

CALVINISM: THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS, Part 2

In review, the fifth and final pillar of Calvinistic doctrine is the *perseverance of saints*. This doctrine is also termed *the impossibility of apostasy* and *once-in-grace, always-in-grace*. It assumes that once one whom God has chosen to be saved is regenerated by a direct, mystical operation of the Holy Spirit, he can never fall away so as to be lost—no matter what he does. We documented this observation quoting an article from a Calvinistic document, THE CONSTITUTION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, U.S.A., Confession of Faith, pp. 79-81.

This teaching is very popular in today's religious world. However, it is also at total variance with what the Bible actually teaches. Please consider the following passages.

In explanation of the parable of the sower, Jesus said the seed that fell on rocky ground represented, "...those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, WHO BELIEVE FOR A WHILE AND IN TIME OF TEMPTATION FALL AWAY" (Luke 8:13).

Warning Christians living in the region of Galatia who were attempting to be justified by the Law of Moses, Paul wrote, "You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; YOU HAVE FALLEN FROM GRACE" (Galatians 5:4).

The writer of the letter to Hebrew Christians were doing the very thing Calvinism claims cannot be done, that they were in danger of departing (apostatizing) from Christ and thereby losing their reward of salvation in Christ. The writer, reminding these Hebrew Christians that they were, "...partakers of the heavenly calling...", cited the example of their Israelite ancestors whom God delivered from Egyptian bondage, but failed to continue to obey God, that they consequently lost their reward in the promised land. God's promise of this reward was predicated on continued faithful obedience to the covenant God made with them through Moses (Exodus 19:5, 6). When these Israelites failed to keep God's covenant with them they lost their reward (Hebrews 3:7-11). Based on this example, the writer then warned the faltering Christians to whom he wrote, "BEWARE BRETHREN, LEST THERE BE IN ANY OF YOU AN EVIL HEART OF UNBELIEF IN DEPARTING FROM THE LIVING GOD" (Hebrews 3:12).

These passages, and others, clearly demonstrate two things: 1. Calvinism's assertion of the impossibility of apostasy is false; 2. God requires faithfulness of those who expect to be saved in Christ.

—Jerry F. Bassett