



## Articles

# Perseverance of the Saints and II Peter 2:17

by Bryan Sharp

In **II Peter 2:1**, Peter warns of false teachers from within the Church *"who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction."* In **II Peter 2:17** Peter says these same people *"are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved."* The New King James Version renders the "gloom of utter darkness" as the "blackness of darkness forever." It is an obvious reference to hell. So Peter is telling us there are some people who will go to hell even though the Lord bought them. Some people will lose their salvation.

The Westminster Confession of Faith states, "They whom God has accepted in His Beloved ... can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace..." (Chapter 17, Paragraph 1). This Calvinistic teaching of Perseverance of the Saints, or more commonly, "once saved always saved", is a common belief among American denominations. So in this lesson we will see how this doctrine connects with the rest of Calvinism, then discuss Scripture relating to the doctrine. Finally we will examine some specific consequences of the doctrine as they relate to our love for God and motivation for obedience.

Perseverance of the Saints is another logical consequence of Total Hereditary Depravity. Consider the following progression of TULIP: People are born so evil that they cannot even want to do what is right (Total Hereditary Depravity). Because we cannot even want to do good, God must override our will and force us to be saved (Irresistible Grace). Because God is forcing us to obey Him, we can do nothing to damn ourselves (Perseverance of the Saints).

Supporting this doctrine is the same misconception of God's sovereignty that supports the doctrine of Irresistible Grace. Calvinism holds that God specified each and every thing that would ever happen before the creation of the world and that these decrees are unchangeable. In fact Calvinism equates affirming free will to denying God's sovereignty. Thus the Westminster Confession of Faith states, "This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will but upon the immutability of the decree of election ..." (Chapter 17, Paragraph 2).

Our text is not the only biblical example of saints losing their salvation. **Acts 8:13** tells us that Simon

was a baptized believer, yet in [Acts 8:23](#), after Simon sinned, Peter describes him as being "*in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity*." In [II Corinthians 5:20](#), Paul implores Christians to "*be reconciled to God*." In [Galatians 5:4](#), Paul warns the Christians who are forsaking the gospel for the Law of Moses that they "*have fallen away from grace*."

Not only do Bible examples show Christians losing their salvation, but the ramifications of this doctrine make it untenable. Instead of motivating us with reasons to serve God, it engenders an acceptance of our situation and a lack of caring. If we are lost, we cannot be saved. If we are saved, we cannot be lost. Either way, there is nothing we can do to change our situation. Rather than bettering ourselves, we blame others and wait for them to fix our problems. All of our tribulations are a product, not of our own shortcomings, but of God's eternal decree. We cannot fight God, so we should just accept ourselves as we are while blaming God for anything bad that ever happens. The logical end of such a position is that instead of growing to love a just and merciful God, we grow to hate an unjust and unappeasable tyrant.

Thousands of years ago, Satan lied to Eve promising her she would not die if she ate the forbidden fruit. Believing the lie, she ate and received the very thing she had, until that time, successfully avoided, death. Calvinism consists of an elaborate series of falsehoods, each purporting to glorify God by denying man's free will and ascribing complete control of every action to our Creator. Just as happened to Eve, if we believe this lie and act accordingly, we will accomplish the very thing we seek to prevent.

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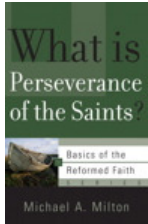
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FEBRUARY 13, 2009

# Released: What is the Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints?

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This week, P & R Publishing released a booklet they asked me to write, *What is the Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints?* This is part of their “Basics of the Reformed Faith” series. P and R Publishing introduced its series this way: “Basics of the Reformed Faith booklets introduce lay readers to Reformed distinctive. These resources are designed especially for use by Presbyterian and Reformed churches.” I was honored to be asked and enjoyed the writing of this little book. I

sought to write it as if I were sitting with someone, maybe at coffee house or over a meal. I pray it reflects a pastoral warmth, as I present the doctrine, rather than a haughty condescending tone, which we can often fall into. No friends are made that way, and little truth is advanced when the other person is having to defend himself.

As a pastor, nothing was more wonderful than watching as believers began to “get it!” I meant to say that they began to grasp the Gospel of God’s grace and see its implications for all of life. There is a birthing process that goes with that. And as pastor, one must be patient during the gestation period of this growing faith. The best way to introduce the truth of God’s grace is simply and profoundly through the Scriptures, without labels. The Holy Spirit will apply His Word to their hearts. But these little books do, indeed, help in that work as these books are grounded in the Bible and are simply expositions and explanations of the major doctrines of the Bible, which are also, refreshingly, simply the doctrines of the Reformed faith.

As this new book is launched, I pray for God’s blessings on those who will take and read; that many will also inwardly digest the Gospel truth that is there.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. World without end. Amen. Amen.

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# Conditional preservation of the saints

<div>The Five Articles of Remonstrance</div>
Conditional election
Unlimited atonement
Total depravity
Prevenient grace
Conditional preservation
<div><div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div><div><div>v</div><div>t</div><div>e<sup>[1]</sup></div></div></div>

Part of a series on
<div>Arminianism</div>
<div><div></div><div>Jacobus Arminius</div></div>
<div>Background</div>
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<div><div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div><div><div>Jacobus Arminius</div><div>Simon Episcopius</div><div>Hugo Grotius</div><div>The Remonstrants</div><div>Synod of Dort participants</div><div>John Wesley</div></div></div>
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Arminianism portal	
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The **conditional preservation of the saints**, or commonly **conditional security**, is the Arminian belief that believers are kept safe by God in their saving relationship with Him upon the *condition* of a persevering faith in Christ.<sup>[3]</sup> Arminians find the Scriptures describing both the initial act of faith in Christ, "whereby the relationship is effected, and the persevering faith in Him whereby the relationship is sustained."<sup>[4]</sup> The relationship of "the believer to Christ is never a static relationship existing as the irrevocable consequence of a past decision, act, or experience."<sup>[5]</sup> Rather, it is a living union "proceeding upon a living faith in a living Savior."<sup>[6]</sup> This living union is captured in this simple command by Christ, "Remain in me, and I in you" (John 15:4).<sup>[7]</sup>

According to Arminians, biblical saving faith expresses itself in love and obedience to God (Galatians 5:6; Hebrews 5:8-9).<sup>[8]</sup> In the Arminian Confession of 1621, the Remonstrants (or Arminian leaders) affirmed that true or living faith operates through love,<sup>[9]</sup> and that God chooses to give salvation and eternal life through His Son, "and to finally glorify all those and only those truly believing in his name, or obeying his gospel, and persevering in faith and obedience until death ... "<sup>[10]</sup>

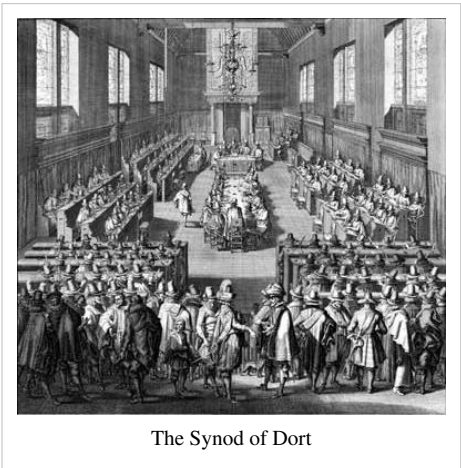
Arminians believe that "It is abundantly evident from the Scriptures that the believer is secure."<sup>[11]</sup> Furthermore, believers have assurance in knowing there is no external power or circumstance that can separate them from the love of God they enjoy in union with Christ.<sup>[12]</sup> Nevertheless, Arminians see numerous warnings in Scripture directed to genuine believers about the possibility of falling away in unbelief and thereby becoming severed from their saving union with God through Christ.<sup>[13]</sup> Arminians hold that if a believer *becomes an unbeliever* (commits apostasy), they necessarily cease to partake of the promises of salvation and eternal life made to *believers* who continue in faith and remain united to Christ.<sup>[14]</sup> Therefore, Arminians recognize the importance of warning believers about the danger of apostasy and exhorting them to persevere in faith as a means of building them up in their faith and encouraging them to mature spiritually, which is a sure and biblical way to avoid apostasy.<sup>[15]</sup>

Historical background

Main article: History of Calvinist-Arminian Debate

Free Will Baptist scholar Robert Picirilli states:

Appropriately last among the points of tension among Calvinism and Arminianism is the question whether those who have been regenerated must necessarily persevere (or be preserved) or may apostatize and be lost.... Arminius himself and the original Remonstrants avoided a clear conclusion on this matter. But they raised the question. And the natural implications of the views at the heart of Arminianism, even in its early stages as a formal movement, tended to question whether Calvinism's assumptions of necessary perseverance was truly Biblical. Those tendencies indicated by the questions raised did not take long to reach fruition, and thus Calvinism and Arminianism have come to be traditionally divided on this issue.<sup>[16]</sup>



Prior to the time of the debate between Calvinists and the Arminians at the Synod of Dort (1618–1619), the view in the early church appears to be on the side of conditional security. From his research of the writings of the early

church fathers (AD 90–313), patristic scholar David W. Bercot arrived at this conclusion: "Since the early Christians believed that our continued faith and obedience are necessary for salvation, it naturally follows that they believed that a 'saved' person could still end up being lost."<sup>[17]</sup>

Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609) arrived at the same conclusion in his own readings of the early church fathers. In responding to Calvinist William Perkins arguments for the perseverance of the saints, he wrote: "In reference to the sentiments of the [early church] fathers, you doubtless know that almost all antiquity is of the opinion, that believers can fall away and perish."<sup>[18]</sup> On another occasion he notes that such a view was never "reckoned as a heretical opinion," but "has always had more supporters in the church of Christ, than that which denies its possibility ...."<sup>[19]</sup> Arminius' opinion on the subject is clearly communicated in this relatively brief statement:

My sentiments respecting the perseverance of the Saints are, that those persons who have been grafted into Christ by true faith, and have thus been made partakers of his life-giving Spirit, possess sufficient powers [or strength] to fight against Satan, sin, the world and their own flesh, and to gain the victory over these enemies — yet not without the assistance of the grace of the same Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ also by his Spirit assists them in all their temptations, and affords them the ready aid of his hand; and, provided they stand prepared for the battle, implore his help, and be not wanting to themselves, Christ preserves them from falling. So that it is not possible for them, by any of the cunning craftiness or power of Satan, to be either seduced or dragged out of the hands of Christ. But I think it is useful and will be quite necessary in our first convention, [or Synod] to institute a diligent inquiry from the Scriptures, whether it is not possible for some individuals through negligence to desert the commencement of their existence in Christ, to cleave again to the present evil world, to decline from the sound doctrine which was once delivered to them, to lose a good conscience, and to cause Divine grace to be ineffectual. Though I here openly and ingenuously affirm, I never taught that a *true believer can, either totally or finally fall away from the faith, and perish*; yet I will not conceal, that there are passages of scripture which seem to me to wear this aspect; and those answers to them which I have been permitted to see, are not of such a kind as to approve themselves on all points to my understanding. On the other hand, certain passages are produced for the contrary doctrine [of unconditional perseverance] which are worthy of much consideration.<sup>[20]</sup>



Arminius in his study

For Arminius the believer's security is conditional—"provided they stand prepared for the battle, implore his help, and be not wanting to themselves." This complements what Arminius says elsewhere in his writings: "God resolves to receive into favor those who repent and believe, and to save in Christ, on account of Christ, and through Christ, those who persevere [in faith], but to leave under sin and wrath those who are impenitent and unbelievers, and to condemn them as aliens from Christ."<sup>[21]</sup> In another place he writes: "[God] wills that they, who believe and persevere in faith, shall be saved, but that those, who are unbelieving and impenitent, shall remain under condemnation."<sup>[22]</sup>

After the death of Arminius in 1609, the Remonstrants maintained their leader's view on conditional security and his uncertainty regarding the possibility of apostasy. This is evidenced in the fifth article drafted by its leaders in 1610:

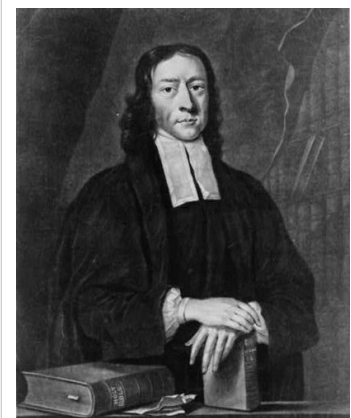
That those who are incorporated into Christ by a true faith, and have thereby become partakers of his life-giving Spirit, have thereby full power to strive against Satan, sin, the world, and their own flesh, and to win the victory; it being well understood that it is ever through the assisting grace of the Holy Ghost; and that Jesus Christ assists them through his Spirit in all temptations, extends to them his hand, and if only they are ready for the conflict, and desire his help, and are not inactive, keeps them from falling, so that they, by not craft or power of Satan, can be misled nor plucked out of Christ's hand, according to the Word of Christ, John 10:28: 'Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.' But whether they are capable, through negligence, of forsaking again the first beginnings of their life in Christ, of again returning to this present evil world, of turning away from the holy doctrine which was delivered them, of losing a good conscience, of becoming devoid of grace, that must be more particularly determined out of the Holy Scripture, before we ourselves can teach it with full persuasion of our minds.<sup>[23]</sup>



Episcopius was the leader of the Remonstrants

Sometime between 1610, and the official proceeding of the Synod of Dort (1618), the Remonstrants became fully persuaded in their minds that the Scriptures taught that a true believer was capable of falling away from faith and perishing eternally. They formalized their views in "The Opinion of the Remonstrants" (1618). Points three and four in the fifth article read:

True believers can fall from true faith and can fall into such sins as cannot be consistent with true and justifying faith; not only is it possible for this to happen, but it even happens frequently. True believers are able to fall through their own fault into shameful and atrocious deeds, to persevere and to die in them; and therefore finally to fall and to perish.<sup>[24]</sup>



Wesley opposed the doctrine of unconditional perseverance

Picirilli remarks: "Ever since that early period, then, when the issue was being examined again, Arminians have taught that those who are truly saved need to be warned against apostasy as a real and possible danger."<sup>[25]</sup>

John Goodwin (1593–1665) was a Puritan who "presented the Arminian position of falling away in *Redemption Redeemed* (1651)"<sup>[26]</sup> which drew a lot of attention from Calvinists.<sup>[27]</sup> In his book, English bishop Laurence Womock (1612–1685) provides numerous scriptural references to the fifth article concerning perseverance delivered by the later Remonstrants.<sup>[28]</sup> Philip van Limborch (1633–1712) penned the first complete Remonstrant Systematic Theology in 1702 that included a section on apostasy.<sup>[29]</sup> In 1710, a minister in the Church of England, Daniel Whitby (1638–1726), published a major work criticizing the five points of Calvinism—which involves their doctrine of unconditional perseverance.<sup>[30]</sup>

John Wesley (1703–1791), the founder of Methodism, was an outspoken defender of conditional security and critic of unconditional security. In 1751, Wesley defended his position in a work titled, "Serious Thoughts Upon the Perseverance of the Saints." In it he argued that a believer remains in a saving relationship with God if he "continue in faith" or "endureth in faith unto the end."<sup>[31]</sup> Wesley affirmed that a child of God, "while he continues a true believer, cannot go to hell."<sup>[32]</sup> However, if he makes a "shipwreck of the faith, then a man that believes now may be an unbeliever some time hence" and become "a child of the devil."<sup>[33]</sup> He then adds, "God is the Father of them that



believe, so long as they believe. But the devil is the father of them that believe not, whether they did once believe or no."<sup>[34]</sup> Like his Arminian predecessors, Wesley was convinced from the testimony of the Scriptures that a true believer may abandon faith and the way of righteousness and "fall from God as to perish everlastingly."<sup>[35]</sup>

From John Wesley onward, it looks as if every Methodist/Wesleyan pastor, scholar, or theologian in print has opposed unconditional perseverance: Thomas Olivers (1725–1799);<sup>[36]</sup> John Fletcher (1729–1783);<sup>[37]</sup> Joseph Benson (1748–1821);<sup>[38]</sup> Leroy M. Lee (1758–1816);<sup>[39]</sup> Adam Clarke (1762–1832);<sup>[40]</sup> Nathan Bangs (1778–1862);<sup>[41]</sup> Richard Watson (1781–1833);<sup>[42]</sup> Samuel Wakefield (1799–1895);<sup>[43]</sup> Luther Lee (1800–1889);<sup>[44]</sup> Amos Binney (1802–1878);<sup>[45]</sup> William H. Browning (1805–1873);<sup>[46]</sup> Daniel D. Whedon (1805–1885);<sup>[47]</sup> Thomas N. Ralston (1806–1891);<sup>[48]</sup> Thomas O. Summers (1812–1882);<sup>[49]</sup> Albert Nash (1812–1900);<sup>[50]</sup> John Miley (1813–1895);<sup>[51]</sup> Philip Pugh (1817–1871);<sup>[52]</sup> Randolph S. Foster (1820–1903);<sup>[53]</sup> William Burt Pope (1822–1903);<sup>[54]</sup> B. T. Roberts (1823–1893);<sup>[55]</sup> Daniel Steele (1824–1914);<sup>[56]</sup> Benjamin Field (1827–1869);<sup>[57]</sup> John Shaw Banks (1835–1917);<sup>[58]</sup> and Joseph Agar Beet (1840–1924).<sup>[59]</sup>

From a historical perspective, it appears that a person could legitimately be considered an "Arminian" and be *undecided* as it pertains to whether a believer can commit apostasy (Arminius and the early Remonstrants were). However, Arminians (from 1618 to the 1900s) have clearly and consistently taught that a true believer may fall away from God and perish everlastingly, with no Arminian theologian holding to unconditional perseverance.<sup>[60]</sup>

## Definition and dangers of apostasy

Arminian scholar Robert Shank writes,

The English word *apostasy* is derived from the Greek noun, *apostasia*. Thayer defines *apostasia* as 'a falling away, defection, apostasy; in the Bible sc. from the true religion.' The word appears twice in the New Testament (Acts 21:21, 2 Thessalonians 2:3). Its meaning is well illustrated in its use in Acts 21:21, ... "you are teaching apostasy (defection) from Moses." ... A kindred word is the synonym *apostasion*. Thayer defines *apostasion*, as used in the Bible, as "divorce, repudiation." He cites Matthew 19:7 and Mark 10:4, ... "a bill of divorce [*apostasion*]." He also cites Matthew 5:31, ... "let him give her a bill of divorce [*apostasion*]." He cites the use of *apostasion* by Demosthenes as "defection, of a freedman from his patron." Moulton and Milligan cite the use of [*apostasion*] as a "bond of relinquishing (of property sold) ... a contract of renunciation ... the renunciation of rights of ownership." They also cite the use of *apostasion* "with reference to 'a deed of divorce.'" The meaning of the [related] verb *aphistēmi* ... is, of course, consonant with the meaning of the nouns. It is used transitively in Acts 5:37, ... "drew away people after him." Intransitively, it means to *depart, go away, desert, withdraw, fall away, become faithless*, etc.<sup>[61]</sup>

I. Howard Marshall notes that *aphistēmi* "is used of giving up the faith in Luke 8:13; 1 Timothy 4:1 and Hebrews 3:12, and is used of departure from God in the LXX [i.e., Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament]."<sup>[62]</sup> Marshall also notes that "the failure to persist in faith is expressed by [other Greek] words which mean falling away, drifting and stumbling...."<sup>[63]</sup>

Shank concluded: "An apostate, according to the New Testament definition, is one who has severed his union with Christ by withdrawing from an actual saving relationship with Him. Apostasy is impossible for men who have not entered into a saving relationship with God... The warnings against succumbing to the ugly peril of apostasy are directed ... to men who obviously are true believers."<sup>[64]</sup> J. Rodman Williams adds,

One of the mistakes made by those who affirm the invariable continuance of salvation is the viewing of salvation too much as a "state." From this perspective, to be saved is to enter into "a state of grace." However true it is that one moves into a new realm—whether it is called the kingdom of God, eternal life, or other like expression—the heart of the matter is the establishment of a new relationship with God. Prior to salvation, one was "without God" or "against God," cut off from His presence. Now through Jesus Christ reconciliation—"at-one-ment with God"—has occurred. Moreover, the Holy Spirit,

who becomes present, is not merely some force or energy but God Himself in a new and intimate relationship. Hence, if a person begins to "drift away," it is not from some static condition or "state" but *from a Person*. It is a personal relationship that thereby is betrayed, broken, forfeited; this is the tragic meaning of apostasy. It is not so much giving up something, even so marvelous as salvation, but the forsaking of a Person. Surely through such an action salvation too is forfeited. But the critical matter is the severing of a relationship with the personal God.<sup>[65]</sup>

Marshall finds four biblical dangers that could serve as precursors to committing apostasy.<sup>[66]</sup>

- 1. Persecution by Unbelievers** – "Believers ... are frequently tempted to give up their faith because of the difficulties of maintaining it amid fierce opposition."
- 2. Accepting False Doctrine** – "Whatever form this presents itself ... the temptation is to blunt the edge of faith in Jesus Christ and ultimately to destroy it altogether."
- 3. Temptation to Sin** – "The significance of this form of temptation is that it causes the believer to deny the power of God to preserve him from sinning, to return to the very things from which he was saved by belief in Christ (and which by their nature exclude a man from the kingdom of God), and to perform those acts which are expressly forbidden by the Lord ... In other words, sin is an act and attitude which is incompatible with the obedience of faith, and hence constitutes a denial of faith."
- 4. Weariness in Faith** – This is where "the believer gradually drifts away from his faith and passes into a state of apostasy."

