

“Were Those Who Fell Away Ever Saved or Did They Lose Salvation?”

In referencing II Thess. 2:3, II Timothy 3:1-8 regarding the apostasy of professing church (Body of Christ?) and falling away at the end time by seducing spirits, how does that correlate with Hebrews 6: 4-6? Are these people believers or not? Are they saved and God's elect or not? ...Are they eternally lost because they cannot crucify Christ again and put Him to an open shame? I was taught (once saved, always saved). Please enlighten, as I am puzzled. Thank you for your time and information.

Thanks for your letter. These are complicated questions and good Christian people (including scholars) often disagree about the details. I personally lean toward the view that the true believer is eternally secure in her relationship with Christ. But not all Christians (indeed, not all evangelical Christians) hold this view. Some believe that a genuine Christian can indeed fall away and be lost. Hebrews 6:4-6 is a passage often cited in this regard. But notice that, strictly speaking, this passage does not say that a true believer can lose her salvation. What it says is that if such a person falls away (i.e., commits willful apostasy) it is impossible to renew that person again to repentance. This may mean that the person has sinned so grievously, and their heart has been so hardened in the process, that they simply will not repent. But their failure to repent does not necessarily mean that they are therefore eternally lost. Thus, I personally do not see this passage as decisive in this debate.

Ultimately, one must weigh all of the biblical evidence pertaining to this issue. It is my view that the evidence, considered in its entirety, is more consistent with the

eternal security of the believer, than with the notion that one of God's elect might ultimately fall away and be eternally lost. Here, it seems to me, that Romans 8:28-39 and John 6:35-40 are particularly strong promises regarding the security of the believer.

Hope this helps. Shalom in Christ,

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“I Don't Know How to Answer this Biblical Argument Against Eternal Security”

I have been debating a Christian online about whether salvation is permanent, which I believe it is. This person brought up two verses to which I don't know how to respond, 2 Peter 2:20-21:

For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them.

I looked in a couple of commentaries as well as in *When Critics Ask* (by Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe) and they either said nothing about it or they didn't address the issue

at hand.

You have brought up a great question! The security of every believer is a critical issue in the Christian life. John 10:28-30 assures us that if we are given eternal life by God through Jesus Christ, no one can snatch us from the Father's hand. Romans 8:28-39 also guarantees that nothing in all of reality can separate us from the love of God in Christ.

With that said, there is the issue of the "apparent" problem passages. Of them, 2 Peter 2:20-21 seems a real nasty one. But upon reading the entire epistle from Peter, one can see that the people in question are false teachers. Peter's perspective, as that of Jude in Jude 19, is that these false teachers were not truly Christian. As Jude puts it, they are "worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit." Most likely these teachers publicly professed Christ as their Lord, but their subsequent rejection verified their unchanged spiritual condition.

The Bible as a whole teaches that believers are securely held in God's hand. But let us be careful not to judge others because of what we see or don't see. Challenge one another in perseverance to bear fruit, but leave the final judgment to the word of God that is "able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

Thanks so much for your insightful question. God gives understanding to those who seek it as if searching for buried treasure and precious silver. (Proverbs 2:3-5)

Kris Samons

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