

Once you accept Jesus, is it possible to fall from grace?

Dear Mr. Crown,

Thank you for visiting our web page (www.christianquestions.net). We appreciated your comments and hope that we can answer your questions.

You asked that once you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior, is it then impossible to "fall from grace" and lose your salvation? You said you had been brought up believing that even if you were a "child of God" that you could "fall from grace" and lose your salvation if you continued to deliberately sin. Now you are being led to believe that if you step out in faith there is nothing you can do to fall from grace.

Your questions and concerns are well taken. To answer them, we must first ask some other pertinent questions. Must one become a Christian in order to be saved? If so, what about the countless millions who have never heard of Jesus? What about all the good people who are not Christians? What about those who lived before Jesus' time? What about the person who believes, but does not make any changes for the better? What is their fate? When we look up the word "condemned" used in John 3:13-21, we find that it really means "to distinguish" or "to separate" (see Strong's Concordance #2919). Therefore, Jesus was separating those willing to follow him now from all others. He fulfilled his mission which was to die so that all would be saved, some now and others later. The following scriptures are emphatic that Jesus died for everyone who ever lived (and especially for those who believe). See 1 Tim. 2:3-6; 4:10; John 5:28-29; I Corinthians 15:21-23; Hebrews 2:9; 9:24-28; Romans 5:12-19; 1 John 2:2. These scriptures separate the true followers from everyone else and give these followers something different, something special. The letters of the New Testament were written to these special called out ones. But the scriptures do not minimize Jesus' sacrifice for everyone else. There is a dichotomy in the plan of God -- the spiritual calling out and the blessing of everyone else. Judgment is an important part of this whole picture. Those who are called out to sacrifice are judged now. These are the spirit begotten ones, the ones who have chosen to live a life of sacrifice to do God's will now. This class, if faithful, will be part of the heavenly phase of the Kingdom of God. Those not called out are not judged now, but will be later in the "day of judgment," soon to take place on earth. Timing is very important in the plan of God. (Acts 26:23; Luke 14:14) When the class of the called out ones is complete, the judgment of the rest of the world will begin and the end result of that judgment will be the eradication of tears, pain, sorrow, crying and finally death itself. (Revelation 21:1-4)

Having established that there are indeed two salvations, the first for the true followers of Christ now and the second for the rest of the world later, we can address the question of being "born again" and its implications. First, we believe that the term "born again" (Strong's #1080) is not a correct translation in all the cases in which it appears in scripture. In the context of John 3:1-13, particularly verse 3, "born again" should be translated "begotten," meaning conception, not birth, since one's spirit birth (in heaven) will take place when one dies. So, what does spirit begettal imply? Many Christians feel that once you've got the spirit, you're locked in (guaranteed a seat in heaven). But we believe that we have to do something to make this spirit begettal turn into spirit birth. In 2 Corinthians 5:16-18 and

Galatians 6:15-16, we learn that anyone in Christ (spirit begotten) is a "new creature" and would be walking a different path than everyone else. This path is anything but easy. Apostle Paul talks about his struggles in Romans 7:15-25. This "new creature," begotten of the holy spirit, desires to serve God, but our old nature still serves sin. Battling this dual nature is the struggle of each true Christian. And the battle continues until death. Nonetheless, Apos. Paul also said, "I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:14) "Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize." (1 Cor. 9:26-27) If Apos. Paul had to struggle, we also have a massive fight in front of us. It is a fight to joyfully do the will of God as we crucify our own wills and desires. But, although we struggle with our sinful natures we have an advocate in Jesus. "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:1-2) How encouraging is this precious promise! This scripture says that if we sin, there is a way to cancel out that sin -- through Jesus Christ our advocate, who is the ransom for us (now) and for the entire world (later). "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16)

So, can we fall from grace after having been called to be sons of God and heirs with Jesus and after having been enlightened by the holy spirit? Yes, it is possible if we turn our backs on Jesus' sacrifice and go back into the world to sin. The Apostle has said, "It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace." (Heb. 6:4-6) But, to fall into this sad condition, one would have to be a deliberately willful sinner, mocking God and his promises.

But we are not to dwell on this condition. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love and of a sound mind." (2 Tim. 1:7) When we are connected with God through prayer and study of his Word, we maintain his Holy Spirit. We acquire the spirit of fear when we mentally disconnect, letting go of God and his promises. Feed upon his promises. They are the food of the new creation. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature." (2 Pet. 1:4) God is ALWAYS there for us. He NEVER leaves us. "He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea in seven there shall no evil touch thee." (Job 5:19) "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Phil. 1:6) "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. 2:10)

Yes, God has promised to assist us. What, then, is our sacrificial role if we are begotten of the holy spirit? Paul tells us in Romans 12:1-2. "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is --his good, pleasing and perfect will." To be able to be transformed we must now give up of our time, our wealth, whatever we have and put it on the altar of sacrifice to be used in the Lord's service. In

so doing, the Lord rewards us with the transformation process. This change, or metamorphosis, comes from within. God's laws become written in our hearts. We obey because we know it is the right thing to do. That is the meaning of the transformation required of each Christian. To get the reward of glory that God has promised to those who love him (1 Corinthians 3:6-16), we have to think like the creatures God intends us to be. The meaning of sanctification (the process of being set apart to be made holy) and its two parts, is illustrated in Philippians 2:12-13. Our part is to work out our salvation by putting our wills on the altar of sacrifice by changing the way we think. God's part is to work within us orchestrating our development by giving us experiences. We are not just maximizing human potential, but we are in the process of becoming something that humans were not intended to be. We are called to become something special. The Bible identifies this call as the high or heavenly call (Philippians 3:14; Hebrews 3:1). As the new creature which is begotten within us grows, the spiritual qualities of love, mercy, and compassion also grow. Each of us needs to ask if we are being transformed into a likeness of Jesus or are we just putting on the guise of Jesus while failing to change our thinking, our hearts, our motivation. Christianity is not just about being nice. It's not just about feeding or giving money to the poor. It is a calling to spirituality beyond human nature. The mind has to change. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 2:5) Our human nature is sacrificed. The bottom line is that God has to call you for that transformation to happen. The transforming process begins when we give our lives to the Lord and it continues until the end of our course. The suffering we endure changes us. God is in charge of our training, and, if we yield ourselves, we will be made into what he wants us to be. That is what it means to be baptized into Christ. Those who lead a life of sacrifice now and remain faithful, will become part of the heavenly body of Christ that will have a part in blessing the world of mankind in the future. A picture of this future earthly phase of the Kingdom can be seen in Micah 4:1-5 and Isaiah 35.

How privileged we are to have been called to bless the world in the future by assisting in bringing each human up the highway of holiness! The Kingdom of God will then be manifested on earth and the spirit of God will be poured out upon all flesh (Joel 2:28) and everyone shall know God from the least to the greatest (Jeremiah 31:34). We can truly say that God has a great plan and everyone, whether in heaven or on earth, has a part in it.