Marshall concludes: "The New Testament contains too many warnings about the danger of sin and apostasy for us to be complacent about these possibilities.... These dangers are real and not 'hypothetical.'"<sup>[67]</sup> Methodist scholar Ben Witherington would add: "The New Testament suggests that one is not eternally secure until one is securely in eternity. Short of that, there is the possibility of apostasy or rebellion against God by one who has believed in Christ. Apostasy, however, is not to be confused with the notion of accidentally or unconsciously "falling away." Apostasy is a conscious, wilful rebellion against God ... Unless one commits such an act of apostasy or rebellion, one need not worry about one's salvation, for God has a firm grip on the believer."<sup>[68]</sup>

## Biblical support

Below are some of the key Scriptures that Arminians have used to defend conditional security and the possibility of apostasy.

### Scriptures used to support conditional security

- **Deuteronomy 29:18-20** - "Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the LORD our God to go and worship the gods of those nations; make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison. When such a person hears the words of this oath, he invokes a blessing on himself and therefore thinks, 'I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way.' ... The LORD will never be willing to forgive him; his wrath and zeal will burn against that man. All the curses written in this book will fall upon him, and the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven." (NIV)<sup>[69]</sup>
- **2 Chronicles 15:1-2** - The Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded, and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The LORD is with you while you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you. (ESV)<sup>[70]</sup>
- **Ezekiel 18:20-24** - "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live. Do I

have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" says the Lord GOD, "and not that he should turn from his ways and live? But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die." (NKJV)<sup>[71]</sup>

- **Matthew 5:27-30** - [Jesus said] "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell." (NIV)<sup>[72]</sup>
- **Matthew 10:16-17, 21-22** - [Jesus is speaking to his 12 disciples] "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles... Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved." (ESV)<sup>[73]</sup>
- **Matthew 10:32-33** - [Jesus is speaking to his 12 disciples] "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven." (NASB)<sup>[74]</sup>
- **Luke 8:11-13** - [Jesus said] "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away." (ESV)<sup>[75]</sup>
- **John 12:24-26** - [Jesus said] "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him." (ESV)<sup>[76]</sup>
- **John 15:1-6** - [Jesus is speaking to his 11 disciples minus Judas] "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vineyard keeper. Every branch in Me that does not produce fruit He removes, and He prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in Me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in Me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without Me. If anyone does not remain in Me, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers. They gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned." (HCSB)<sup>[77]</sup>
- **Acts 14:21-22** - They [Paul and Barnabas] preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. (NIV)<sup>[78]</sup>
- **Romans 8:12-13** - So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. (NASB)<sup>[79]</sup>
- **Romans 11:19-21** - Then you will say, "Branches were cut off so that I could be grafted in." That's right! They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you remain only because of faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid! For if God did not spare the natural branches, he certainly will not spare you either. Consider, then, the kindness and severity of God: his severity toward those who fell, but God's kindness toward you—if you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you too will be cut off. (ISV)<sup>[80]</sup>

- **1 Corinthians 3:16-17** - Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple. (NIV)<sup>[81]</sup>
- **1 Corinthians 6:7-11** - The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers. Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (NIV, 1984)<sup>[82]</sup>
- **1 Corinthians 8:9-13** - Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak. For if someone with a weak conscience sees you, with all your knowledge, eating in an idol's temple, won't that person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols? So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause them to fall. (NIV)<sup>[83]</sup>
- **1 Corinthians 9:24-27** - Do you not know that the runners in a stadium all race, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Now everyone who competes exercises self-control in everything. However, they do it to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one. Therefore I do not run like one who runs aimlessly, or box like one who beats the air. Instead, I discipline my body and bring it under strict control, so that after preaching to others, I myself will not be disqualified. (HCSB)<sup>[84]</sup>
- **1 Corinthians 10:7-8, 11-12** - Don't become idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and got up to play. Let us not commit sexual immorality as some of them did, and in a single day 23,000 people fell dead... Now these things happened to them as examples, and they were written as a warning to us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore, whoever thinks he stands must be careful not to fall! (HCSB)<sup>[85]</sup>
- **1 Corinthians 15:1-2** - Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. (ESV)<sup>[86]</sup>
- **Galatians 1:6-9** - I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse! (NIV)<sup>[87]</sup>
- **Galatians 5:2-4** - Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.<sup>[88]</sup>
- **Galatians 5:16,19-21** - But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.... Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (ESV)<sup>[89]</sup>
- **Galatians 6:7-10** - Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the

household of faith. (ESV)<sup>[90]</sup>

- **Ephesians 5:3-7** - But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them. (NIV)<sup>[91]</sup>
- **Colossians 1:21-23** - And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard. (ESV)<sup>[92]</sup>
- **1 Timothy 1:18-19** - This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. (NASB)<sup>[93]</sup>
- **1 Timothy 4:1** - But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons. (NASB)<sup>[94]</sup>
- **1 Timothy 4:13-16** - Until I [Paul] come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching... Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers. (NIV)<sup>[95]</sup>
- **Hebrews 2:1-4** - We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. For since the message spoken through angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will. (NIV)<sup>[96]</sup>
- **Hebrews 3:7-14** - So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the wilderness, where your ancestors tested and tried me, though for forty years they saw what I did. That is why I was angry with that generation; I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.' So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'" See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end. (NIV)<sup>[97]</sup>
- **Hebrews 6:4-8** - For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned. (ESV)<sup>[98]</sup>
- **Hebrews 10:26-31** - For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know the One who has said, Vengeance belongs to Me, I will repay, and again, The Lord will judge His people. It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God!(ESV)<sup>[99]</sup>

- **Hebrews 10:36-39** - For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls. (ESV)<sup>[100]</sup>
- **Hebrews 12:1-13** - Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. (ESV)<sup>[101]</sup>
- **Hebrews 12:14-17** - Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done. (NIV)<sup>[102]</sup>
- **Hebrews 12:18-29** - For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear." But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken--that is, things that have been made--in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire. (ESV)<sup>[103]</sup>
- **James 1:12** - Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. (NIV)<sup>[104]</sup>
- **James 5:19-20** - My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins. (ESV)<sup>[105]</sup>
- **2 Peter 1:8-11** - For if these qualities [faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly affection, love] are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that

he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.<sup>[106]</sup>

- **2 Peter 2:20-22** - For if, after escaping the world's corruptions through a full knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus, the Messiah, they are again entangled and conquered by those corruptions, then their last condition is worse than their former one. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than to know it and turn their backs on the holy commandment that was committed to them. The proverb is true that describes what has happened to them: "A dog returns to its vomit," and "A pig that is washed goes back to wallow in the mud." (ISV)<sup>[107]</sup>
- **2 Peter 3:16-17** - Some things in them [Paul's letters] are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, leading to their own destruction, as they do the rest of the Scriptures. And so, dear friends, since you already know these things, continually be on your guard not to be carried away by the deception of lawless people. Otherwise, you may fall from your secure position. (ISV)<sup>[108]</sup>
- **Jude 20-21** - But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. (ESV)<sup>[109]</sup>
- **Revelation 2:10-11** - "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I [Jesus] will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death." (NASB)<sup>[110]</sup>
- **Revelation 3:4-5** - "But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels." (NASB)<sup>[111]</sup>
- **Revelation 3:10-11** - "Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown." (NASB)<sup>[112]</sup>
- **Revelation 21:7-8** - He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. (NASB)<sup>[113]</sup>

Arminians find further support for conditional security from numerous Scriptures where the verb "believes" occurs in the Greek present tense.<sup>[114]</sup> Greek scholars and commentators (both Calvinist and non-Calvinist) have noted that Greek present tense verbs refer to *ongoing or continuing action*.<sup>[115]</sup> Greek scholar J. Harold Greenlee supplies a literal translation of several verses where the Greek word translated "believes" (in our modern translations) occurs in the tense of continuing action.<sup>[116]</sup>

John 3:15, "...in order that everyone believing may have eternal life in him."

John 3:16, "...in order that everyone believing in him should not perish but should have eternal life."

John 3:36, "The one believing on the Son has eternal life."

John 5:24, "The one hearing my word and believing him who sent me has eternal life."

John 6:35, "the one believing in me shall never thirst."

John 6:40, "...that everyone beholding the Son and believing in him should have eternal life."

John 6:47, "The one believing has eternal life."

John 11:25, 26, "The one believing in me, even though he dies he shall live; and everyone living and believing in me shall never die."

John 20:31, "...in order that by means of believing you may have life in his name."

Romans 1:16, "it is the power of God to salvation to everyone believing."

1 Corinthians 1:21, "it pleased God ... to save the one believing."

This type of evidence leads Arminians to conclude that *"eternal security is firmly promised to 'the one believing'—the person who continues to believe in Christ."*<sup>[117]</sup> Indeed, "True security rests in the fact that saving faith is not a single historical act, but a present-tense, up-to-date, continuing process."<sup>[118]</sup>

## Scriptures that appear to contradict conditional security

Those who hold to perseverance of the saints cite a number of verses to support their view. The following are some of the most commonly cited:

- **John 5:24** - Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. (ESV)
- **John 6:37-39** - All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. (ESV)
- **John 10:27-29** - My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. (ESV)
- **John 17:12** - While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. (ESV)
- **Romans 8:1** - There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (ESV)
- **Romans 8:35,37-39** - Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (ESV)
- **1 Corinthians 1:8-9** - [God] who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. (ESV)
- **1 Corinthians 10:13** - No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. (ESV)
- **Ephesians 1:13-14** - In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (ESV)
- **Philippians 1:6** - And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. (ESV)
- **2 Timothy 4:18** - The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (ESV)
- **Hebrews 7:25** - Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. (NASB)
- **1 Peter 1:5** - ... who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (NASB)
- **1 John 3:9** - No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. (NIV)
- **Jude 24-25** - To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ



our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen. (NIV)

Arminians would argue that they have adequately provided explanations for how these verses and others can be easily reconciled with conditional security.<sup>[119]</sup>

## Comparisons to opposing doctrines

A major difference between traditional Calvinists and Arminians is how they define *apostasy* (see Perseverance of the saints for the definition as it is referred to here). Traditional Calvinists say apostasy refers to people who fall away (apostatize) from a *profession of faith*, but who have never actually entered into a saving relationship with God through Christ.<sup>[120]</sup> As noted earlier, Arminians understand that apostasy refers to a believer who has departed from a genuine saving relationship with God by developing "an evil, unbelieving heart." (Hebrews 3:12)

In traditional Calvinism the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints "does not stand alone but is a necessary part of the Calvinistic system of theology."<sup>[121]</sup> The Calvinist doctrines of Unconditional Election and Irresistible Grace "logically imply the certain salvation of those who receive these blessings."<sup>[122]</sup> If God has eternally and unconditionally elected (chosen) some men to eternal life, and if His Spirit irresistibly applies to them the benefits of salvation, then the inescapable conclusion is that these persons will be saved forever.<sup>[123]</sup> Arminians acknowledge that the Calvinistic system is logically tight, but do not accept their doctrines of unconditional election and irresistible grace which make perseverance inevitable.<sup>[124]</sup>

On a practical level, Traditional Calvinism and Arminianism agree that Christians have security through a *living and persevering faith*.<sup>[125]</sup> Anthony Hoekema, longtime Professor of Calvin Theological Seminary, stated: "Peter puts it vividly: We are kept by the power of God *through faith* [1 Peter 1:5]—a living faith, which expresses itself through love (Galatians 5:6). In other words, we may never simply rest on the comfort of God's preservation apart from the continuing exercise of faith."<sup>[126]</sup> Hoekema even writes that he agrees with Arminian writer Robert Shank when he says,

There is no warrant in the New Testament for that strange at-ease-in-Zion definition of perseverance which assures Christians that perseverance is inevitable and relieves them of the necessity of deliberately persevering in faith, encouraging them to place confidence in some past act or experience.<sup>[127]</sup>

The non-traditional Calvinist or Free Grace view disagrees with Traditional Calvinists and Arminians in holding that saving faith in Christ *must* continue in order for a person to remain secure in their saving relationship with God.<sup>[128]</sup> Joseph Dillow writes:

Even though Robert Shank would not agree, it is definitely true that saving faith is "the act of a single moment whereby all the benefits of Christ's life, death, and resurrection suddenly become the irrevocable possession of the individual, per se, despite any and all eventualities."<sup>[129]</sup>

Any and all eventualities would include falling away or walking away from the Christian faith and to "cease believing."<sup>[130]</sup> What a Christian forfeits when he falls away is not his saving relationship with God but the opportunity to reign with Christ in his coming kingdom.<sup>[131]</sup> Traditional Calvinists<sup>[132]</sup> and Arminians would strongly disagree with this view on biblical and theological grounds.<sup>[133]</sup> J. Rodman Williams represents well the opinion of Arminians on this view:

Any claim to security by virtue of the great salvation we have in Christ without regard to the need for continuing in faith is totally mistaken and possibly tragic in its results... A doctrine of "perseverance of the saints" that does not affirm its occurrence through faith is foreign to Scripture, a serious theological misunderstanding, and a liability to Christian existence.<sup>[134]</sup>

## Denominations that affirm the possibility of apostasy

The following denominations affirm their belief in the possibility of apostasy in either their articles or statements of faith, or by way of a position paper.

- Roman Catholic<sup>[135]</sup>
- Eastern Orthodox Church<sup>[136]</sup>
- Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod<sup>[137]</sup>
- The United Methodist Church<sup>[138]</sup>
- Free Methodist Church<sup>[139]</sup>
- General Association of General Baptists<sup>[140]</sup>
- The Salvation Army<sup>[141]</sup>
- Church of the Nazarene<sup>[142]</sup>
- Assembly of God<sup>[143]</sup>
- National Association of Free Will Baptists<sup>[144]</sup>
- Missionary Church<sup>[145]</sup>
- Anabaptist-Mennonite Tradition<sup>[146]</sup>
- Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region<sup>[147]</sup>

## Notes

[1] [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Template:Five\\_Articles&action=edit](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Template:Five_Articles&action=edit)

[2] <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Template:Arminianism&action=edit>

[3] James Arminius, *The Works of Arminius*, 2:465, 466; 3:412, 413. Mark A. Ellis, *The Arminian Confession of 1621*, 77–78; 112–13. The Confession was primarily composed by Arminius' protégé Simon Episcopius (1583–1643), and approved by the Remonstrant Pastors in 1620. The first Dutch edition was published in 1621 and the Latin edition in 1622. For more background on the Confession see the "Introduction" by Ellis, v-xiii). French L. Arrington, *Unconditional Eternal Security: Myth or Truth?*, 63, 180. Stephen M. Ashby, "Reformed Arminianism," *Four Views on Eternal Security*, 163–166. Frederick W. Claybrook, *Once Saved, Always Saved? A New Testament Study of Apostasy*, 216–218. I. Howard Marshall, *Kept by the Power of God: A Study of Perseverance and Falling Away*, 210. David Pawson, *Once Saved, Always Saved? A Study in Perseverance and Inheritance*, 18–21. Robert Picirilli, *Grace, Faith, Free Will. Contrasting Views of Salvation: Calvinism and Arminianism*, 191. W. T. Purkiser, *Security: The False and the True*, 27–33. Robert Shank, *Life in the Son: A Study of the Doctrine of Perseverance*, 51–71. John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 10:284–298. J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology: Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective*, 2:119–127. Dale Yocum, *Creeeds in Contrast: A Study in Calvinism and Arminianism*, 128–129.

[4] Shank, *Life in the Son*, 92; cf. Arrington, *Unconditional Eternal Security: Myth or Truth?* 182. Marshall writes: "The Christian life is a life which is continually sustained by the power of God. It does not merely depend upon a once-for-all gift of God received in the moment of conversion, but is a continual relationship to God in which His gracious gifts are received by faith" (*Kept by the Power*, 22).

[5] Shank, *Life in the Son*, 116. cf. Williams, *Renewal Theology* 2:127, 134–135. Brenda Colijn writes: "Salvation is not a transaction but an ongoing relationship between the Rescuer and the rescued, between the Healer and the healed. The best way to ensure faithfulness is to nurture that relationship. Final salvation, like initial salvation, is appropriated by grace through faith(fulness) (Eph 2:8–10; 1 Pet 1:5)... Salvation is not a one-time event completed at conversion. It involves a growth in relationship ... that is not optional or secondary but is essential to what salvation means" (*Images of Salvation in the New Testament*, 140–141).

[6] Shank, *Life in the Son*, 116. In another place Shank writes: "The faith on which our union with Christ depends is not the act of some past moment. It is a present living faith in a living Savior" (*Life in the Son*, 66).

[7] Shank, *Life in the Son*, 43, 116.

[8] Shank, *Life in the Son*, 7, 197, 218–219; Arrington, *Unconditional Eternal Security: Myth or Truth?* 182; Claybrook, *Once Saved, Always Saved? A New Testament Study of Apostasy*, 24–25. Brenda Colijn writes: "The New Testament nowhere supports an understanding of saving faith as mere intellectual assent divorced from obedience. Saving faith entails faithfulness. Believers are saved by grace through faith for works (Eph 2:8–10). According to Hebrews, Jesus is 'the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him' (Heb 5:9). The 'things that belong to salvation' include faithfulness, patience and loving service (Heb 6:9–12). As James points out, the faith necessary for salvation is a faith that expresses itself in works (James 2:14–17)" (*Images of Salvation in the New Testament*, 140).

[9] *The Arminian Confession of 1621*, 76, 111.

[10] *The Arminian Confession of 1621*, 74; see also 78–80. John Wesley wrote: "But he [Christ] has done all which was necessary for the conditional salvation of all mankind; that is, if they believe; for through his merits all that believe to the end, with the faith that worketh by love, shall be saved (*The Works of John Wesley*, "An Extract from 'A Short View of the Differences Between the Moravian Brethren,'" 10:202).

[11] Shank, *Life in the Son*, 55 fn. 3; cf. Marshall, *Kept by the Power of God*, 199–200; Williams, *Renewal Theology*, 2:120–122, 130–135.

