decreed that if a person who was considered by others to be have been one of the chosen ones to be saved (they were a good person) , but who then turns and sins or rejects God later in their lives – that they were never one of the ‘chosen ones’ to begin with. So we can never really tell if we are among the ‘saved’ or not.

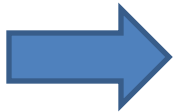
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1 John 5:12-13

Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³ I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

BUT

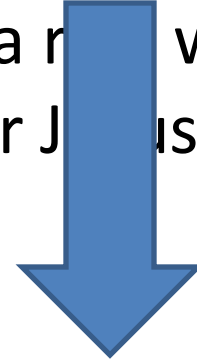


2 Peter 1:10-11

Therefore, my brothers, make every effort to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never stumble,¹¹ and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:10-11

Therefore, my brothers, **make every effort to make your calling and election sure**. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, ¹¹ and you will receive a **royal** welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.



2 Peter 1:5-8

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. ⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 10:12

So, **if you think you are standing firm**, be careful that you don't fall!

If you are so sure that Satan could never tempt you because you are so 'strong' – be careful that your pride doesn't lead you into sins you never considered.

Now if one who was saved could never 'fall' – this verse makes no sense.

Hebrews 3:12-4:1 See to it, **brothers**, *(written to Christians)* that **none of you** has a **sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.** ¹³ But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. ¹⁴ We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end. ¹⁵ As has just been said: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion.” ¹⁶ Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? ¹⁷ And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies perished in the wilderness? ¹⁸ And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? ¹⁹ So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.

4 Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it.

If those who followed Moses out of Egypt and through the desert – those God was leading to the Promised Land could fall because of their disobedience and not get to enter the promised reward, why should we think that God will overlook a follower who sins or disobeys now ?

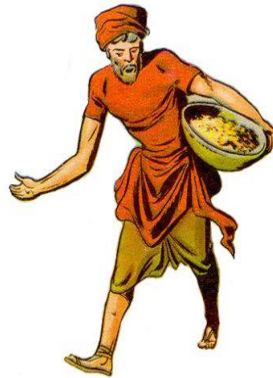
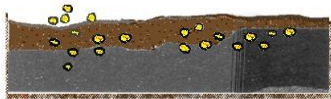
Ezekiel 18:24-28 “But if a righteous person turns from their righteousness and commits sin and does the same detestable things the wicked person does, will they live? None of the righteous things that person has done will be remembered. Because of the unfaithfulness they are guilty of and because of the sins they have committed, they will die. ²⁵ “Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ Hear, you Israelites: Is my way unjust? Is it not your ways that are unjust? ²⁶ If a righteous person turns from their righteousness and commits sin, they will die for it; because of the sin they have committed they will die. ²⁷ But if a wicked person turns away from the wickedness they have committed and does what is just and right, they will save their life. ²⁸ Because they consider all the offenses they have committed and turn away from them, that person will surely live; they will not die.

Matthew 13:20-21

The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹ But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.

Parable of the Soils

Stony Soil: Shallow



“Other seed fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil” (Matt 13:5)



John 15:1-10

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. **No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.**

⁵ “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. **If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.** ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

⁹ “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. **Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love.**

1 Corinthians 9:27

No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

Being controlled by the 'self' can cause us to be lost !

Galatians 5:4

You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

Trying to be right by just doing outward things will cause us to be lost !

The Old Testament 'law' was based on outward actions and keeping all the commands – to fail in even one command was to be condemned. That is why there was the need for continual sacrifices. But in Christ, His sacrifice once for all, atones for our unintentional failings – resulting in us being declared 'righteous' through Him.

Hebrews 10:26-31

If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, ²⁷ **but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.** ²⁸ Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ **How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?** ³⁰ For we know him who said, “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” and again, “The Lord will judge his people.” ³¹ It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

2 Peter 2:20-21

If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and are overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. ²¹ It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.

Those who keep sinning after becoming a Christian will receive greater punishment than even those who never accepted Jesus' sacrifice for sins.

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2 Peter 2:22

Of them the proverbs are true: “A dog returns to its vomit,” and, “A sow that is washed returns to her wallowing in the mud.”



Acts 8:18-23

When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money ¹⁹ and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

²⁰ Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! ²¹ You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. ²² **Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord** in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. ²³ For I see that you are full of bitterness and **captive to sin.**"

Notice he was not told that he was not a Christian but rather that he was in danger of falling due to this sin.

1 John 1:7-9


But if **we walk in the light, as he is in the light**, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

This is addressed to Christians who are attempting to live right (to walk in the light) , but who make unintentional mistakes and sin in their daily life.

James 5:19-20

My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, ²⁰ remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.



This is addressed to Christians, who when they ‘wander from the truth,’ are then called ‘sinners’ – but note they can be turned back and have their sins forgiven. Their salvation can be restored.

God has a book that is called the ‘book of life’ – when a person obeys the gospel the Lord adds their name to His book.

Daniel 12:1

But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered.

Acts 2:40-42

With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” ⁴¹ **Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.**

Acts 2:47

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Philippians 4:3

Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Revelation 20:12

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.

Revelation 21:27

Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

**But if a person sins and does not
repent and return to God - their
name can be blotted out of the 'book of
life'.**

Exodus 32:33

The LORD replied to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book.”

Psalms 69:28

May they be blotted out of the book of life and not be listed with the righteous.

Revelation 3:5

The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels.

Revelation 20:15

Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

So can a Christian fall ? Yes, by rejecting the salvation they once had and returning to their old ways. But God has provided a way back even for those -

1 John 1:9-10 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

But the key is repentance and confession of those sins – if a person refuses to repent, refuses to acknowledge that they have sinned – there is no forgiveness and that person’s name will be blotted out of the book of life –
they will be lost and in an even worse state than before they even became a Christian.