- [12] Shank, *Life in the Son*, 59, 211; Ashby, "Reformed Arminianism," 123, 163.
- [13] Marshall, *Kept by the Power of God*, 157; Shank, *Life in the Son*, 158-164, 262; Arrington, *Unconditional Eternal Security: Myth or Truth?* 180.
- [14] Picirilli, *Grace, Faith, Free Will*, 201; Ashby, "Reformed Arminianism," 123-125, 167; Arrington, *Unconditional Eternal Security: Myth or Truth?* 62; *The Works of John Wesley*, 10:297-298.
- [15] Picirilli, *Grace, Faith, Free Will*, 207; Arrington, *Unconditional Eternal Security: Myth or Truth?* 184-185.
- [16] *Grace, Faith, Free Will*, 183.
- [17] *Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up: A New Look at Today's Evangelical Church in the Light of Early Christianity*, 65. For quotes that appear to support his conclusions see "Salvation," in *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, edited by David Bercot, 574-585, 586-591. See also the article in the External Links by Calvinist John Jefferson Davis titled: "The Perseverance of the Saints: A History of the Doctrine," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34:2 (June 1991), 213-228. He covers the key people and groups that have discussed this topic from Augustine (354-430) to 1981. For a helpful overview see B. J. Oropeza's "Apostasy and Perseverance in Church History" in *Paul and Apostasy: Eschatology, Perseverance, and Falling Away in the Corinthian Congregation*, 1-33. From his research Oropeza makes three observations concerning apostasy and perseverance in Pre-Reformation Church History. First, there were three basic venues which could lead a Christian to apostatize: theological heresies; vices (i.e., temptations to fall back into pre-conversion practices like idolatry, immorality, etc.); and persecution. Second, those who apostatized were excommunicated from the church. Third, "the notion of perseverance involved patient endurance through persecutions and temptations" (*Paul and Apostasy*, 12).
- [18] *Works of Arminius*, 3:438.
- [19] *Works of Arminius*, 2:472-473.
- [20] *Works of Arminius*, 2:219-220. William Nichols notes: "Arminius spoke nearly the same modest words when interrogated on this subject in the last Conference which he had with Gomar [a Calvinist], before the states of Holland, on the 12th of Aug. 1609, only two months prior to his decease" (*Works of Arminius*, 1:665). Oropeza says, "Although Arminius denied having taught final apostasy in his *Declaration of Sentiments*, in the *Examination of the Treatise of Perkins on the Order and Mode of Predestination* he writes that a person who is being 'built' into the church of Christ may resist the continuation of this process. Concerning the believers, 'It may suffice to encourage them, if they know that no power or prudence can dislodge them from the rock, unless they of their own will forsake their position.' [*Works of Arminius*, 3:455, cf. 1:667] A believing member of Christ may become slothful, give place to sin, and gradually die altogether, ceasing to be a member. [*Works of Arminius*, 3:458] The covenant of God (Jeremiah 23) 'does not contain in itself an impossibility of defection from God, but a promise of the gift of fear, whereby they shall be hindered from going away from God so long as that shall flourish in their hearts.' If there is any consistency in Arminius' position, he did not seem to deny the possibility of falling away" (*Paul and Apostasy*, 16).
- [21] *Works of Arminius*, 2:465; cf. 2:466.
- [22] *Works of Arminius*, 3:412; cf. 3:413. For a more in-depth look at how Arminius responded to the issue of the believer's security, see External Link: "James Arminius: The Security of the Believer and the Possibility of Apostasy."
- [23] Philip Schaff, editor. *The Creeds of Christendom Volume III: The Evangelical Protestant Creeds*, "The Articles of the Remonstrants," 3:548-549.
- [24] Peter Y. DeJong, *Crisis in the Reformed Churches: Essays in Commemoration of the Great Synod of Dordt*, 1618-1619, 220ff. See External Link for full treatment.
- [25] *Grace, Faith, Free Will*, 198.
- [26] Oropeza, *Paul and Apostasy*, 17.
- [27] Goodwin's work was primarily dedicated to refuting the Calvinist doctrine of limited atonement, but he digresses from his main topic and spends 300 pages attempting to disprove the Calvinist doctrine of unconditional perseverance. See *Redemption Redeemed*, 226-527. Several Calvinists responded to Goodwin's book, and he provides a lengthy rejoinder in *Triumviri* (1658). See also Goodwin's *Christian Theology* (1836): "Apostasy," 394-428.
- [28] *The Examination of Tilenus Before the Triers, in Order to His Intended Settlement in the Office of a Public Preacher, in the Commonwealth of Utupia: Whereupon Are Annexed The Tenets of the Remonstrants, Touching Those Five Articles Voted, Stated, and Emposed, but Not Disputed, at the Synod of Dort. Together with a Short Essay, by Way of Annotations, Upon the Fundamental Theses of Mr. Thomas Parker* (1638): see "The Fifth Article Touching Perseverance," 138-150; see also *The Calvinists Cabinet Unlock'd* (1659): 436-519.
- [29] *A Complete System, or Body of Divinity, both Speculative and Practical: Founded on Scripture and Reason*: 799-820.
- [30] See *A Discourse on the Five Points*: 330-397.
- [31] *The Works of John Wesley*, 10:288. In his Sermon: "The Repentance of Believers," Wesley proclaimed, "For, by that faith in his life, death, and intercession for us, renewed from moment to moment, we are every whit clean, and there is ... now no condemnation for us ... By the same faith we feel the power of Christ every moment resting upon us ... whereby we are enabled to continue in spiritual life ... As long as we retain our faith in him, we 'draw water out of the wells of salvation'" (*The Works of John Wesley*, 5:167).
- [32] *The Works of John Wesley*, 10:297.
- [33] *The Works of John Wesley*, 10:297.
- [34] *The Works of John Wesley*, 10:298.
- [35] *The Works of John Wesley*, 10:298.
- [36] *A Full Refutation of the Doctrine of Unconditional Perseverance: In a Discourse on Hebrews 2:3* (1790).
- [37] *The Works of the Reverend John Fletcher* (1851): 2:129-260.

- [38] See notes in Hebrews 10:26-27, 38-39, in Joseph Benson's commentary *The New Testament of our Lord and Savior*, Volume 2: Romans to Revelation (1847).
- [39] *Objections to the Calvinistic Doctrine of Final Perseverance* (18??).
- [40] *Christian Theology* (1835): 413-420.
- [41] *The Errors of Hopkinsianism Detected and Refuted. Six Letters to the Rev. S. Williston, Pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Durham, N.Y.* (1815): 215-255; *The Reformer Reformed or a Second Part of the Errors of Hopkinsianism Detected and Refuted: Being an Examination of Mr. Seth Williston's "Vindication of Some of the Most Essential Doctrines of the Reformation"* (1818): 168-206.
- [42] *Theological Institutes* (1851): Volume 2, Chapter 25.
- [43] *A Complete System of Christian Theology: or a Concise, Comprehensive, and Systematic View of the Evidences, Doctrines, Morals, and Institutions of Christianity* (1869): 455-466.
- [44] *Elements of Theology: or an Exposition of the Divine Origin, Doctrines, Morals and Institutions of Christianity* (1856): 163-169; 319-320.
- [45] *Theological Compend* (1862): 81; see also John 15:2, 6; 1 Corinthians 9:27; 10:12; Romans 11:22; Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-29; 2 Peter 1:8-11; Revelation 3:5 in *The People's Commentary* (1878), co-authored with Daniel Steele.
- [46] *An Examination of the Doctrine of the Unconditional Final Perseverance of the Saints as Taught by Calvinists* (1860).
- [47] see notes on John 15:1-6 in *A Popular Commentary on the New Testament* Volume 2: Luke-John (1874).
- [48] *Elements of Divinity: or, A Course of Lectures, Comprising a Clear and Concise View of the System of Theology as Taught in the Holy Scriptures; with Appropriate Questions Appended to Each Lecture* (1851): 369-381.
- [49] *Systematic Theology: A Complete Body of Wesleyan Arminian Divinity Consisting of Lectures on the Twenty-Five Articles of Religion* (1888): 2:173-210.
- [50] *Perseverance and Apostasy: Being an Argument in Proof of the Arminian Doctrine on that Subject* (1871).
- [51] *Systematic Theology* (1894), 2:268-270.
- [52] *Arminianism v. Hyper-Calvinism*, 45, 70, 74-75, 180-187.
- [53] *Calvinism As It Is: in a Series of Letters Addressed to Rev. N. L. Rice D.D. by Rev. R. S. Foster* (1854): 179-194.
- [54] *A Compendium of Christian Theology: Being Analytical Outlines of a Course of Theological Study, Biblical, Dogmatic, Historical* (1879), 3:131-147; *A Higher Catechism of Theology* (1883): 276-291.
- [55] *The Earnest Christian*, "To Perdition," Vol. 43 (Feb 1882) No. 2, 37-39; *The Earnest Christian*, "Kept from Falling," Vol. 50 (Dec 1885) No. 6, 165-168; *Holiness Teachings: The Life and Works of B.T. Roberts* (1893), Chapter 21, 35.
- [56] *Antinomianism Revived or the Theology of the So-Called Plymouth Brethren Examined and Refuted* (1887): 157-158; *Steele's Answers* (1912): 73, 142.
- [57] *The Student's Handbook of Christian Theology* (1870): 220-224.
- [58] *A Manuel of Christian Doctrine* (1902): 225-226.
- [59] *A Manuel of Theology* (1906): 293-295; see also his notes on Romans 11:11-24 in "A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans (1877).
- [60] I am unable to find any published work from a pastor or theologian (from 1618 to the present) that called themselves an "Arminian" while holding to unconditional perseverance.
- [61] *Life in the Son*, 157-158. Richard A. Muller offers this definition of apostasy (Greek *apostasía*): "a willful falling away from, or rebellion against, Christian truth. Apostasy is the rejection of Christ by one who has been a Christian ..." (*Dictionary of Greek and Latin Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology*, 41). In *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Walter Bauer had this to say on *aphistēmi* (Fall, Fall Away): "Of theological importance is falling away in the religious sense... 1 Timothy 4:1 describes 'falling away from the faith' in the last days in terms of falling into false, heretical beliefs. Luke 8:13 probably refers to apostasy as a result of eschatological temptation. Here are people who have come to believe, who have received the gospel 'with joy.' But under the pressure of persecution and tribulation arising because of the faith, they break off the relationship with God into which they have entered. According to Hebrews 3:12, apostasy consists in an unbelieving and self-willed movement away from God (in contrast to Hebrews 3:14), which must be prevented at all costs. *aphistēmi* thus connotes in the passages just mentioned the serious situation of becoming separated from the living God after a previous turning towards him, by falling away from the faith. It is a movement of unbelief and sin, which can also be expressed by other words (cf. the par. to Luke 8:13 in Matthew 13:21; Mark 4:17; [see] Offence, art. *skandalon*). Expressions equivalent in meaning to the warning in 1 Timothy 4:1 include *nauageō*, suffer shipwreck, 1:19; *astochēō* miss the mark, 1:6; 6:21; 2 Timothy 2:18; cf. also *aperchomai*, go away, John 6:66; *apostrophō*, turn away; *arneomai*, deny; *metatithēmi*, change, alter; *mē menein*, do not abide, John 15:6; [see] art. *piptō*; Lead Astray, art. *planaō*; and the pictures of defection in Matthew 24:9-12, and Revelation 13." (3:607-608)
- [62] *Kept by the Power*, 217, note 5; cf. Williams, *Renewal Theology*, 2:131-135.
- [63] *Kept by the Power*, 23; These are the other Greek words connected to apostasy: "[*piptō*], 'to fall' (Romans 11:11, 22; 14:4; 1 Corinthians 10:12; 13:8; Hebrews 4:11; Revelation 2:5); [*parapiptō*], 'to fall away, transgress' (Hebrews 6:6); [*pararrheō*], 'to drift away' (Hebrews 2:1); the root [*skandal-*], 'to stumble, offend' is also important" (Marshall, *Kept by the Power*, 217, note 4).
- [64] *Life in the Son*, 158.
- [65] *Renewal Theology*, 2:135.
- [66] *Kept by the Power*, 197; see also Arrington, *Unconditional Eternal Security: Myth or Truth?* 178-179.
- [67] *Kept by the Power*, 198-199; cf. Arrington, *Unconditional Eternal Security: Myth or Truth?* 179.
- [68] *John's Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel*, 386, fn. 28).

- [69] Joseph Benson: Verse 18. *Lest there be among you man or woman* — These words are to be considered as connected with verses 14, 15, and as signifying the end for which he engaged them to renew their covenant with God, that none of them might revolt from him to serve other gods. *Lest there should be a root* — An evil heart inclining you to such cursed idolatry, and bringing forth bitter fruits: or rather, some secret or subtle apostate from the true God and his religion, secretly lurking and working as a root under ground, and spreading his poison to the infection of others; for both the foregoing and following words speak of some particular person... Verse 19. *The words of this curse* — This oath and execration, wherein he swore he would keep covenant with God, and that with a curse pronounced against himself if he did not perform it. *Bless himself* — Flatter himself in his own eyes with vain hopes, as if God did not mind such things, and either could not, or would not punish them. *Peace* — Safety and prosperity. *My own heart* — Though I do not follow God's command, but my own devices... This is well deserving of our most serious consideration. Moses here assures the Israelites that, how much soever they might flatter themselves with hopes of peace and safety on account of their privileges, none of these would avail them at all if they forsook the law of God, and apostatized from his worship and service... Let us all take warning by this, and neither as a nation nor as individuals dare to promise ourselves security and peace while we *walk in the imagination of our own hearts*, and live in sin and forgetfulness of God. (*The Old Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*, Obtained from the Wesleyan Heritage Collection CD [Rio: Ages Software Inc., 2002])
- [70] Adam Clarke: "This is the settled and eternal purpose of God; to them who seek him he will ever be found propitious, and them alone will he abandon who forsake him. In this verse the unconditional perseverance of the saints has no place." (*A Commentary and Critical Notes on the Holy Bible Old and New Testaments*, Obtained from the Wesleyan Heritage Collection CD [Rio: Ages Software Inc., 2002])
- [71] Adam Clarke: Verse 20. *The soul that sinneth, it shall die.*] Hitherto we have had to do with the *simple cases* or the *righteous* and the *wicked*; of him who *lived and died a holy man*, and of him who *lived and died a wicked man*. But there are *two cases* behind: 1. That of the *wicked man*, who *repents and turns to God*. 2. That of the *righteous man*, who *backslides*, and *does not return to God* by repentance... Verse 24. *When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness*] Here is the *second case*. Can a man who was once holy and pure fall away so as to perish everlastingly? YES. For God says, "If he turn away from his righteousness;" not his *self-righteousness*, the gloss of theologians: for God never speaks of turning away from *that*, for, in his eyes, that is a *nonentity*. There is no righteousness or holiness but what himself infuses into the soul of man, and as to *self-righteousness*, i.e., a man's *supposing* himself to be *righteous* when he has not the *life of God* in his soul, it is the delusion of a dark and hardened heart; therefore it is the real *righteous principle* and *righteous practice* that God speaks of here. And he tells us, that a man may so "turn away from this," and so "commit iniquity," and "act as the wicked man," that *his righteousness shall be no more mentioned* to his account, than the *sins* of the *penitent backslider* should be *mentioned* to his condemnation; and "in the sin that he" this once righteous man, "hath sinned, and in the trespass that he hath trespassed, in them shall he die." O, how awful a termination of a life once distinguished for righteousness and true holiness! So then, God himself informs us that a *righteous man* may not only *fall foully*, but *fall finally*. But to such righteous persons the devil will ever preach, "Ye shall not surely die; ye shall be as God." Touch, taste, and handle; ye cannot ultimately fall. Thus we find, by the manner of treating these *two cases*, that *God's way* is equal, ver. 25; just, merciful, and impartial. And to prove this, he sums up his conduct in the above cases, in the following verses, 26-29. And then, that the "wicked may not die in his sins," and that the "backslider may return and find mercy," he thus exhorts: [Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, verse 30]. (*A Commentary and Critical Notes on the Holy Bible Old and New Testaments*, Obtained from the Wesleyan Heritage Collection CD [Rio: Ages Software Inc., 2002])
- [72] R.T. France: To "cause to stumble" (*skandalizō*) is a recurrent metaphor in Matthew; ... In some of these cases the passive denotes "being offended" by a person's behavior or teaching (11:6; 13:57; 15:12; 17:27), a relatively mild sense of the verb. But often it denotes something more catastrophic, a stumbling which deflects a person from the path of God's will and salvation (13:21; 18:6; 24:10; 26:31-33), and a "stumbling block" is a person or thing which gets in the way of God's saving purpose (13:41; 16:23; 18:7). In the case of the disciples' stumbling in Gethsemane (26:31-33) the effect was not terminal, but here and in 18:8-9 (and by implication in 13:21) the stumbling involves the final loss of salvation [Gehenna/Hell] ... The theme is impediments to ultimate salvation, and the importance of eliminating them at all costs, a theme which could have many different applications to relationships, activities, mental attitudes, and the like, certainly not only to sexual temptation. (*The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007], 205-206)
- [73] Joseph Benson: *But he that endureth to the end shall be saved*—But be not discouraged at the prospect of these trials, for he that perseveres in the faith and practice of the gospel, and who bears constantly and with invincible patience these persecutions, (which my grace is sufficient to enable you all to do,) shall be finally and eternally saved from all sin and misery, into the kingdom and glory of God: whatever extremities he may be called to suffer in this world, God will not only deliver him from the destruction which shall come upon the wicked, but will repay his fidelity with unspeakable and everlasting felicity in the next. (*The New Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*, Obtained from the Wesleyan Heritage Collection CD [Rio: Ages Software Inc., 2002])
- [74] Grant Osborne: 10:32 Therefore, everyone who publicly confesses me before people ... The emphasis on the public nature of the witness ("before people") is part of the teaching in the sermon on "for my sake" (10:18) and "for my name's sake" (10:22) as well as the oneness between Jesus and his followers (10:24-25). Jesus is the focus of the mission. He has sent his disciples, and they are proclaiming his name. In fact, this also sums up their witness both in mission (10:5-15) and in the courtroom (10:18-21). The recipients in both situations are those persecuting the messengers. So this is witness in the midst of serious conflict. The term "confess" ... is used of confessing Jesus as Messiah (John 9:22) or Lord (Rom 10:9) and here has the idea of public proclamation of allegiance to Jesus 10:32 ... I will acknowledge before my Father in heaven ... The verbs are the same tense (future) in both clauses; for Jesus' followers it entails future witness, and for Jesus it becomes acknowledgment before the Father and the heavenly court (16:27; 25:31), undoubtedly on the day of judgment... Here the Son of Man on the throne confesses or denies people before the heavenly court... The passage here is not just meant for professional missionaries and preachers but also for everyday Christians as light bearers to the world. 10:33 But whoever denies me before people, I will also deny before

my Father in heaven ... There is an exact parallelism between vv. 32 and 33, with the obvious contrast being between acknowledging or denying Christ and the destiny that each brings about. This is a strong warning, for "to deny" ... here means to renounce Christ and is language of apostasy. [The word deny "points not to the mere failure to witness, but rather to the straightforward rejection of one's relationship to Jesus, that is, to open apostasy" (Dorothy J. Weaver, *Missionary Discourse*, 207 n183)] In this persecution passage, it means that people cave in to pressure and renounce Christ to avoid beating or death. It is clear that our status before God is completely tied to our relationship to Christ. Our eternal destiny depends on our acceptance or renunciation of Christ. Further, he along with God will be the Judge at the final judgment (cf. 7:21-23), and his witness about us will be the determining factor in where we spend eternity. At the same time, this is not just speaking of the apostate but also of the weak Christian who tries to remain anonymous, i.e., refuses to stand up for Christ at school or in the workplace. Such a one is, in effect, "ashamed" of Christ, and in another saying of Jesus on this same topic, he will be "ashamed" of that person (Mark 8:38) on the day of judgment. (*Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010], 402-403)

- [75] John Nolland: The seed is the word of God, and the first place it has fallen is along the path. The initial group hear, but get no real hold on the word of God. The Devil has no difficulty in extricating it from their hearts. In their case, no response of faith has bound the message to their hearts... which could have brought them salvation (cf. Acts 15:11; 16:31). The second group have a different problem. They "receive the word"—a mode of expression that indicates a right believing response to the gospel (Acts 8:14; 11:1; etc.)... The real potential of these newly germinated plants will only come to light when the pressures come on in some kind of trial. Just as the true deep loyalties of Jesus were put on trial in Luke 4:1-13, so will those of every respondent to the Christian gospel also be. If the rootedness is not there, the new life will wither away. Apostasy is the outcome. (*Word Biblical Commentary: Luke 1–9:20* [Dallas: Word Publishers, 1989], 388)
- [76] B. J. Oropeza: After Jesus speaks about his upcoming death (12:23-24) he proclaims in 12:25, "the one who loves his life loses it; the one who hates his life in this world will keep it for life eternal." In this variant, unlike any of its predecessors in the Synoptic texts, loving (φιλέω) and hating (μισέω) life are contrasted. And to love one's life is to lose it, and to hate it is to keep or protect (φυλάσσω) it. The contrast between love and hate may be borrowed from a Semitic idiom of preferring one thing over the other, and the idea is found in other Jesus sayings (Luke 14:26; Matt 10:37; cf. Matt 6:24; Gen 29:31-33; Deut 21:15). Compatible with Johannine themes . . . this saying includes the words "this world" and life as "eternal" . . . Eternal life involves salvation pertaining to the eschatological age to come, which is given to those who believe in Jesus (e.g., John 3:16). *This brings into sharper relief what is already found in the Synoptic parallels: this saying warns against falling away and losing eternal life.* Elsewhere in Johannine thought the "world" (κόσμος) is blind, unregenerate, and often hostile toward Jesus and believers (1:10, 29; 3:17; 6:51; 8:12; 9:39; 12:47; 15:18-20; 16:33; 17:13-16). Unbelievers live in this realm, and its destiny ends in destruction (John 3:16-18; 8:23-26; 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 1 John 2:15-17; 1 John 5:19). The Johannine believers are not to "love" the world, that is, be assimilated to its attitudes and values of lust, fleshly desires, and pride (cf. 1 John 2:15-16). The disciples of Jesus are not of the world, and the world hates them (John 17:14-16); the world exemplifies loveless behavior opposite of what the believers are to practice (1 John 3:10-13). The nuance of loving one's life in John 12:25, then, may be related to the notion of conforming to the world. Possibly this passage functioned as a warning for the Johannine community not to be conformed to the "world." More pointedly, however, love is contrasted with hate, and the followers of Jesus who "hate" their life keep it for eternal life. In the Johannine context Jesus declares this saying in relation to his upcoming death on the cross. As in the Synoptic texts, then, the saying is relevant to persecution and martyrdom, and a true disciple of Jesus must be willing to "hate" his/her life in the sense of be willing to lose it for the sake of Jesus (12:23-26). . . . In 12:25 . . . we see another glimpse of a Johannine warning against apostasy directed at authentic believers. . . . *John 12:25 and 15:6 both seem to be actual warnings in which the authentic voice of Jesus can still be heard through the Johannine narrative, and Jesus warns his faithful followers against committing apostasy.* Both passages likewise are set in a larger framework related to persecution. (In the Footsteps of Judas and Other Defectors: the Gospels, Acts, and Johannine Letters, Apostasy in the New Testament Communities, Volume 3 [Eugene: Cascade Books, 2011], 206-208)
- [77] B. J. Oropeza: In the vineyard pericope of John 15:1-17 Jesus claims himself as the true vine, the Father as the vine grower and pruner, and the disciples as the branches. Those disciples who abide (μένω) in Jesus will bear much fruit. Whereas in ancient Israel vineyard illustrations often represent the nation in terms of its unfaithfulness to God and his covenant (e.g., Isa 5; Ezek 15), the Johannine Jesus and his disciples represent a vine and branches that point to a restored Isaianic eschatological covenant with God's people. Those individuals who do not bear fruit and abide in the vine are cast off as a branch, dried up, and tossed into the fire for burning (John 15:6). The fruitless branches that God the Father cuts off in 15:2 and the ones that do not abide in 15:6 are probably the same. Presumably it is the Father who casts out the worthless branches in 15:6 also. *The reason they are cast away is because they do not abide or remain "in" Jesus (15:2). Likewise, Johannine thought does not allow for fruitless disciples to continue in the vine because bearing "fruit" in this context is directly related to loving one another and keeping Jesus' commandments* (John 15:7-17; cf. 1 John 2:3-5; 3:17-24; 4:21). Both of these ethical precepts are essential for true believers. These branches refer to Jesus' followers, not the unbelieving "Jews." John 15:2 presupposes that the branches belong to Jesus and abide "in" him; namely, these are believers who have an authentic relationship with Christ. This relationship involves believing in Jesus and having some sort of a mystical union with him . . . *Such a relationship reflects the later Christian communion typified by the Johannine community, who had spiritual fellowship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* (cf. 14:10, 17-23; 15:4-5, 10; 1 John 1:3; 2:24). More than this, *abiding in Jesus seems related to abiding in a covenant with him.* As we noticed in John 6, abiding is associated with Jesus in terms of eating and life, and these are directly informed by the "everlasting covenant" mentioned in Isa 54-56. To abide in Jesus and his words is to have eternal life and remain in a perpetual covenant related to loving one another and keeping his commandments. The influence of the covenant motif on the Johannine concept "to abide in" (μένω ἐν) is verified by Edward Malatesta, who examines the related Septuagint term ἐμμένω ἐν to affirm that contexts using this term in the Septuagint are similar to the "Johannine formulae"—they are related to keeping God's covenant, observing commandments, "fraternal" union, and divine mercy and love (Deut 27:26; Isa 30:18; Sir 6:20; 28:6; cf. Isa 5:1-11). Rekha Chennattu adds

that the covenantal motif may be seen as an undercurrent for John 15–16. He sums up important covenant elements from the Hebrew and Septuagint scriptures in terms of: 1) loving God and keeping his commands, 2) the community of God's public declaration of commitment to God, 3) God's promise of abiding presence, and 4) election and knowledge of God (e.g., Exod 19–24; Deut 26–32; Josh 24; Hos 2–6; Jer 4, 9, 31–33). Several aspects derived from earlier covenantal language are identified in John 15–16, including abiding in Jesus/God (John 15:4–10/LXX Deut 27:26; 30:18), keeping his commandments and bearing fruit (John 15:9–17/Exod 19:5; Josh 7:11; Jer 2:21; 3:13), and being God's chosen people (John 15:16–19/Duet 7:6; 14:2; Exod 19:5). Severe judgment awaits the people of God who fail to remain in God's covenant. *As failure to live up to keeping God's commandments resulted in Israel's destruction often by fire—so the disciples failure to keep Jesus' commandments would result in eschatological destruction* (John 15:6/Ezek 15:1–8; Isa 1:3–7, 31; 4:4; 5:1–6, 24; 6:13; Deut 29:10–28). The believers, if they do not continue to abide in Jesus, wither or "dry up" (ξηραίνω), are cast off from Jesus, and burned (John 15:6). The term ξηραίνω often appears in agricultural contexts, and perhaps significantly for our purposes it is found in Jesus' parable of the Sower where it refers to the drying up of the second seed sown on rocky soil, which refers to apostates (Mark 4:6; Matt 13:6; Luke 8:6; cf. *Herm. Sim.* 9.21.1–3). It is clearly evident that the person who is cut off like a branch in 15:6 was once part of the metaphoric vine. He once belonged to God's covenant people who, for John, are the community of Christ-followers. More specifically this individual represents a genuine believer who becomes apostate. The possibility of bona fide disciples committing apostasy makes necessary Jesus' instruction in 16:1–4. . . . The severed "branch" is not restored or engrafted back into the vine; it is thrown with other branches into the fire to be burned (15:6b). The defector in 15:1–6 is someone who truly abides in Jesus (cf. 15:2: ἐν ἐμοί), which could hardly be the case with the spurious followers in 1 John 2:19 . . . . The third person singulars in 15:6a [refer] . . . generally to any individual who abides in Christ and then is cast away (cf. the indefinite singular pronoun "anyone": τις). . . . Although the singular language in 15:6a focuses on an individual being cast away, such a person would seem to be joined by others, for in 15:6b the branches become plural with the neuter αὐτῶν: "they gather them" (i.e., the branches) to be cast into the fire and be burned. . . . *The individuals who face a danger of being cut off from Christ are those who already abide in him, which means that the apostasy described in 15:6 refers to authentic believers.* . . . Maloney may be correct when he writes that the gnomic aorist of the branch being cast away and withering suggests a "truth valid for all time and all potential disciples." The severity of these former believers being "burned" in fire in 15:6 has often been played down to the point of denying it has anything to do with eternal judgment. The identity of "they," the ones who gather the broken branches and toss them into the fire, seems deliberately ambiguous in John 15:6b. It probably alludes not only to farm helpers but also to the task of angels gathering up a final harvest of people at the culmination of the eschaton (Rev 14:14–20; Matt 13:36–43; cf. 24:31; 25:31–32). In agricultural imagery the wicked are occasionally represented as chaff and tares that are burned in eschatological fire (Matt 3:10, 12; 13:30, 39–42; Luke 3:17; cf. Matt 25:31–32, 41, 46; Rev 14:10–11; 20:10–15; 21:8). The picture we find in 15:6 may resemble the fiery imagery of Gehenna found in the Synoptic Gospels (e.g., Mark 9:42–47). In any case, whether by "fire" or some other means, elsewhere Johannine literature affirms that defectors will face eschatological destruction (10:10; 12:25; 17:12; 1 John 5:16). John 15:6 is another example of this. (*In the Footsteps of Judas and Other Defectors: the Gospels, Acts, and Johannine Letters*, Apostasy in the New Testament Communities, Volume 3:199–202) Also Donald Stamps: **15:2 every branch**. Jesus speaks of two categories of branches: fruitless and fruitful. (1) The branches that cease to bear fruit are those who no longer have the life in them that comes from enduring faith in and love for Christ. These "branches" the Father severs from the vine, i.e., he separates them from vital union with Christ (cf. Matthew 3:10). When they stop remaining in Christ, they cease having life; thus they are severed and thrown into the fire (v. 6). (2) The branches that bear fruit are those who have life in them because of their enduring faith in and love for Christ. These "branches" the Father prunes so that they will become more fruitful. That is, he removes from their lives anything that diverts or hinders the vital life-flow of Christ into them. The fruit is the quality of Christian character that brings glory to God through life and witness (see Matthew 3:8; 7:20; Romans 6:20; Galatians 5:22–23; Ephesians 5:9; Philippians 1:11). **15:6 like a branch that is thrown away**. The parable of the vine and branches makes it unmistakably clear that Christ did not believe "once in the vine, always in the vine." Rather, in this parable Jesus gave his disciples a solemn but loving warning that it is indeed possible for true believers to ultimately abandon the faith, turn their backs on Jesus, fail to remain in him, and thus be thrown into the everlasting fire of hell. (*Life in the Spirit Study Bible* [Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1992, 2003], 1635)

- [78] William J. Larkin Jr.: Paul's purpose is "to strengthen the souls of the disciples." He wants the new Christians to become "more firm and unchanging in attitude or belief" (Louw and Nida 1988:1:678)... Paul commands them to remain true to the faith (literally, "remain in"; compare Acts 11:23; 13:43). As it was Christ's divinely appointed destiny (*dei*) "to suffer these things and then enter his glory" (Luke 24:26), so his followers must [*dei*] go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22; compare Romans 8:17; Philippians 3:10–11; Colossians 1:24). Many hardships are to be expected as a normal, indeed necessary, part of the Christian life. For Luke, they mainly come in the form of persecution (Acts 5:41; 11:19; 20:23). We must endure through them if we would hope to enter the kingdom of God, experience the full enjoyment of salvation blessings either at death (2 Timothy 4:18) or at Christ's return. (*IVP New Testament Commentary: Acts* [Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1995], 215–216) Ajith Fernando: The third feature of follow-through care here is warning the converts about hardship. Not only does Acts 14 tell us about the necessity of suffering, it also illustrates that by showing how Paul suffered. We referred earlier to the mental anguish and humiliation that Paul must have experienced when he was stoned and dragged outside the city of Lystra. Luke suggests that this message about suffering was an important part of his ministry of "strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith," for immediately after he records their teaching: "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God" (v. 22b). Hardship is a key ingredient of discipleship. Paul also teaches this in his letters (Phil. 1:28–30; 1 Thess. 3:3), and Jesus mentioned it in his basic call to discipleship (Luke 9:23–24). Acts 14:22 goes further, however, suggesting that suffering is a *condition* for entrance into the kingdom of God. Paul says the same thing in his letters: "We share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory" (Rom. 8:17; see 2 Tim. 2:12). (*NIV Application Commentary: Acts* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998], )

[79] Jack Cottrell: [Paul] issues a solemn warning, stressing the danger of continuing to live the lifestyle of the flesh now that we are in the Spirit.

**For if you live according to the sinful nature [literally, "flesh"], you will die ...** "Die" cannot mean die physically, for that will happen regardless. Thus it means die spiritually by reverting to an unsaved condition; or die eternally in hell. Actually these cannot be separated; ... This verse is a strong affirmation of the real possibility that a Christian can fall from grace and lose his salvation. Those who cling to the dogma of "once saved, always saved" deny this, of course. Moo (1:528) says he favors the "Calvinist" interpretation, i.e., that the "truly regenerate believer, while often committing 'fleshly' acts, will be infallibly prevented from living a fleshly lifestyle by the Spirit within." This view, he says, "in no way mitigates the seriousness of the warning Paul gives here." MacArthur (1:422) agrees: "The apostle is not warning genuine believers that they may lose their salvation and be condemned to death if they fall back into some of the ways of the flesh... He is rather saying that a person whose life is characterized by the things of the flesh is not a true Christian and is spiritually dead." Such comments are incredible in view of the fact that Paul here directs this warning specifically to his "brothers" (v. 12). He is not speaking of an anonymous "anyone" (v. 9) who is not a true Christian, but is speaking directly to these brothers in second person plural: "If *you* live according to the flesh, *you* will die." To say that it cannot really happen "in no way mitigates the seriousness of the warning," and to say that the Spirit will "infallibly prevent" the very thing he warns against, approaches the limits of spiritual confusion. *Of course* it mitigates the seriousness of the warning! If living according to the flesh is impossible for Christians, then this "warning" is *meaningless* to the very ones to whom it is addressed, and it can be totally ignored. The warning is serious and relevant: if believers continue to live according to the flesh, they will die. But the warning is balanced by a glorious promise: **... but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live ...** This is the Christian's other possibility. He can continue to live the fleshly lifestyle, yes (and die!); or he can put to death the sins of the body (and life!)... These and any other sins are to be "put to death," mortified (KJV), killed. This is the opposite of living according to the flesh... Like Paul, we must beat or buffet our bodies and make them our slaves (1 Cor 9:27), gaining control over our passions... We must note here again the Christian's personal responsibility for this discipline: "if ... *you* put to death." Again, this is not automatic and inevitable; we must personally will it and do it... The key to victory lies in these three words: "*by the Spirit*!" The Spirit's power alone ensures victory in our battle against sin; this is why he lives within us. He gives us the power to put sin to death... The promise to those who succeed, by the Spirit, is eternal life: "You will live." This can be nothing than the glory of heaven. (*The College Press NIV Commentary: Romans*, 1:474-77)

[80] Joseph Agar Beet: verses 20—22 involve clearly an emphatic contradiction of the teaching, by Calvin and others, that all who have been justified will ultimately be saved. For Paul assumes throughout that his readers are already justified, are adopted as sons and heirs of God, and possess the Spirit of God as a firstfruit of their inheritance: see chapters 5:9—11; 6:18, 22; 8:2, 15, 16, 23. Yet he solemnly and emphatically warns them that unless they continue in the kindness of God they will be cut off. This last can be no less than the punishment already inflicted on the unbelieving Jews who have been broken off, and who are held up in verse 20, 21 as a warning to the believing Gentiles. For Paul's deep sorrow for the unbelieving Jews proves clearly that in his view they are on the way to the destruction (chapter 2:12) awaiting unrepentant sinners. His warning to Gentiles who now stand by faith implies clearly that unless they continue in faith they will experience a similar fate. We therefore accept the words before us in their simple and full meaning. Although salvation, from the earliest good desire to final victory, is entirely a work of God, a gift of His undeserved favor, and a realisation of His eternal purpose, it is nevertheless, both in its commencement and in its continuance, altogether conditional on man's faith. (Obtained from the Wesleyan Heritage Collection CD [Rio: Ages Software Inc., 2002]) Jack Cottrell: The first part of this paragraph [11:17-22] is a specific warning to Gentile Christians not to think of themselves as somehow superior to the Jewish branches that were broken off the tree... Here [11:20b-21] Paul tells the Gentile Christians the proper attitude to develop in place of arrogance: fear of God... The fear of God takes two different forms. One is the healthy, reverential awe of the creature before his Creator. The other is the terror and dread of a sinner in the presence of the holy Lawgiver and Judge. To which of these kinds of fear is Paul referring? Certainly to the first ... There is no better antidote to arrogance, nothing more conducive to humility, than to come to a full realization of our creatureliness before God Almighty. But what about the second, being afraid of Judgment? Certainly when it is truly felt, this kind of fear cancels out arrogance ... As a rule such fear is inappropriate for Christians, since we are free from condemnation thanks to justification by faith in the blood of Christ. But there is one context in which the fear of terror is still necessary even for Christians, namely, when we stand on the brink of apostasy or falling away. In such a situation, how can we not call to mind that "it is dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb 10:31)? In view of Paul's warning to the Gentile Christians in v. 21, I think he probably also has this kind of fear in mind in v. 20b, i.e., terror at the prospect of being cut off. We should make no mistake: in v. 21 Paul holds before us all the real possibility of falling from grace and losing our salvation. This is another reason why Gentile Christians, and Jewish Christians as well, should realize the folly of arrogance regarding their salvation status... Why does Paul admonish the representative Gentile Christian (and us) to "consider" or "observe" the kindness and sternness of God? Because these are the two basic attributes that God expresses toward sinners, depending on their response to the grace of his Son, Jesus Christ. In this context they are the attributes that lie behind the breaking off of the unbelieving Jewish branches and the grafting in of the believing Gentile branches: sternness to those who fell, i.e., the Jews who rejected Christ (v. 11), but kindness to you as a Gentile who has accepted Christ. In verse 20 Paul stressed that the reason the Gentile Christians were grafted into the tree was their faith in the Messiah, not some merit on their part. Here he shows that God's willingness to accept someone on the simple basis of faith in Christ is a matter of his gracious kindness. There is no merit in faith itself. Paul says all these things to set up his final warning to Gentile Christians, which also applies to all branches on the olive tree (all members of his church) in all times and places. I.e., the very fact that you are on the tree (and my implication saved) means that you have received the kindness of God. But be warned: you will remain on the tree as a recipient of God's kindness provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off... God will continue to bestow his kindness upon you, if and only if you "continue in his kindness." To "continue in" God's kindness means to continue to trust his kindness and grace as embodied in the saving work of Jesus. What will happen if you do not continue to trust God's grace? Paul's answer is very clear: "you also," like the Jews who refused to believe, "will be cut off." You will lose your salvation. This verse brings into sharp focus the issue of whether or not salvation is conditional, which includes the issue of "once saved, always saved." In general Calvinists



- believe that God's grace is sovereignly bestowed and maintained in an unconditional way, and non-Calvinists believe that it is conditional... In my judgment this verse unequivocally supports the view that salvation is conditional. Just as *becoming* saved is conditioned upon faith, *staying* saved is conditioned upon continuing to believe. You will remain as a branch on the olive tree "if you continue" (NASB) in God's kindness. (See Colossians 1:23 for the very same point.) More specifically this verse shows that falling from a saved state and thus losing one's salvation is possible. Dunn rightly says, "The possibility of believers 'falling away' ... apostatizing, is one which Paul certainly did not exclude." He adds, "Perseverance is a Christian responsibility rather than an unconditional promise" (2:664-665)... In my opinion all ... attempts to harmonize the "if" in 11:22 (or elsewhere) with Calvinism, or with any "once saved, always saved" belief ... reduce Paul's warning to a travesty. Unless there is a genuine possibility that this warning may be disregarded by a genuine believer, then it is not a warning at all, and its very presence in the Bible is deceptive. (*The College Press NIV Commentary: Romans*, 2:254, 258-263)
- [81] David E. Garland: Since this community building is the temple of God, where the Spirit of God dwells, Paul introduces a new, more serious threat. While some builders may do a lousy job of building on the foundation and their work will be consumed, some work moves beyond mere shoddiness and becomes destructive. Paul assumes that the community can be destroyed by insiders, not by outsiders... It is a severe warning. He has real destruction in mind, and those who destroy God's temple will also be destroyed. There is no narrow escape from this sin. Yinger points out, "The dividing line between poor building and destruction is not clearly marked out, making Paul's initial warning to 'beware how you are building' all the more potent." Paul does not describe how the temple is destroyed, but it is undoubtedly related in some way to their boastful arrogance, their eagerness to appraise others, and their competitive partisanship—all the things that divide Christ... Paul allows the readers to imagine that their petty jealousies (3:3), boasting (1:29; 3:21; 4:7), arrogance (4:6, 18, 19), and quarrels (1:11; 3:3) might qualify for this bleak judgment. The survival of the church and their salvation is at risk. (*1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003], 120-121)
- [82] Gordon Fee: With these sentences [verses 9-10] Paul ties together a number of items in 5:1-13 and 6:1-8. The first sentence flows directly out of vv. 7-8 with another rhetorical "Or do you not know that?" (cf. vv. 2 and 4 above). Likewise, the word *adikoi* ("wicked") Paul ties these words of warning to the "wrongdoing" of vv. 7-8, and at the same time ties both to v. 1. The "wicked" in v. 1 are those in the world who are going to be judged by the saints (v. 2), a judgment now expressed in terms of their not inheriting the kingdom. Here is a piece of eschatological teachings about which one can be sure the Corinthians had previously been informed: "The 'wicked' will not inherit the kingdom of God." This is of course refers to the eschatological consummation of the kingdom that is "not yet," just as the same phrase in 4:20 referred to the kingdom as it is "already" being realized in the present age. The failure of the wicked to "inherit the kingdom of God" is the other side of their being judged in v. 2; this is what that judgment leads to. Paul's point in all this is to warn "the saints," not only the man who has wronged his brother, but the whole community, that if they persist in the same evils as the "wicked" they are in the same danger of not inheriting the kingdom. Some theologies have great difficulty with such warnings, implying that they are essentially hypothetical since God's children cannot be "disinherited." But such a theology fails to take seriously the genuine tension of texts like this one. The warning is real; the wicked will not inherit the kingdom. That first of all applies to the "unsaved." Paul's concern is that the Corinthians must "stop deceiving themselves" or "allowing themselves to be deceived." By persisting in the same behavior as those already destined for judgment they are placing themselves in the very real danger of that same judgment. If it were not so, then the warning is no warning at all. Paul's own response to such, of course, is v. 11, in which he invites them to change their behavior by reminding them that they do indeed belong to God through the gracious work of Christ and the Spirit... Paul cannot bring himself to conclude on the note of warning struck in vv. 8-10, especially since it might leave the impression the Corinthians were actually still among "the wicked." Thus he brings this whole matter to a conclusion by reaffirming: "And these things are what some of you were." This sentence, therefore, functions in a way similar to the indicative of 5:7 ("Christ our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed"). Just as the imperative in that passage was intended to be taken seriously, so too with the warning in this one. But the predicate in each case is God's prior action in Christ Jesus. The previous list is what the wicked are like still, and because of that they will not inherit the kingdom. Those who persist in the same activities are in similar danger. "But that is what some of you were. Now in Christ Jesus you are something different, so live like it. Stop defrauding, living in sexual sin, etc., because you are no longer among those who do." The rest of the verse gives the soteriological basis for this premise: "But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God." As such it is also one of the more important theological statements in the epistle. Paul's concern is singular: "Your conversion, effected by God through the work of Christ and the Spirit, is what has removed you from being among the wicked, who will not inherit the kingdom." By implication there is an inherent imperative: "Therefore, live out this new life in Christ and stop being like the wicked." (*1 Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987], 242, 245)
- [83] Robert Picirilli: The meaning of v. 11 is a matter of dispute, involving the question whether a regenerate person can commit apostasy from God... The argument arises over the word "perish." Those who do not believe that a genuine Christian can be lost will interpret ... "perish" ... as though the word does not mean eternal ruin but the "stunting of his Christian life and usefulness" (Bruce 82), or as though it simply means "comes to sin" (Grosheide 197). According to this view, the prospect of apostasy is not in view ... the "ruin" involved is the ruin of one's life and service by falling into sin. It strikes me that ... [this] view does not do justice to the severity of the word "perish" (Greek *apollumi*), as it is consistently used in the New Testament to describe "definitive destruction, not merely in the sense of extinction of physical existence but rather of an eternal plunge into Hades and a hopeless destiny of death" (TDNT 1:396)... "Communion with Christ is threatened, and the salvation of the believer is at stake" (Ridderbos 292). Actually, the verb is present tense, not future: either "Is your brother perishing?" or "Your brother is perishing." (This use of the present is futuristic, of course, but it puts the future into the present time as something already in process.) Paul does not mean that this weak brother has perished yet; but he does mean that the outcome of his falling into sin, if the process is not reversed in some way, is certain to be his eternal ruin... Sin persisted in, on the part of a Christian, can lead to a retraction of faith in Christ and thus to apostasy and eternal destruction. (*Randall House Bible Commentary: 1 & 2 Corinthians* [Nashville: Randall House Publishers,

- 1987], 119-120) Richard B. Hays: Verse 10-12 offer a specific description of how Paul imagines the possible damage inflicted on the community by those who want to eat the idol meat. The weak will see the *gnōsis* [knowledge]-boasters eating *in the temple of an idol* and be influenced, contrary to their own consciences, to participate in the same practice (v. 10). This is a very important statement, because it shows that Paul's primary concern here is not the consumption of meat sold in the marketplace (cf. 10:25-26); rather, he is worried about having weak Christians drawn back into the temple, into the powerful world of the pagan cult, which was, we must always remember, the dominant symbolic world in which the Corinthian Christians lived. In verse 11 Paul states the dire consequences of such cultural compromise: The weak will be "destroyed." This language should not be watered down. The concern is not that the weak will be *offended* by the actions of the *gnōsis*-boasters; Paul's concern is, rather, that they will become alienated from Christ and fall away from the sphere of God's saving power, being sucked back into their former way of life. Paul presents this horrifying possibility with biting irony: "So, the weak one is destroyed by your *gnōsis*, the brother from whom Christ died." If the Corinthians will only pause to ponder this picture seriously, the contrast is stunning: Christ gave up his life for this "brother" ... Christ died for this person, and you can't even change your diet? On the one side we have the Son of God who died for us "while we were still weak" (Rom. 5:6); on the other side we have the *gnōsis*-flexers who are so fixated on exercising their own freedom that they were willing to trample on the weak and jeopardize their very salvation. This is not only to injure the community but also to "sin against Christ" (v. 12) by scorning and undoing his saving work... Paul concludes this unit by declaring his own resolution in this matter. "Therefore, if food causes my brother [or sister] to fall, I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause my brother [or sister] to fall." Interestingly, the word "meat" in this sentence is the generic word for animal flesh, not the specific term "idol meat" that has occurred previously in the passages. Paul is willing to forego not only the specific practice of eating idol food but also the eating of meat altogether if that is necessary to protect the weak from stumbling... The "stumbling block principle" is often erroneously invoked to place limits on the behavior of some Christians whose conduct offends other Christians with stricter behavioral standards. For example, it is argued that if drinking alcohol or dancing or dressing in certain ways might cause offense to more scrupulous church members, we are obligated to avoid such behaviors for the sake of the "weaker brother's conscience." The effect of such reasoning is to hold the entire Christian community hostage to the standard of the most narrow-minded and legalistic members of the church. Clearly, this is not what Paul intended. He is concerned in 1 Corinthians 8 about weaker believers being "destroyed" by being drawn away from the church and back into idol worship. Therefore, in applying this text analogically to our time, we should be careful to frame analogies only to those situations in which the boundary-defying actions of the "strong" might actually jeopardize the faith and salvation of others by leading the weak to *emulate* high-risk behaviors. Framing the analogy in this way will significantly limit the number of situations to which the text is directly relevant. A corollary of this point, however, is that idolatry *can* actually lead to destruction. This was denied by the *gnōsis* group at Corinth, but Paul solemnly warns of the danger of dabbling with idolatrous practices. (*First Corinthians* [Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997], 141-142, 145).
- [84] Gregory Lockwood: Paul proceeds to illustrate the need for self-discipline if he is to reach the goal of saving as many people as possible (9:22). As a resident of Corinth in A.D. 50-52, he had probably witnessed the Isthmian Games in the spring of A.D. 51. This prestigious event, second only to the Olympic Games, was celebrated every two years about ten miles from Corinth. The basic athletic events included racing, wrestling, jumping, boxing, hurling the javelin, and throwing the discus. Paul begins with an illustration from the footraces in the stadium. A number of runners competed in each event, but only one could win the prize. The analogy to the Christian life is, of course, imperfect, for in the Christian race all believers are prize winners. But Paul uses the analogy only to point to the exertion and self-discipline required of the successful runner. He challenges the Corinthians: "Run that you may win" (9:24). Every entrant in the Olympic Games was required to devote ten months to strict training. Presumably the same rule applied to the games at Isthmian. As is well known from such contests both in the ancient and modern times, the competitor must renounce not only bad habits, but give up many things that are fine in themselves, in order to focus totally on preparation for the goal. The theme of self-control applies equally to the Christian life (9:25). Self-control is one of the fruits of the Spirit that should be found in the lives of all Christians (Gal 5:23; 2 Pet 1:6). It is one of the qualities essential in a minister of the Gospel (Titus 1:8). Whereas contestants in the Isthmian Games exercised self-control in order to win a wreath of withered celery and some ephemeral honor and glory, it is infinitely more worthwhile for the Christian to practice self-control, for the crown awaiting him—if he completes the race—is the imperishable gift of eternal life (2 Tim 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Pet 5:4; Rev 2:10). Paul now applies the imagery of the stadium to his own example as the Corinthians' apostle (1 Cor 9:26). It was not his practice to run the race of the Christian life aimlessly (2 Tim 4:7), like someone with no clear goal. Rather, he pressed on "toward the goal for the prize [... as in 1 Cor 9:24] of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:14). Likewise, in fighting "the good fight" (1 Tim 1:18; 6:12; 2 Tim 4:7), he did not behave like a boxer flailing the air and never landing a blow... His practice was to keep his body in check, so that it continually serves the great goal (cf. Heb 12:11-12). Paul is not here advocating asceticism or self-flagellation as a means to the individual's private spiritual ends. Rather, he is calling on Christians to give up whatever does not advance the cause of the Gospel. Paul himself gave up many things that he could have claimed a right to have (1 Cor 9:4-6, 11-12, 15, 18). He calls on Christians to avoid doing anything that offends others (8:9-13). Christians should forego their rights "for the sake of other in the community," placing their bodies at God's disposal as a "living sacrifice" (Rom 12:1) devoted to winning others for the Gospel. By thus disciplining himself, Paul's faith was active in loving service to all. If he were to live a life of self-indulgence, he would endanger not only the salvation of others, but also his own. The danger of being disqualified is real. Disqualification would mean nothing less than missing out on the crown of life, as the context makes clear (1 Cor 9:24-27). Paul has been devoting his life to commending the benefits of the Gospel to others. These benefits are worth having; Paul wants to share in them himself (9:23). What a tragedy it would be if, after preaching to others, he would be found to be no longer "in the faith" (2 Cor 13:5-6), because he had become complacent and fallen in love with the things of this world (James 4:4)! The implication for the Corinthians should be obvious: it would be a tragedy if they forfeited their salvation by ceasing to exercise self-control and thus relapsing into idolatry. Paul will now elaborate that message in 1 Corinthians 10. Christians must constantly exercise self-discipline, restraining their sinful nature and putting it to death by the power of the Spirit, so that they may live for God—now and in eternity (Rom 8:13). (*Concordia Commentary: 1 Corinthians* [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House,

2000], 318-321)

- [85] B.J. Oropeza: We have observed that in 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 Paul warns members in the Corinthian congregation that if they continue to participate in vices related to those which the Israelites practiced, they would suffer divine rejection and judgment. Paul's method of persuading the Corinthians about this danger is by comparing Israel in the wilderness with the Corinthians, who are viewed as being in a state of eschatological overlap. The experiences of Israel in the wilderness are types pointing to the Corinthians' experiences, and the judgments are hypothetical prefigurations of what might happen to the Corinthians (10:6, 11a). Paul compares the two communities in relation to election, conversion-initiation, and divine graces. Israel's unified initiation through the cloud and sea under Moses prefigured the Corinthians' Spirit and water baptism which made them members of the body of Christ (10:1-2). Israel's consumption of supernatural sustenance in the wilderness represented for the Corinthians their participation in the Lord's Supper and any other means whereby they might have deemed themselves as spiritual. Paul claims that Christ was the provider of these blessings for Israel; hence, Christ was spiritually present with the Israelites in the wilderness just like he was present with the Corinthians (10:3-4). Despite these privileges, the majority of Israelites did not make it to the promised land; their bodies fell in the wilderness. God rejected them because they coveted the food of Egypt, committed idolatry and fornication, tempted Christ, and murmured against their leaders. Likewise Paul implies that the Corinthians may be rejected by God if they participate in idolatry, commit fornication, provoke Christ through their inconsiderate liberties, and continue in their factions and perhaps their opposition toward Paul (10:5-10). Many in Israel were destroyed in the wilderness; likewise, many in the Corinthian congregation could be destroyed in the present eschaton. For Paul, this period covers the overlap between the eschatological present and future ages. The eschatological "rest" for Paul is in the "not yet" kingdom of God (cf. 10:11b). Paul's eschatological framework is added to his argument, in part, because the Corinthians had an overrealized perspective of eschatology... They believed they had already achieved an aggregative status because of their initiation and separation from their pre-converted status. Paul attempts to bring them back to the realization that they are still in a state of liminality. Paul warns them to watch out or else they will commit apostasy; namely, they will fall away from the grace in this marginal state and fail to enter the "not yet" kingdom of God (10:12). After such a stern warning, he provides them with some comfort by giving them assurance about persevering through temptation (10:13). This assurance, however, was not intended to contradict or mitigate his previous warning about the genuine possibility of apostasy. (*Paul and Apostasy*, 225-226)
- [86] Robert Picirilli: Paul strings together three relative clauses to describe the Corinthian Christians' relationship to the gospel he had preached to them. First, they had received it—looking to the past, their original reception of Paul and his message of salvation. Second, they now stand in it—looking to the present, to the firm footing one has in his relationship with God as a result of hearing the gospel with faith. Third, they are being saved through it—looking not only to the present, but to the future experience of final salvation ... As v. 2 will show, all this is involved in the Corinthians' faith; and, as verses 3, 4 will show, saving faith, in its essence, is always "bound to the gospel in its concrete redemptive content" (Ridderbos 240). To all this, especially to the last of the three, Paul attaches a condition. It is not meant to cast doubt on their salvation: the condition is one assumed true (a Greek first class condition). Even so, it is a real condition (expressed exactly like the one in Col 1:23). The Corinthians are being saved by means of the gospel and can confidently expect final salvation if in fact (as they really are) they go on holding fast to such good news as Paul announced to them. "Keep in memory" [KJV] (Greek *katecho*, as in 11:2) literally means to hold down, hold firmly to, and is continuing action... The last part of v. 2 (literally), "unless if otherwise you believed for nothing," actually continues the conditional addition by stating its negative. Paul is confident that they are holding fast to the gospel (as his assumed true condition has expressed); even so, he feels it necessary to attach an exception clause. They are holding fast—except for the possibility that if they are not they placed their faith (in Christ) in vain... There is really no reason to doubt that ... the reference to believing in vain reflects the real possibility of apostasy from faith. Apparently Paul regards their doubts about the resurrection of believers seriously enough that his usual confidence in his converts must be qualified at least this much. (*Randall House Bible Commentary: 1 & 2 Corinthians*, 214)
- [87] Scot McKnight: The reason why Paul wrote this letter, and the reason we have it, is because the Galatians had "changed positions" on a crucial subject: the means of acceptance with God and the role Christ played in that acceptance. Paul is amazed that their change took place "so quickly" (v. 6). At 5:4 Paul states that this change was opting for a system in which grace was not crucial and in which Christ's work was not sufficient. Paul states here that they were "deserting the one who called you" (v. 6); that is to say, their move was not just an intellectual one. Rather, it was a desertion of God as made known in Christ; it was abandoning of their personal relationship with God. If we use the categories of 3:19–25, their departure was a decision to live in B.C. days when the A.D. days had arrived. It was a decision to recede back in time into the days of Moses and to reject the epoch-altering revelation in Christ. While Paul suggests this was a move to a "different gospel," he goes on in verse 7 to clarify this by saying that this is "really no gospel at all." The move of the Galatians was not one of those views of legitimate Christian differences; it was total and devastating. Paul counters here any suggestion of simple Christian differences. When the gospel of grace in Christ is supplemented with the system of Moses, the result is not a perfected, fully mature gospel; rather, it is a gross perversion and a totally different message. Gross perversions of the gospel are heresies. Paul's final words here are potent. He invokes a curse on anyone (including himself!) who distorts the gospel. Paul's sentences in verses 8–9 are largely parallel and synonymous with one interesting variation. The expression "the one we preached to you" in verse 8 has its parallel in verse 9 in "than what you accepted." The latter expression is related to his apostolic calling. Paul uses here the technical language of passing on sacred traditions ("what you accepted"; Gk. *parelabete*) in such a way as to guarantee authenticity and heredity. It is the same language used by rabbis for handing on their sacred traditions, and it is the same term Paul uses for the tradition of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:23). The message Paul preached is the message that ultimately derives from the Lord because it has been transmitted to others through his apostles. Those who distort this message are rejecting the authority of Christ and are therefore cursed (*anathema*). This word is used in the Old Testament for something consecrated to God for his destruction (cf. Deut. 7:26; Josh. 6:17–18). Paul is not talking here about church discipline; his language is far too strong for that. He is invoking God's final damnation and wrath on people who distort the gospel of grace in Christ and substitute, in effect, Moses' law as the preeminent form of revelation. They are like those who reject the message of the prophets (1 Kings 11:30–31) or apostles (Matt. 10:14). (*NIV*

*Application Commentary: Galatians* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995], 50-52)

- [88] G. Walter Hanson: The third and fourth consequences of following the demands of the false teachers are given in verse 4: *You ... have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace*. No doubt the rival teachers had assured them that keeping the law was not abandoning their faith in Christ; it was the way to "attain your goal" (3:3)-perfection-in Christian life. But Paul says that those who regulate their lives by the law are removed from the reign of Christ over their lives. If you trust in your own efforts to keep the law, then you are no longer trusting in God's grace. Circumcision or Christ, law or grace: these are exclusive alternatives. You cannot have it both ways. You must choose. The danger of apostasy, falling away from grace, must have been very real, or Paul would not have used such strong language. If we use the doctrine of eternal security to deny the possibility of falling from grace, we are ignoring Paul's warnings. People who ignore warnings are in great danger. Just observe the person who sees the warning sign of a sharp curve and a fifteen-mile-per-hour speed limit but keeps driving at seventy miles per hour. (*IVP New Testament Commentaries: Galatians* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994], 156) I. Howard Marshall: The main theme of the *Epistle to the Galatians* is a warning to its readers against turning back to Judaism as a means of salvation. A die-hard Judaizing party had arisen which ... held indeed that circumcision was necessary for salvation... The general tone of the letter is one of warning rather than of condemnation; the false teaching was making headway, but the churches had not wholly succumbed to it. In itself circumcision was a matter of complete indifference to Paul—except when the physical act was regarded as an indispensable means to salvation... At the same time, submission to circumcision indicated a cessation of faith in Christ. It implied that even after trusting in Christ a man was still not completely justified from his sins; he was still a transgressor, and Christ's death had been vain... Submission to circumcision was not, therefore, a meaningless piece of empty ritual. It was the expression of a repudiation of God's grace manifested in Christ. The person who was circumcised severed himself from Christ and His saving power (Galatians 5:2); he had fallen away from grace (Galatians 5:4)... There can be no doubt that in this verse Paul is speaking of the possibility of turning from faith in Christ to an attempt to be justified by the law, and that such an action leads to the loss of salvation, since for Paul salvation is either by faith in Christ or by complete obedience to the law (which he regards as impossible in practice). (*Kept by the Power*, 109-110, 241 fn. 38)
- [89] I. Howard Marshall: The Epistle to the Galatians has an important section on the possibility of sin in believers. Paul realizes that Christ might misunderstand their freedom from the law (Galatians 5:1) to mean a license to follow the inclinations of the flesh (Galatians 5:13-26) instead of the possibility of living under the guidance of the Spirit and following the law of love. Two possibilities thus lie before the Christians, walking by the Spirit and gratifying the flesh. Two opposing sets of desires are at conflict them, and it is possible that the believer may follow either of them. Either set may act to prevent a man from following the other (Galatians 5:17), so that there is a real danger that a man may live by the flesh instead of by the Spirit. Such people will not inherit the kingdom of God; they will reap what they sow, and those who sow to the flesh will reap corruption (Galatians 5:21; 6:8). Here is a plain warning that if a Christian lives according to the flesh he may in the end be excluded from the kingdom. 'Even as a believer man stand both under the promise of grace and also the threat of apostasy ... (the flesh) can seize control and threaten him.' [quoting from E. Schweizer in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 6:429] (*Kept by the Power*, 111-112)
- [90] Robert Picirilli: Because verse 8 includes such broad terms, we should also apply this principle [of sowing] to things in general as well as giving in particular. The context both before and after these verses, refers to our relationships with the *brethren*, either in generous giving or good deeds. Therefore Paul must be thinking specifically of sowing and reaping in our relationships (whether donations or deeds) with one another in the Christian fellowship. If this is correct, then "soweth to his flesh" probably means doing things to or with one another that stem from the flesh's drives. This would refer to such things as jealousy, strife, or selfishness in any form (compare the list in 5:19-21) ... This ultimately carries us back to the realm of "the works of the flesh" listed in chapter five, verses 19-21. And anything produced on a fleshly basis will not survive, but is corrupt. The only fruit that can be harvested from such a sowing is corruption. This word refers to that which perishes, decays, and decomposes. In other words, sowing to the flesh begets a rotten harvest. "Soweth to the Spirit" is exactly the opposite in every respect and means doing things to or with one another that stem from the Spirit's impulses. And so here we come to "the fruit of the Spirit" listed in 5:22, 23. When we deal with one another in genuine, Spirit-motivated love, longsuffering, meekness, etc., we can expect a fruit that will live forever not subject to corruption. The contrast between "corruption" and "life everlasting" refers not only to the *fruits* reaped in our relationships with one another in the Christian fellowship, but also to the destinies of the *persons* involved. Those who practice in life "sowing to the flesh" will "not inherit the kingdom of God" (5:21), while those whose manner of life is to "sow to the Spirit" will inherit life everlasting... The principle of sowing and reaping still applies as verse 9 clearly indicates... It is interesting to notice that the analogy of sowing and reaping comes from the work of a farmer, and Paul often used the farmer as an example of patience or endurance just as here... Farming is an especially good example of perseverance in labor, because the farmer must prepare, plant, fertilize, cultivate—all at the right times faithfully and all with the ultimate harvest in view. This is what Paul is saying about our "well-doing" for one another. We must persevere like a good farmer. Sometimes we may not immediately see the fruits of our service; but if we are faithful, if we do not lose heart or tire out, we will reap the promised harvest—first of good things produced in our brotherly relationships, and finally of eternal life itself. (*The Book of Galatians* [Nashville: Randall House Publications, 1973], 101-103)
- [91] J. Wesley Adams with Donald C. Stamps (posthumously): Living as God's children and God's holy people involves walking in love. For the third time Paul uses the word *peripateo* (trans. "live" in 5:2) when discussing the conduct of the Ephesians believers (cf. also 5:8, 15). To "live a life of love" (5:2) involves being "imitators of God" (5:1)... Just as children will imitate a loving earthly father, so believers are to imitate their loving heavenly Father... Paul turns from the self-sacrifice of Christ to the very opposite, the self-indulgence of the sinner (5:3-4), from agape love to its perversion, lust; he mentions three manifestations of self-indulgence of loves perversion... These three sins [sexual immorality, impurity, greed] are not even to be mentioned or talked about among "God's holy people" ... Verse 5 contains a solemn warning and pronouncement: No one who gives himself or herself to practice the aforementioned sexual sins "has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" ... Bruce (1961, 103) discredits a common rationalization about this verse that misrepresents the point Paul is making: "The

- idea that Paul means that such people may be true Christians even so, but that their behavior will debar them from any part or lot in a future millennial reign of Christ, is totally unwarranted by the context and by the New Testament teaching in general." Paul goes on to state that a "greedy person ... is an idolater" because his or her affection is set on earthly things rather than on this above, so that some earthly object of desire has "the central place with God alone should have in the human heart" (Bruce, 1961, 104). Paul knew that his message of freedom from the law and exhortation to love could easily be used to excuse sexual sin. Thus he adds: "Let no one deceive you" (5:6) into believing that some immoral, impure, or greedy persons do have an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ. Such assurance and false security involve deception and "empty words." Upon such people "God's wrath comes." The danger of forfeiting our inheritance in God's kingdom is a real one for "those who are disobedient," that is, those who know God's moral law and willfully disobey it. "Therefore, do not be partners with them" (5:7), lest you share in their doom. (*Life in the Spirit New Testament Commentary: Ephesians* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999], 1071-1072)
- [92] Robert W. Wall: In the first half of verse 23 Paul breaks with tradition to address his readers in a more intimate way. His exhortation to them expresses a condition of their reconciliation, which includes both a positive and a negative element. This exhortation has caused problems for those who think of Paul's idea of salvation in terms of God's unconditional grace. However, Paul's understanding of God's salvation is profoundly Jewish and therefore covenantal. The promise of the community's final justification is part of a covenant between God and the "true" Israel. Even the idea of God's faithfulness to a promise made is modified by the ideals of a covenantal relationship: God's fulfillment is conditioned upon a particular response. According to Paul's gospel, getting into the faith community, which has covenanted with God for salvation, requires the believer's confidence in the redemptive merit of Christ's death (as defined in vv. 21-22). And staying in that community requires the believer to keep the faith. Paul does not teach a "once saved, always saved" kind of religion; nor does he understand faith as a "once for all" decision for Christ. In fact, apostasy (loss of faith) imperils one's relationship with God and with the community that has covenanted with God for salvation. So he writes that the community's eschatological fitness holds *if you continue in your faith...* The negative ingredient of the passage envisions the very real possibility that the community may indeed *[move] from the hope held out in the gospel*, risking God's negative verdict at Christ's parousia. (*IVP New Testament Commentaries: Colossians* [Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994], 81-82)
- [93] John Wesley: One who is endued with the faith that purifies the heart, that produces a good conscience, may nevertheless so fall from God as to perish everlastingly. For thus saith the inspired Apostle, "War a good warfare; holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck." (1 Timothy 1:18, 19) Observe, (1.) These men (such as Hymeneus and Alexander) had once the faith that purifies the heart, that produces a good conscience; which they once had, or they could not have "put it away." Observe, (2.) They "made shipwreck" of the faith, which necessarily implies the total and final loss of it. For a vessel once wrecked can never be recovered. It is totally and finally lost. And the Apostle himself, in his Second Epistle to Timothy, mentions one of these two as irrecoverably lost. "Alexander," says he, "did me much evil: The Lord shall reward him according to his works." (2 Timothy 4:14.) Therefore one who is endued with the faith that purifies the heart, that produces a good conscience, may nevertheless so fall from God as to perish everlastingly. (*Works of Wesley*, "Serious Thoughts on the Perseverance of the Saints," 10:287-288)
- [94] Gordon D. Fee: [1 Timothy 4:1-5] is joined to 3:14-15 by the conjunction *de* (untranslated in NIV), which could mean "now" (as KJV, meaning "to move on to the next matter") or "however." The latter seems preferable. In 3:15-16 Paul declared that the church has been entrusted with **the truth**—the truth we sing about Christ. "However," he goes on, **the Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith** [i.e., the truth]. But who are these some [people]? In this case—and surely this is the great urgency of the letter—they are not the false teachers themselves but the members of "God's household" (3:15), who are being led astray by the **hypocritical liars** (the false teachers) of verse 2. Note how this same concern is expressed in 2 Timothy 2:16-18; 3:13; and 4:3-4. (*1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, New International Biblical Commentary [Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988], 97)
- [95] Gordon Fee: **Watch your life**, Paul says, referring to his being an example *for* the believers (v. 12); **and doctrine**, (better, "teaching"; as in v. 13 the noun here emphasizes the *act* of teaching more than its content, although the latter is not excluded) referring to his ministry *to* them (vv. 13-14). So one more time Paul enjoins, **persevere in them**, because by so doing Timothy **will save both himself, and especially his hearers**. As in 2:15 above and 1 Corinthians 7:16, the language may not be theologically precise, but the meaning is clear. Salvation involves perseverance; and Timothy's task in Ephesus is to model and teach the gospel in such a fashion that it will lead the church to perseverance in faith and love and hence to final, eschatological salvation. (*1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, New International Biblical Commentary, 109)
- [96] J. Wesley Adams: This is . . . where the author combines urgent exhortation and solemn warning in order to move his readers to a place of renewed confidence, hope, and persevering faith in Christ. . . . The close connection between this paragraph [Heb 2:1-4] and the exposition in 1:5-14 demonstrates that scriptural exposition for our author was not an end in itself but rooted out of his concern for his readers and their perilous situation. . . . The Greek construction of 2:1-4 consists of two sentences: a direct statement (2:1), followed by a long explanatory sentence (2:2-4), which includes a rhetorical question ("how shall we escape") with a condition ("if we ignore [or neglect] such a great salvation") (2:3a). The word "therefore" (2:1) connects this paragraph to the Son's incomparable splendor and supremacy in chapter 1. Because the Son is superior to the prophets and the angels, what God "has spoken to us by his Son" (1:2), if neglected, makes one that much more culpable: "We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard" lest we "drift away." The expression "what we have heard" refers to God's revelation in his Son about salvation (cf. 2:3a). Here the danger of drifting away is due not to a rebellious refusal to heed the gospel, but to a carelessness about the commitment to Christ that it requires. The verb *prosecho* (lit., "to give heed") means not only "pay attention" with the mind to what one hears, but also "to act upon what one perceives" (Morris, 1981, 21). This verb is analogous to *katecho* in 3:6, 14; 10:23, where the readers are admonished to "hold fast to their confession of faith, without which the goal of salvation cannot be reached" (Lane, 1991, 37). The Greek word translated "drift away" (*pararreo*) has nautical overtones, as when a ship drifts past a harbor to shipwreck. The picture thus conveyed in 2:1 is that of Christians who are "in peril of being carried downstream past a fixed landing place and so failing to gain its security" (Bruce, 1990, 66). The result of drifting from Christ is a worse end than that experienced by those who

disobeyed the law of Moses under the old covenant (vv. 2-3; cf. 10:28). As Bruce notes, "our author is warning Christian readers, who have heard and accepted the gospel, that if they yield to the temptation to abandon their profession, their plight is hopeless" (1990, 66). "The message spoken by angels" (2:2) refers to the law given at Sinai. Here we begin to see the primary reason why the Son's superiority to the angels was emphasized in 1:5-14. The author makes an *a fortiori* argument (i.e., arguing from a lesser, well-accepted truth to a greater truth, for which there is even stronger evidence) from angels to the Son, from law to gospel (cf. 7:21-22; 9:13-14; 10:28-29). The angels were of instrumental importance in the lesser matter of the law; the Son is of supreme importance in the greater matter of the gospel (Hagner, 1983, 21). If the law accompanied by angels was honored, how much more should we respect God's word that came in his Son! If "every violation and disobedience" of the law had inescapable consequences, how can we hope to escape the consequences of ignoring the gospel of Christ? Our author writes "to awaken the conscience to the grave consequences of neglecting" God's message in his Son (Guthrie, 1983, 80). The answer to the rhetorical question in verse 3—"How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?"—is obvious: No escape is possible. In Hebrews "salvation" (*soteria*) was promised by the Old Testament prophets (1:1), is fulfilled by Jesus in the present time (2:3, 10; 5:9), and will be consummated in his future coming (cf. 1:14; 6:9; 9:28; see *TDNT*, 7:989-1012). . . . The emphasis here and elsewhere in Hebrews [with the phrase "how shall we escape"] is on the inescapable, terrible, and eternal consequences for apostasy (cf. 6:4-6; 10:26-31). The first steps in that catastrophic direction occur when Christians drift away from Christ (2:1) and ignore God's glorious salvation in his Son (2:3a). The author identifies his readers as fellow believers by using the pronoun "we" in 2:1, 3a and "us" in 2:3. As I. Howard Marshall points out, the warning addresses "people who have heard the gospel and responded to it. At no point in the Epistle is it warrantable to assume that the readers originally addressed by the author are not Christians" (1969, 139). By using the preacher's "we," our author not only identifies the readers as believers, but also includes himself and all other believers in the same warning (cf. 3:6, 14; 10:26-27; 12:25). ("Hebrews," *Life in the Spirit New Testament Commentary*, [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999], 1312-1313) See also Scot McKnight's article "A Synthetic Look at the Warning Passages in Hebrews" in External Link.

- [97] J. Wesley Adams: Hebrews views the possibility of remaining steadfast in faith or abandoning faith as a real choice facing the readers; the author illustrates the consequences of the latter by referring to the destruction of the rebellious Hebrews in the desert after their glorious deliverance from Egypt (3:7-19). The final statement in 3:6 ["And we are God's house, if indeed we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory"] serves as a transition to the solemn warning and exhortation in 3:7-19. As a comparison was drawn between Moses and Jesus in 3:1-6, so now a parallel is drawn between (1) the response of unbelief and disobedience by the Hebrews who were redeemed out of Egypt under Moses' leadership (3:7-11), and (2) the possibility of the same response by the Hebrews who were redeemed by Christ under the new covenant provisions of salvation (3:12-19). Moses had been faithful to the end (3:2, 5), but most of those who left Egypt with him were unfaithful. They all shared by faith in the first great Passover deliverance but afterward because of unbelief hardened their hearts against God and perished in the desert (cf. Num. 13:26-14:38). Likewise, Christ, who is far superior to Moses, is also faithful (Heb. 3:2, 6), but the author of Hebrews was deeply concerned that the community of Hebrew Christians he is addressing, who had experienced the deliverance of the cross, were now in danger of hardening their hearts and of perishing because of unbelief . . . . This section reveals the progressive nature of unbelief: (1) The seed of unbelief is sown and allowed to sprout; (2) unbelief leads to hardness of heart; (3) hardness leads to disobedience and rebellion; and (4) rebellion leads to apostasy and forfeiting forever God's promised rest. The powerful warning and exhortation in this section begins with a quotation from Psalm 95:7-11 (Heb. 3:7-11) and follows with the author's application for his readers (3:12-19). The application is framed by the repetition of the verb *blepo* ("see to it," 3:12; "so we see," 3:19) and the noun *apistia* ("unbelieving," 3:12; "unbelief," 3:19). Lane observes: "The warning against unbelief in vv. 12 and 19 provides a literary and theological frame for the admonition to maintain the basic position of faith, which is centrally placed in v. 14" (1991, 83). . . . The warning of Hebrews 3:7-19 is that "those who have experienced the redemption of the cross may find themselves in a similar situation" (Hagner, 1983, 43) to the desert generation who perished, if they harden their hearts in unbelief and turn back from Christ to their former way of life. The passage represents a serious exhortation to persevering discipleship and unwavering faith. . . . In Hebrews 3:12, the author applies the Psalm 95 warning to his fellow believers. That his readers are genuine Christians is again indicated by the word "brothers" (cf. 3:1). He is concerned that none of them be lost: "Be careful," he exhorts, "that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away [*apostenai*, lit., departs] from the living God" (pers. trans.). Like the Hebrews mentioned in Psalm 95:7-11, God's people under the new covenant "sometimes turn away from God in apostasy . . . . This may be provoked by suffering or persecution or by the pressures of temptation, but the root cause is always unbelief" (Peterson, 1994, 1330). Apostasy refers to abandoning what one has previously believed, in this case, a disowning of Jesus as the Son of God a departing from the fellowship of believers. Our author calls it a turning "away from the living God." . . . As with the desert generation, apostasy is not so much a decision of the moment as it is the culmination of a process of hardening the heart (3:8, 13, 15) in unbelief (3:12, 19; cf. 4:2), resulting in the end in rebellion against God (3:8, 15, 16), disobedience (3:18; cf. 4:6), and finally turning away from God (3:12; cf. 3:10). An important safeguard against apostasy is a loving, nurturing community of true believers, who "encourage one another daily" in the Lord (3:13). Isolation from other believers particularly makes one vulnerable to the world's wisdom and lies, to the many temptations of the devil, and to "sin's deceitfulness." . . . "Today" carries with it both a note of urgency and an inherent warning that windows of opportunity do not last forever. . . . Believers are sharers (*metochoi*, plural) "in Christ" (3:14, NIV), "partakers of Christ" (NASB, NKJV), "partners of Christ" (NRSV). As Christ came to share our humanity, so "in Christ" we share his life, grace (4:16), salvation (2:10), kingdom (12:28), suffering (13:12-13), and glory (2:10). To begin well is commendable, but we must "hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first" (3:14b). As Bruce states, "it is only those who stay the course and finish the race that have any hope of gaining the prize" (1990, 101; cf. 12:1-3). We must persevere until Jesus comes the second time (cf. 9:28) or until we go to him through death (cf. 2 Cor. 5:8). ("Hebrews," *Life in the Spirit New Testament Commentary*, 1319-1322) See also Scot McKnight article "A Synthetic Look at the Warning Passages in Hebrews" in External Link.

- [98] B. J. Oropeza: Our author assumes his audience already knows the foundational instructions prior to listing them in 6:1-2. *Since all the teachings may be related to conversion initiation, he seems to be reminding them of their earliest instruction that led to their confession when*

they were baptized. His reminder provides confirmation of the audience's identity as Christian converts. Even if the author claims them babes in Christ, they are still bona fide believers. They are holy brothers and sisters who share in Christ (3:1, 6), have already repented, placed initial faith in God, experienced baptism in water and Spirit, and placed their hope in the resurrection of the dead and day of recompense. Moreover, *it seems they have been believers for a long time (5:12), and so their potential to fall away is probably not precipitate but a gradual drifting away (cf. 2:1).* The author's reaffirmation of their Christian identity may function as an implicit means of discouraging them from returning to their pre-converted status prior to their having a spiritual life in Christ. Even though they are to press on towards maturity, they must not forget how they first became Christ-followers. Our author may also believe that anything short of advancing forward to maturity would be a step backward, which eventually leads to backsliding. *An important preventative against falling away, then, is for the audience to move forward.* This reiteration of the foundational teachings sets up our author for his next warning. The author turns from directly addressing his audience to speak primarily in aorist masculine plural participles about others in 6:4-6. The string of participles describing these people prior to their failing away would seem to imply that they had also experienced conversion and understood the elementary teachings in 6:1-2. *The audience would have doubtless thought that these apostates were also once Christians.* Our author mentions them vaguely as "those" . . . . When speaking about others in the context of his warnings, and whether they are anonymous (e.g., 10:38-39) or not (e.g., 3:16-19; 12:16-17), the author uses their example as a springboard to directly challenge his recipients not to behave in a like manner. Here he mentions apostates (6:6), but he implies through the larger context that the recipients' reluctant hearing might become the cause of their own defection. . . . With the immediate context of 6:1-3 fresh in the author's mind, the thought of those who "were once enlightened" . . . probably refers to conversion or "saving illumination" as in 10:32 where the word [enlightened] refers to the audiences' actual conversion in the past. In 6:4 the word assumes conversion as a one-time event with the adverb "once" (cf. 9:7, 26-29; 10:2; 12:26f). . . . *The text is referring to their conversion and this is the primary meaning of [enlightened] in 6:4.* An echo from the wilderness generation's eating of manna possibly appears through the next phrase, "had tasted of the heavenly gift" (6:4b). . . . Attridge understands the meaning of this gift to be more eclectic: it is "the gracious bestowal of salvation, with all that entails—the spirit, forgiveness, and sanctification." This is perhaps the best interpretation of the phrase. Important for our purposes is that the "tasting" of this gift does not mean a mere sip or sampling but the reality of experiencing something related to personal salvation. The author uses the term earlier to refer to Christ "tasting" death (Heb 2:9; cf. Matt 16:28). *Whatever else the author means in 6:4, he is conveying that the apostates were at one time converted and experienced the grace of God.* They also "shared in the holy Spirit" (6:4c: . . . , a thought that comes close to the mystical union of sharing in a relationship with Christ (cf. 3:1, 14). Here the focus may be on the Spirit's relationship, communion, and solidarity with the believers, an early Christian hallmark for determining conversion-initiation, new life, and sanctification (Acts 11:15-18; Rom 8:9-14; 2 Thess 2:13; Titus 3:5; Eph 1:13-14; John 3:3-7). *There is in fact no passage in the New Testament that affirms unbelievers or fake Christians having a share in the Holy Spirit.* . . . They had also "tasted of the good word of God and the powers of the age to come" (6:5). This refers back to the theme of God speaking through his Son in the final days (1:3). The apostates were taught the spoken word, the gospel message of salvation and life (2:3; 4:1; 5:9; 6:12). The powers of the coming age likely points to the signs and wonders experienced by early Christian communities (Heb 2:2-4; cf. 1 Cor 12:4-11). . . . The upshot in Heb 6:4-6 is that *despite all these salvific blessings these individuals experienced, they fell away . . . .* There is no conditional "if" in the Greek text and none should be imported. The warning does not express what hypothetically happens to apostates even though Christians cannot really become apostates. The danger of apostasy is a real threat for the community. The severity of language and repeated warnings attest to this regardless of whether the apostates in 6:4-6 are anonymous or people the author and audience once knew. [Fell away] appears nowhere else in the New Testament, but in the LXX it normally conveys some form apostasy from God, righteousness, or wisdom (Ezek 14:13; 15:8; 18:24; 20:27; Wis 6:9; 12:2). We are not told specifically in 6:6 what they fall away from, but we can adduce from the immediate context that it would be a turning away from conversion and salvific benefits described in 6:1-5. The author, in any case, refers to Christians who were once converted, sharers in God's Spirit, and experienced gracious salvation, God's word, and the miracles of the coming age. At very least, then, they commit apostasy by rejecting God's grace and God's Spirit (cf. 10:29c). *There is little reason for the author to bother compiling an entire list of salvific blessings described in 6:1-4 if he were intending to communicate to his audience that these people were inauthentic believers.* . . . The surprise of their apostasy is implied in 6:6: they experienced all the gifts and blessings a normal Christian experiences, and yet they fell away. *Our author presents this passage, then, as part of his effort to shake the audience free from their spiritual dullness.* His rhetorical strategy for them comes through loud and clear: "if these other Christians fell away who had experienced conversion and spiritual blessings just like you experience, watch out lest the same thing happen to you!" The author of Hebrews not only affirms that Christ-followers can fall away, but that once they do they cannot be renewed again to repentance (6:4-6). The meaning of the adjectival neuter ἀδύνατον means an unqualified "impossible," as it does elsewhere in the homily (6:18; 10:4; 11:6; cf. 9:9; 10:1, 11). . . . For our author, it is impossible to bring the apostate again to repentance and conversion. The reason why it is impossible is not specified. Perhaps God will not allow it to happen. It is God who declares that the wilderness generation will never enter into his rest after they reject his ways (3:11). Then again, if an apostate repudiates Christ, he or she rejects the very basis upon which atonement and forgiveness is made possible (cf. 10:26-29). The author might assume both ideas. . . . The author of Hebrews was not unique in his declaration that apostates could not be restored. *The verdict for the apostates in Hebrews is similar to God's verdict for the wilderness generation who are rejected because of their persistent unbelief and disobedience when he swears "they will never enter into my rest" (Heb 3:11; 4:3, 5).* This divine oath from Ps 94[95]:11 and Num 14:21-35 provides a strong undercurrent for the author's ultimate rejection of apostates who reject God in the final "today" of salvific history. . . . The punishment of the apostates is described through a comparison between well-watered and fruitful ground blessed by God, and useless ground that produces thorns and thistles and "is about to be cursed; its end is for burning" (6:7-8). The blessing and curse distinction may recall the Deuteronomic tradition's divine blessing on covenant keepers and curses on violators (Deut 11:11, 26-28; 30:1, 19). In this tradition fire is related to divine judgment (Deut 32:22; cf. 2 Sam. 23:6; Isa 33:12). More specifically, however, the burning in Heb 6:8 recalls eschatological judgment comparable to Jewish apocalyptic and early Christian traditions (Matt 13:31-32; 1 Cor 3:10-15; Rev 20; cf. Isa 66:24;

1 En. 102.1; 4 Ezra 16.78). The metaphor of burning useless thorns and thistles is also evident in the gospels that depict the imagery of fire related to a judgment on the wicked at the end of the age (e.g., Matt 13:30, 36-43; cf. Matt 7:16-26; John 15:6). In Hebrews final judgment will take place when Christ returns, and the apostates will be punished with fiery destruction at that time (Heb 10:30-31; 12:29). Most likely, a similar thought about *the apostates' final destruction is being conveyed in Heb 6:8*. (*Church Under Siege of Persecution and Assimilation: The General Epistles and Revelation*, Apostasy in the New Testament Communities, Volume 3 [Oregon: Cascade Books, 2012], 32-38, 41, 45) See "Christian Apostasy and Hebrews 6" by Ben Witherington in External Link; see also Scot McKnight's article "A Synthetic Look at the Warning Passages in Hebrews" in External Link.

- [99] B. J. Oropeza: In the opposite direction of receiving the forgiveness of sins, maintaining confidence, and exhorting one another the author writes: "For if we continue sinning willingly (ἐκούσιως) after receiving the knowledge (ἐπίγνωσις) of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins" (10:26). The present tense participle for "continue sinning" . . . may suggest a state of sin rather than a single act of sin. The "knowledge of the truth" refers to the proclamation of the gospel and Christ's atoning sacrifice that brings forgiveness of sin. Here it may imply the notion of conversion similar to the Pastoral Letters (1 Tim 2:4; 4:3; 2 Tim 2:25; 3:7). "We" includes both the author and audience (cf. Heb 2:1). Their spiritual transformation is implied in 10:22 (cf. 9:13), where repentance and the removal of sin is contrasted with the old covenant that could not deliver from the consciousness of sin (cf. 9:9; 10:2). The body washed in water is probably referring to baptism. In light of 10:22, the sin in 10:26 is committed after conversion. *This verse refers to the danger of believers who after being converted and fully accepting and understanding the gospel message then reject it*. . . . Perhaps the most celebrated parallel to Heb 10:26 comes from Numbers and distinguishes intentional and unintentional sins (Num 15:22-31; cf. Lev 4:1-2; 5:18; Deut 19:4; Heb 5:2; 9:7). An Israelite's commitment to witting sin showed contempt for God and barred forgiveness, excluding the violator from God's people. It is clear that our author was familiar with this source; he echoes it earlier in the homily when speaking about the wilderness generation's rebellion and punishment (Heb 3-4/Num 14). In Hebrews the sinning believers cannot claim ignorance; they know fully the message of salvation in Christ and yet reject it (Heb 10:26, 29). This is akin with committing witting or intentional sin, and it is virtually synonymous with committing apostasy, as 10:29, 35 and 38-39 suggest (cf. also 3:13). Hebrews 10:29 gives three descriptions of the apostate: 1) he tramples underfoot the Son of God (10:29a); 2) he profanes the blood of the new covenant by which he was sanctified (10:29b); and 3) he has insulted/outraged the Spirit of grace (10:29c). Regarding the first description (Heb 10:29a), καταπατέω is used of trampling something underfoot (cf. Matt 5:13; Luke 8:5; 12:1). . . . At its most basic level the notion of trampling in Hebrews refers to the apostate rejecting the Son of God. . . . To trample on the Son of God . . . implies a repudiation of Jesus as the Son of God and eschatological ruler of the cosmos (Heb 1), *a reversal of the Christian confession* that was considered a brash challenge to Caesar according to Roman opponents and blasphemy according to Jewish opponents. Regarding the second description (10:29b), the thought of reckoning unclean the blood of the covenant refers to a repudiation of the new covenant work of Christ involving his sacrificial death that provides the forgiveness of sin (cf. Heb 9:12, 13-14, 20; 10:19; Acts 21:28; Rev 21:17). Here the atoning death of Christ related to the new covenant is being denied. Johnson astutely writes, "The apostasy, in effect, reverses the effect of Christ's priestly work." Also significant in 10:29b is that *the apostate was at one time "sanctified"* . . . *through Christ's sacrifice*. There is no doubt that the author considers the apostate as being once a genuine Christ follower thoroughly converted and cleansed from sin before his repudiation of the new covenant. The third description (10:29c) asserts that the apostate outrages or insults (ἐνυβρίζω) the Spirit of grace, implying insolence of the arrogant sort. Some interpreters associate the thought with blaspheming the Holy Spirit. This is certainly possible, but the author probably intends to convey something more than this. The "Spirit of grace" relates to the arrival of the eschatological era and may echo Zech 12:10, a passage that our author would probably interpret as Christ's death on the cross (cf. John 19:34-37; Rev. 1:7). The idea, then, may refer to *a repudiation of the baptism and outpouring of the Spirit during the end times*, which was considered a gift (i.e., "grace") associated with miraculous signs, conversion, and the believers' new life in Christ (cf. Heb 2:4; 6:4; Acts 2:4, 38-39; 11:15-18; 1 Cor 12:13; Rom 8:9; John 3:5). The person in Heb 10:26-29 commits the sin of apostasy: he repudiates the confession of Jesus as Son of God, reverses his atoning death, and arrogantly rejects the gift of God's Spirit. This apostate seems antagonistic towards his former faith. There no longer remains a sacrifice that could bring this person back to right standing with God. Since Christ's once-for-all sacrifice is considered unrepeatable, and this person has rejected this sacrifice, he cannot be renewed, nor can he turn to the old covenant priestly sacrifices that were offered yearly to cover sins, because according to our author such things were rendered obsolete by Christ's sacrificial death (cf. 10:9, 18). *In essence 10:26, similar to 6:4-6, teaches that it is impossible for the apostate to be restored, and 10:29, similar to 6:4-6, teaches that the apostate was once an authentic believer*. What remains for the apostate, according to our author, is judgment in the form of a fearful, impending punishment from God (10:27-31). The judgment is described in at least three significant contours. First, the apostate is to expect a "fiery zeal" . . . from God that will consume God's enemies (10:27). A natural inference is that the defecting Christian has now become an enemy of God deserving punishment. This form of retribution uses the Isaianic tradition in which God sends fiery judgment against his adversaries on the appointed "day" that is fast approaching (Heb 10:27/Isa 26:11 cf. Isa 26:1, 20/Heb 10:37a). Hebrews relates this judgment to eschatological destruction on the "day" Christ returns (10:25), in other words, the day after "today" (cf. 4:7-11). Second, using *qal wahomer*, our author affirms a punishment (τιμωρίας) worse than the penalty of physical death prescribed under Mosaic Law (Heb 10:28-29). . . . According to the Law, no pity should be given to heinous violators of God's covenant, and by the testimony of two or three witness the punishment was prescribed (Heb 10:28/Deut 17:2-6; cf. Deut 13:5-11; 19:11-13, 21; 25:12). Hebrews, in turn, presents three greater witnesses against the apostate who repudiates the new covenant; these are the Son of God (10:29a), the "blood of the covenant" (10:29b), and the Spirit of grace (10:29c). The living God then executes the judgment (10:30-31). Third, the Song of Moses is cited twice by the author in Heb 10:30-31 (Deut 32:35-36; cf. 17:6): "vengeance is mine, I will repay," and "the Lord will judge his people." The song testifies of God's people breaking their covenant with God and thus incurring covenant curses as a result. Our author used this song earlier as background for first warning in Heb 2:1-4. In this song the day of vengeance and destruction draws "near" when God will punish his enemies. God will avenge the blood of his "sons," recompense the opponents, and the land will be purged (Deut 32:35f, 41-43). The song affirms that God makes alive and



none can deliver from his "hands"; he lives forever (32:37-39). The song may have influenced the passage in Hebrews several ways. It reinforces that our author has in mind the concepts of apostasy, covenant breaking, and God's judgment against his people at an impending time. The Deuteronomic day of vengeance is reconfigured into the day of Christ's return and final judgment. The enemy judged by God is the apostate. At the same time, God's faithful servants will be delivered, which may be seen in light of the Deuteronomic benefit of covenant blessings (cf. Heb 10:39). The cleansing of the land in the song perhaps anticipates the final "shakedown" presented in 12:26-29 (albeit, the passage in chapter 12 relies primarily on Haggai 2). Moreover, the song's stress on God as living and making alive, as well as his hands bringing judgment, probably influenced 10:31: "it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God." This all plays into the *author's rhetorical strategy of portraying God's judgment on covenant violators in a graphic manner in order to instill the audience with fear of falling away* (Heb 10:27, 30-31; cf. 4:1; 12:21). The author's concept of fearfulness (10:27, 30-31), in fact, reflects the characterization of covenant curses (Deut 28:66-67; cf. Deut 10:17). The recipients must choose between fearing God (Heb 10:30-31) or fearing humans who harass and marginalize them (10:32-34; 11:23-28; 13:6). Such a decision was repeatedly made by the emerging Christians (Matt 10:28; Luke 12:4-5; cf. 1 Pet 3:14-15/Isa 8:12-13). They could backslide and not come to Christian gatherings as a result of intimidation caused by outsiders, but it would be far better for them to fear God rather than be punished by him as apostates on judgment day. Even so, their fear is not supposed to be the same thing as being traumatized with anxiety attacks because of God; they are to have "godly fear" involving moral response to submit to God's will (cf. 5:7; 12:28). This requires their possessing both a sense of awesomeness about God as well as a deep realization that God will punish the wicked at the end of time, and for our author this includes any Christians who reject God. (*Church Under Siege of Persecution and Assimilation: The General Epistles and Revelation*, Apostasy in the New Testament Communities, Volume 3:48-54) See also Scot McKnight's article "A Synthetic Look at the Warning Passages in Hebrews" in External Link.

[100] Kevin Anderson: The alternation of threat (10:25, 26-31) and encouragement (10:32-34) is concentrated in the final verses of this chapter [v. 37-39]. The preacher presents another set of reasons (**For** [gar]) why the community must "persevere" (v. 36) in a composite biblical quotation. the quotation supplies further scriptural support for the eschatological urgency punctuating the transitional section (10:25, 27, 30-31, 34, 35, 36). "The Day" is fast approaching (10:25) because Christ is coming soon (10:37). The quote also introduces the topic of living by faith (v. 38a), illustrated at length in ch. 11. The introductory line, **in just a very little while**, comes from Isa 26:20. Its original context accounts for the distinctly eschatological resonance of the phrase: the promise of resurrection (Isa 26:19), the gracious opportunity given to God's people to hide from divine wrath (26:20-21), and the broader themes of God's righteous judgment and salvation (26:1-18). The phrase fits perfectly with the following quote from Hab 2:3b-4 (Heb 10:37b-38). It reinforces the promise that the Coming One **will come and will not delay** (v. 37b). The author adapts the text from Habakkuk in several ways in order to drive home his points. . . . First, he cements the messianic interpretation of the passage (already present in the LXX) by adding *the* to the word for **coming**: *ho erchomenos*, **He who is coming** or "the Coming One" (ESV, HCSB, NLT, RSV). This leaves no doubt that the prophecy in Habakkuk concerns Christ's second coming. Second, he transposes the two clauses in Hab 2:4 (LXX) and adds an adversative **and** . . . between them. So in Hebrews the subject of the phrase **if he shrinks back** is not the coming deliverer (as in the LXX) but is **my righteous one** (i.e., the person of faith). The inversion sets up two contrasting courses of action for believers: living by faith or shrinking back. Third, he alters the LXX by attaching **my** to **righteous one** instead of **faith**. This (along with the inversion of clauses noted above) unambiguously identifies the **righteous one** as the believer. It switches the focus from God's faithfulness (as in the LXX) to the imperative for God's righteous people to live **by faith**. Hebrews embraces the assurance found in God's faithfulness (Heb 6:13-20; 10:23). But here the emphasis is upon the responsibility of God's people to live in accord with divine faithfulness—**by faith**. . . . The preacher sets an encouraging pastoral tone in his application of the Habakkuk text (v. 39). he does this by using the first person plural we (*hēmeis*; 10:19-25; 12:1). Providing reassurance on the heels of a strong warning about divine judgment is an effective method of exhortation he has used before (6:9 and 10:32-34). In effect, our author invites his audience to acknowledge with him that **we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed**. To **shrink back** (*hypostolēs*) is to be timid (BDAG, 1041). It is the opposite of having "confidence" (10:19, 35), but it also plays phonetically with another antonym, **endurance** (*hypomonēs* [10:36]). Fortitude is necessary, because slinking away from God's people (10:25) and abandoning one's confession (10:23) inevitably lead to **destruction** (*apōleian*). This is connected with the "eternal judgment" (6:2), described as the dreadful and fiery execution of divine justice (6:8; 10:27, 30-31; 12:26-29). It is falling under God's curse (6:8) and displeasure (10:38), rather than doing what is pleasing to God by aligning one's actions with his will (10:36; 13:21). The readers must count themselves among **those who believe** (*pisteōs*) or "those who have faith" (ESV, HCSB, NASB, NET, NRSV). **Faith** is directly opposed to **shrinking back**. Lack of faith characterized the apostasy of the wilderness generation (3:12, 19; 4:2) and led to their destruction (3:16-18; 4:11). Readers must instead follow the example of those who through faith and perseverance inherit God's promise (6:12; 10:36). **Faith** is here more than a mental assent to the truth or a mere profession of one's belief. It entails drawing near to God in "absolute trust" (10:22 NAB) and "confidence" (10:19, 35). It means holding on to the confession of hope (10:23) and committing oneself to the Christian community and its vital practices of love and well-doing (10:24-25). Such *faithfulness* involves courage and "perseverance" (10:32, 36). A long list of people who model this follows in ch. 11. The result of faithfulness is that **we are saved**. The expression is literally "preserving of the soul" (NASB). . . . In the NT it refers to attaining eternal life (Luke 17:33; compare "receive salvation [*peripoiēsēsin sōterias*] [1 Thess 5:9]; . . . From the beginning, the preacher has warned his audience not to ignore "such a great salvation" (2:3; see 1:14) or the Great High Priest who has procured it (2:10; 5:9; 9:28). Now, as earlier, though he must warn them about the dire consequences of apostasy, he is convinced "of better things" in their case—"things that accompany salvation" (6:9). (*Hebrews: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition*, [Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2013], 289-291). See also Scot McKnight's article "A Synthetic Look at the Warning Passages in Hebrews" in External Link.

[101] B. J. Oropeza: Since the believers have so many previous examples of faith who stand as a cluster of spectators or "cloud of witnesses," they are encouraged to run their metaphoric footrace of life with endurance (Heb 12:1; cf. ch. 11; 1 Cor 9:24-27). Hebrews uses the imagery of a footrace as one more example of God's people "moving" towards the goal of eschatological completion, similar to the wilderness generation

journeying to the place of "rest" (Heb 3-4). The race metaphor, in any case, eventually breaks down when we realize that our author is not concerned about who gets first prize but just that all the contestants run until reaching the finish line. Once that has been achieved, the location is transformed from a stadium to the heavenly Jerusalem (12:22). Hence, the footrace concerns the participants' endurance, and apostasy would seem to be the outcome for those who do not finish the race. The runners are to mimic the attitude of the faithful champions who are now watching them in the stadium as the runners participate in the contest. In this race they must not return once they have gone out (cf. 11:15-16a). If they continue the race God will not be ashamed of them but will grant them entrance into the heavenly city (cf. Heb 11:16b; contrast Mark 8:38). *The point for our author is not that some in the congregation will not start the race, but that some will not finish it.* To run this race appropriately they should lay aside every impediment and easily obstructing sin, similar to a runner who loses excess body weight and sets aside heavy clothes or anything else that would hinder the athlete's speed (cf. Philostratus, *Gymnasticus* 48; Philo, *Sacrifices* 63). The sin is unspecified, and some exegetes surmise it as the sin of apostasy (cf. Heb 3:13; 10:26). The closest prior mention of sin is in 11:25, which speaks of Moses choosing mistreatment with God's people over the temporary pleasures of sin. That sin also has been understood as apostasy. But its connection with pleasure (*ἀπόλαυσις*/cf. *ἀπόλαύω*), when used in a negative sense, often refers to enticements related to forbidden foods and sensual vices, and this comes close to the meaning of sin in 12:16. The imagery of laying aside excess impediments in 12:1 is something normally done before the race starts, which tend to make the "sin" relevant to pre-conversion impediments that would hinder the participants during their new course of life if they are not discarded. The sin in 12:1 therefore refers to pre-converted sins or sin in general (cf. 9:26). It is not referring to apostasy per se. Interestingly, disrobing before baptism was practiced in Christian circles in the second century, and a similar practice may be operating in Asia Minor in the first century, which uses the same word in 12:1 (*ἀποτίθημι*) to describe disrobing. In any event, post-baptismal sins could always resemble pre-baptismal ones that do lead to apostasy, and sin would seem to ensnare easily any runner (cf. 12:1, 14-16). As runners focus their eyes down the track at a person "seated in the place of honor," so the believers are to keep their eyes on Jesus. He has already run the race of faith and finished his course having endured great suffering to the shedding of blood, something the believers have not yet experienced (12:2-4). Jesus is thus the ultimate exemplar of faithfulness as well as the object of faith for the runners. He endured crucifixion and despised "shame," affirming the societal honor system and public opinion as unreliable regarding its evaluation of crucifixion as dishonorable. Our author deems Jesus' death to be noble, voluntarily allowed in obedience to God, dedicated to virtue, and for the benefit of others (cf. 2:9-10, 14f; 4:14-16; 5:7-10; chs. 7-10). By setting their eyes on Jesus and his accomplishment on the cross, the believers will be encouraged not to grow fatigued and "give up" on the race (*ἐκλύω*: 12:3, 5). The believers, as good athletes, are to endure "discipline" (*παιδεία*), rigorous training conducive for running a good race (12:5-11). The author reconfigures the idea of *παιδεία* from a loving yet punitive and correcting discipline the LORD gives to children in Prov 3:11-12 to a non-punitive discipline in Heb 12. The discipline and suffering the believers experience, in other words, are not the result of divine punishment. Rather, the training and suffering fosters virtuous living with the special qualities of holiness and righteousness (12:10-11). Children who are without this training from the Father, something all God's children participate in, are "illegitimate and not sons" (Heb 12:8; cf. Wis 4:3). These words do not accuse some of the audience as false believers. The author gives us no clear indication of such a problem within this community. The homily suggests instead that the members have in fact experienced suffering and are currently enduring the struggle of salvation, and this is why he encourages them to press on—they are legitimate children belonging to Christ (Heb 2:13; 3:1; cf. 10:32-34). Their training and suffering should be considered as badges of honor; being illegitimate is a mark of dishonor. The argument probably aims to counter their supposing that discipline and suffering brings shame. David deSilva rightly argues in 12:8: "The author thus makes the experience of reproach and loss suffered for the sake of Christ a sign of favor and honor, and, more astounding, the lack of such hardship a sign of disfavor and dishonor! Those who shrink back so as to avoid these experiences find themselves shamed because they no longer experience what all children of God share in common." Moreover, *the thought of illegitimacy also stresses the reality of a person being denied the right of inheritance as a legal child* (cf. Gen 21:10; 25:5-6; Gal 4:30). In this homily such an inheritance ends with everlasting salvation (Heb 1:14; 6:12; 9:15; 11:8), and *if one is without discipline, one could anticipate a fate similar to Esau who sold his birthright and lost his rightful inheritance* (Heb 12:16-17; cf. v. 23). Esau's profane act nullified his rightful privileges as the firstborn son; and if the believers fall away from their spiritual footrace they will become illegitimate children by losing their place in the family of God and Christ (cf. 2:13b; 3:1, 6; 12:23). The imagery turns to a fatigued or crippled runner who needs reviving so as to continue advancing: "Therefore strengthen your drooping hands and your feeble knees and make straight paths for your feet so that what is crippled may not be dislocated [*ἐκτρέπω*] but rather be healed" (Heb 12:12-13/Prov 4:26). In this passage *ἐκτρέπω* is sometimes interpreted as a turning aside from the course, suggesting apostasy. Or it may have a medical meaning, referring to the dislocation of a joint. A dislocation would cause the runner to fall or not be able to continue the race, so in either case it seems that the runner would not be able to make it to the finish line. Thus committing apostasy is implied as a negative outcome of what might happen if the runner is not healed and strengthened once again. The author's exhortation intends to bring about the audience's strengthening and renewing; the congregants are presumed to be spiritually fatigued and about to give up the metaphoric race that leads to eternal inheritance. (*Churches Under Siege of Persecution and Assimilation: The General Epistles and Revelation*, Apostasy in the New Testament Communities, Volume 3:57-60).

- [102] J. Wesley Adams: As holiness belongs to the essence of God and is his highest glory, so it is to characterize God's people. We were chosen in Christ to be holy (Eph. 1:4), and God disciplines us as his children so "that we may share in his holiness" (12:10). . . . Lane observes that "in Hebrews 'pure' and 'holy' are interchangeable terms because those who have been made holy are those for whom Christ has made purification. . . . Christians have within their reach the holiness that is indispensable for seeing God" (1991, 451). Holiness "is not an optional extra in the Christian life but something which belongs to its essence. It is the pure in heart, and none but they, who shall see God Matt. 5:8). Here [Heb. 12:14], as in v. 10, practical holiness of life is meant" (Bruce, 1990, 348). Thus 12:14 begins by exhorting believers to earnestly pursue peace and holiness as a way of life. "Make every effort" (*dioko*) conveys diligence in the pursuit of peace and holiness . . . . Peace is viewed as an objective reality tied to Christ and his redemptive death on the cross, which makes possible harmony and solidarity in Christian community

(cf. Col. 1:20). Similarly, "holiness" is essential to Christian community (cf. 12:15). Sin divides and defiles the body of Christ, just as cancer does a human body. To pursue holiness suggests a process of sanctification in which our life and manner of living are set apart for God as holy and God-honoring. Verse 14 concludes that "without holiness no one will see the Lord." To "see" the Lord and "know" him intimately are closely related. To see the Lord "is the highest and most glorious blessing mortals can enjoy, but the beatific vision is reserved for those who are holy in heart and life" (Bruce, 1990, 349). Things that are unholy effectively block seeing and knowing God and in the end keep the person from inheriting the kingdom of God (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-10). Believers must be vigilantly watchful over the spiritual well-being of each member of the church. The verb translated "see to it" (*episkopeo*; 12:15a) conveys the idea of spiritual oversight and is related to the function of "overseers" or elders. This verb is a present active participle with the force of an imperative and carries the sense of "watching continually." Three subordinate clauses of warning follow this verb, each one introduced by the words "that no one" (*me tis*): Watch continually—"that no one misses the grace of God" (12:15a) "that no bitter root grows up . . ." (12:15b) "that no one is sexually immoral or . . . godless" (12:16a). This appeal to spiritual watchfulness is a call to the church as a whole. The exhortation "see to it that no one misses the grace of God" (12:15a) is a key statement. Remaining steadfast in faith (10:19-11:40), enduring discipline as children (12:1-13), and pursuing peace and holiness (12:14) are all related to the grace of God, as is everything involving our salvation. If entrance into the Christian life is by the grace of God, even so the continuance and completion of it is by the grace of God. The dreadful possibility of missing God's grace is not because his grace is inaccessible, but because some may choose not to avail themselves of it. For this reason it is possible for a person (though once a believer) not to reach the goal that is attainable only by his grace operating through faith (cf. 3:12; Bruce, 1990, 349). Marshall makes several observations concerning this warning passage (1969, 149-51). (1) It is possible for a believer to draw back from the grace of God (12:15a; cf. 2 Cor. 6:1; Gal. 5:4). The context of the warning here, as elsewhere in Hebrews (e.g., Heb. 2:1-4; 6:4-8; 10:26-31), indicates that a true believer is meant. (2) Where the grace of God is missed, bitterness will take root and potentially defile other members in the church (12:15b). The deadly sins of unbelief and a poisonous root of bitterness function like a fatally contagious disease that can "defile many" in the community. (3) No one should be "sexually immoral [*pornos*; lit., fornicator] or . . . godless like Esau." Esau was a sensual man rather than a spiritual man—entirely earthly-minded rather than heavenly-minded—who traded away "his inheritance rights as the oldest son" (12:16b) for the momentary gratification of his physical senses. He represents those who would make the unthinkable exchange of long-range spiritual inheritance (i.e., things hoped for but not yet seen, 11:1) for present tangible and visible benefits, momentary though they be. Afterwards, when Esau realized the foolishness of his choice, he wanted to inherit his blessing but could not since "he was rejected" by God (12:17a). Attridge notes that the comment on Esau "conveys the sharpest warning" of this passage (1989, 369). Though some have understood verse 17b to mean that Esau could not change Isaac's mind, the more likely sense is that of rejection by God—that is, repentance was not granted by God. "God did not give Esau the opportunity of changing his mind and gaining what he had forfeited. The author intends his readers to apply this story to themselves and their salvation. Just as Esau was rejected by God, so can they be rejected if they spurn their spiritual birthright" (Marshall, 1969, 150). Bruce concurs that this example of Esau "is a reinforcement of the warning given at an earlier stage in the argument, that after apostasy no second repentance is possible" (1990, 352). Esau's "tears" represent regret for having lost his birthright, not repentance for having despised and shown contempt for God's gift of a birthright and for the covenant by which it was secured. This is all immediately applicable to the readers of this book, for Esau represents "apostate persons who are ready to turn their backs on God and the divine promises, in reckless disregard of the blessings secured by the sacrificial death of Jesus" (Lane, 1991, 455). In other words, a person may miss the grace of God and the spiritual inheritance of eternal life that he or she might have received. In such cases "God may not permit . . . an opportunity of repentance. Not all sinners go this far; but an apostate may well find that he has stretched the mercy of God to its limit, so that he cannot return" (Marshall, 1969, 150-51). ("Hebrews," *Life in the Spirit New Testament Commentary*, 1382-1384)

- [103] B. J. Oropeza: In 12:18-29 thoughts about divine judgment merge with the finishing line of the runner and the place of "rest" for the moving people of God portrayed in the earlier portion of the homily (Heb 3-4). The end of the race is met with a festival gathering (*πανηγυρις*) appropriate for the end of a competition. The scene in Hebrews is primarily eschatological with the believers having arrived in Zion, and the heavenly Jerusalem (12:22). The city is paradoxically yet "to come" (13:14; cf. 11:10). In 12:18-24 our author seems to be stripping away the curtain that hides the presently unseen reality so that the audience could get a magnificent glimpse or sneak preview of the heavenly city awaiting them at the culmination of the race. The scene depicts a location where the blessings of God's promises are fully realized: the faithful enter into a final state of rest and receive their reward of inheritance. In heavenly Zion, God is the judge, Jesus is enthroned, the firstborn assembly is registered as its citizens, and both angels and perfected "spirits" reside there. If our author is primarily fast-forwarding the recipient community's race so that they could see in advance the final scene, then the "church" and firstborn in Zion might include the recipients who have persevered. If so, then the "spirits" of the righteous ones are probably those who had already died by the time the author presented this homily. This group might be identified as the heroes of faith in chapter 11 (cf. 10:38a) or early Christian leaders and martyrs (cf. 13:7), or both. 11:39-40 claims that the people of faith from bygone eras could not be perfected "without us," that is, they could not be completed without believers who presently live in the new covenant era (cf. 7:19; 10:10, 14). This group, it seems, will be perfected when Zion is fully realized to all the firstborn at the end of time. A final comparison from lesser to greater is given in 12:18-29. God speaking in the past from Mount Sinai is compared with God speaking in the present from the heavenly city. At Sinai when the old covenant was established Moses trembled exceedingly and the people were terrified at God's voice. Even beasts were to be destroyed if they touched the mountain of divine presence (cf. 12:18-21). Fearful as Israel's past experience with the divine presence might have been, the future heavenly Zion is intended to be even more fearful and operates on the new covenant of Jesus with God as judge (12:22-24). God's voice shook the earth when his presence was manifest at Sinai, but now a promise remains that at the end of the age God will also shake "the heaven" (12:25-26). The shaking of heaven and earth resembles apocalyptic imagery and destruction that must take place before the end (Rev 6:12-14; 16:18-21; 21:1-2; 2 Pet 3:5-7; Isa 59:3; Joel 2:10-11; cf. Isa 33:20). Such shaking communicates the fearful presence and intervention of God (cf. Nah 1:5; Joel 3:16; Isa 13:13; Jer 10:10; Ezek 39:20). . . . An echo from Hag 2:6-7 (cf. 2:21) is felt here which was originally addressed to

Zerubbabel of Judah and "Jesus the high priest." In the prophetic book the day of the Lord was soon approaching, and at that time everything would be affected by it. A shaking would take place horizontally on sea and dry land and vertically on earth and in the heaven. Then all the nations would surrender their treasures and submit to Jerusalem and its temple so that that latter house of God would be greater than the former temple (Hag 2:6-9). Our author in Hebrews relates the shaking from Haggai to the final eschatological visitation in which the temporal and unholy things will be removed and only that which is permanent and holy will remain for the coming kingdom of God. The implication for believers seems clear enough. The author essentially warns that if the fearful presence and voice of God from the heavenly city is greater than the theophany at Sinai, then how much greater and terrifying will be the judgment of God on those who reject God's voice in the new covenant era? The author's final warning resembles the first one in Heb 2:1-4. The audience is to take heed (βλέπετε) and not to refuse God who now speaks from heaven. The author and the community to whom he writes ("we") will not be able to escape the final judgment if they *turn away* (ἀποστρέφω) from the one who warns from heaven (12:25, 29). God is viewed as a consuming fire, a thought that alludes to his judgment against enemies and those who violate his covenant (cf. Deut 4:23-24; 9:3; Isa 33:14). Our author has in mind a burning judgment and picture of final destruction akin with early apocalyptic traditions (Isa 66:16, 24; Zeph 1:18; 1 En. 91.9; 4 Ezra 7.38; 2 Bar. 44.15). Put differently, *if the malaise Christian community that suffers from dullness of hearing commit apostasy by rejecting God's message, then God will consume them with a fiery punishment at the eschaton*. Given that the audience is in the process of inheriting an unshakable kingdom, the appropriate way to worship God, then, is for all believers to show gratitude (Heb 12:28), which is the proper response beneficiaries are to show to the benefactor who gives them a gift. In this case the benefactor is God. They are also to offer service pleasing to God with "godly fear" (εὐλάβεια) and "dread" (δέος). Again the author uses fear as a strategy in his warning (4:1; 10:27, 31; 12:21; cf. 11:7). The believers are exhorted to worship God acceptably and not commit apostasy but inherit instead the promised blessing of rest in heavenly Zion. (*Church Under Siege of Persecution and Assimilation: The General Epistles and Revelation, Apostasy in the New Testament Communities*, Volume 3:64-67)

- [104] David P. Nystrom: As in the wisdom tradition, the word "blessed" has both present and future connotations, for the one who perseveres is qualified to be called "blessed," and the reward is the "crown [*stephanos*] of life." ... The "crown of life" is eternal life, and in this age it is a life lived in the will of God as his faithful and loyal servant... James then adds that this crown of life is what "God has promised to those who love him." As his children, Christians are to stand fast, as do all who truly love God, in order to receive our inheritance. Here the theme of loyalty to God and of turning from lesser and therefore potentially dangerous and false loyalties is present. The faithful are those who stand the test, for real love for God manifests itself in action. James is here faithfully following the teaching of Jesus (see Matt. 25:31-46). (*The NIV Application Commentary: James* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997], 71-72)
- [105] Peter Davids: The verse is in fact very significant. James is written in a typical Greek letter form. It was customary to end such a letter with a summary (James 5:7-11), an oath (James 5:12), a health wish (James 5:13-18) and a purpose statement (James 5:19-20). This verse, then, should be part of the statement of the purpose of the whole letter. That in itself is reason enough to assign it great importance. The condition this verse speaks to is described in James 5:19. A Christian ("one of you") has erred. James gives us plenty of illustrations of this in the letter. The errors he addresses are those of partiality and greed, of anger and jealousy. All of them are found within the church. Such error calls for another Christian ("someone") to point it out so that the person can repent and be restored ("bring him back"). That, of course, is what the entire letter is about, bringing the Christians he addresses back to proper Christian behavior. This is indeed the purpose statement of James. Therefore the sinner in this verse is a Christian who has fallen into sin, such as greed or criticism of others. This Christian brother or sister has erred or gone the wrong way—the text is not talking about an individual sin, however "serious" we may consider it, from which the believer quickly repents. As Jesus points out in Matthew 7:13-14 (which may be the word of Jesus that James is applying here), there are two ways. The way that leads to life is narrow and difficult, while the one leading to death is broad and easy. Unfortunately there are many ways to get from the narrow to the broad way. This Christian (the sinner) has taken one of them and is observed by another, whom we shall call the rescuer. The question is, Who is saved from death—the sinner or the rescuer? Ezekiel 3:18-21 is a discourse on the responsibility of the rescuer. If someone sees a person fall into sin and sits by and does nothing, the sinner will indeed receive the results of the sin, but the potential rescuer will be held guilty of the sinner's blood. In the Old Testament such guilt usually cost the person his life. On the other hand, the rescuer who tries to warn the sinner is free of any guilt, whatever decision the sinner makes. This is certainly the message of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 33:9; compare 1 Tim. 4:16), but is it the message of James? It seems to me that James's message is that the sinner is the one rescued from death by the rescuer's efforts. There are four reasons for this. First, the fact that sins are covered (an adaptation of Proverbs 10:12: "Love covers all wrongs") seems to refer to the sinner's sins, not the potential sin of the rescuer. Only the sinner has erred in the context. Second, the word order in the Greek text makes it more likely that it is the sinner who is delivered from death. Third, the very picture of turning a person from his wandering way (a rather woodenly literal translation that brings out James's imagery) suggests that it is the error that is putting the individual in danger of death. The rescuer is presumably safe (although potentially in error, if he or she fails to help the erring Christian). What, then, is the death that the person is saved from? Certainly sin can lead to physical death in the New Testament, as shown by the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11), as well as by Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 11:30 (compare 1 Cor. 5:5). Moreover, in James 5:15-16 we discover that sin may be involved in the illnesses of Christians. Could this be what James is referring to? By turning a sinner from their error a person is saved from physical death, their sins being forgiven? Attractive as this solution is, it is not the most likely interpretation of the passage. The fact that each of the units of James 5:7-20 is separate and dictated by the letter form means that we should look to the body of the letter (and the call to repentance in James 4:1-10) rather than to the "health wish" (James 5:13-18) for the meaning of "death" in this verse. Both testaments view death as the end result of sin, usually referring to death in terms of eternal death or condemnation at the last judgment (Deut. 30:19; Job 8:13; Psalm 1:6; Psalm 2:12; Jeremiah 23:12; Jude 23; Rev. 20:14). James has already mentioned this in James 1:15: desire gives birth to sin, which results in death. That death is contrasted with the life that God gives (James 1:18). Since death and life are parallel ideas, it is likely that they are not physical but eternal (or eschatological, to use the more technical term). This parallel, plus the seriousness of

the tone in James 5, indicates that it is this sort of death, the ultimate death that sin brings about, which is in view. What James is saying, then, is that a Christian may err from the way of life. When another Christian attempts to rescue him or her, it is not a hopeless action. Such a rescue effort, if successful, will deliver that erring person from eternal death. That is because the sins will be covered (the language is that of the Old Testament sacrifice; when atonement was made the sin was said to be covered as if literally covered by the blood). It may be one simple action of rescue, but it can lead to the covering of "a multitude of sins." In stating this, James shows his own pastor's heart and encourages all Christians to follow in his footsteps, turning their erring brothers and sisters back from the way of death. (*More Hard Sayings of the New Testament*, [Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991], 149-152)

[106] Peter Davids: What does the author mean in 2 Peter 1:10 in exhorting us to make our "calling and election sure"? ... The passage is certainly calling for moral effort. The call for zeal in the phrase "be all the more eager [or diligent]" tips us off to that fact. If that were not enough, this verse comes right after another exhortation to moral living. In 2 Peter 1:5-7 we discover a chain of virtues that Christians are strongly encouraged (using a phrase similar to "be all the more eager") to develop. Developing them will make us effective and productive in our relationship to Christ, while the failure to develop them means that we are blind and have forgotten the cleansing from past sins that we have experienced. We are not surprised at this encouragement to moral effort, for the false teachers in 2 Peter are false precisely in that they are not living morally (false teaching in 2 Peter and in many other New Testament writings is false because it sets a wrong moral example, not just because it teaches wrong doctrine). They apparently claim to see, but in Peter's eyes they are blind. To make one's "calling and election sure," then, is to guarantee or confirm or ratify (the term has those meanings in various contexts) the calling one has received. The calling, of course, is the calling to Christ referred to in [2 Peter] 1:3. The ideas of calling and election are closely associated. . . . The point is that this word pair ... indicates God's action in bringing a person to Christ. This is what needs to be confirmed or ratified by the ethical obedience of the Christian. However, the author is not saying that moral effort can produce election to Christ's kingdom. The calling and election are first (the grace of God appears in [2 Peter] 1:3), just as faith comes first in his list of virtues in 1:5. Everything else is to be a fruit of faith. What Peter does believe is that without moral living one will not enter the kingdom, which is precisely what Paul also believed (1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:21). Peter makes his point clear in the second half of the verse. To confirm one's calling is not to "stumble." This term can mean to sin, as in James 2:10, 3:2. But if this were all Peter had in mind, the sentence would be so obvious as to be meaningless: If you live ethically (do these things), you will not sin (fall). Therefore Peter is using the term as it is used in Romans 11:11, to "fall" in the sense of "come to grief" or "fall disastrously." In Jude 24 a related term refers to God's grace in keeping people from falling in this way, meaning "leaving the faith." The opposite of falling, then, is to "receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:11). In other words, the author pictures Christians on a journey begun with the calling and election of God. If they fall on the way, they will never reach the goal of the kingdom (salvation). But if they do not stumble, and instead develop the virtues he has already listed, they will in the end arrive at the kingdom and be warmly welcomed into it. This teaching is important within the context of 2 Peter. As noted above, the false teachers in the church were not living according to Christian standards, yet they were claiming to be elect and on their way to Christ's kingdom. The author is denying this claim. While the whole New Testament witnesses to forgiveness of sin for all who repent, and acknowledges that Christians do sin from time to time, no author in the New Testament, whether Paul or James or Peter or John, believed that a person could be living in disregard of Christian standards and still be "saved" (or still inherit the kingdom). (*More Hard Sayings of the New Testament*, [Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991], 184-186. Richard Bauckham: Through the knowledge of Christ he has given Christians everything necessary for godly life (verse 3); if they exercise the virtues, this knowledge will be fruit... The "knowledge Jesus Christ," received at conversion, came as illumination to those who were blind in their pagan ignorance (2 Corinthians 4:4), but Christians who do not carry through the moral implications of this knowledge have effectively become blind to it again... "Therefore, my brothers, make all the more effort." ... ("to be zealous, to make an effort") is a natural word for moral effort (Ephesians 4:3; Hebrews 4:11 ...) and is something of a favorite word in 2 Peter (also 1:15; 3:14)... "to confirm your call and election." ... Christ has called the Christian into his kingdom (v. 3), promising him immortality (v. 4), but an appropriate moral response is required if his final salvation is to be guaranteed... This passage does not mean that moral progress provides the Christian with a subjective assurance of his election (the sense it was given by Luther and Calvin, and especially in seventeenth-century Calvinism), but that the ethical fruits of Christian faith are objectively necessary for the attainment of final salvation. Although we should not obscure the variety of New Testament teaching about justification by faith as it is supposed. (1) The author of 2 Peter is concerned with the ethical fruits *of faith* (1:5) and with moral effort which is only possible *through grace* (1:3: "his divine power has bestowed on us everything necessary for a godly life"). (2) Paul can also regard the ethical fruits of faith as necessary for salvation, even in Galatians (5:21), when countering the dangers of libertinism. (3) If our author seems to *emphasize* man's role in salvation, the context should be remembered. His readers were in danger of moral apostasy, under the influence of teachers who evidently held that immorality incurred no danger of judgment... ["If you do these things, you will never stumble"] Many commentators think that because this metaphor means "sin" in James 2:10; 3:2 it must do so here ... but this makes the sentence virtually tautologous: "if you lead a virtuous life (or: if you confirm your calling by leading a virtuous life), you will never sin." The metaphor must rather be given the same sense as in Jude 24: it refers to the disaster of not reaching final salvation (so Bigg, James, Kelly, Grundmann, Senior)... Verse 11 holds out the prospect of entry into Christ's kingdom for those whose faith is effective in virtuous living. [Bauckham notes on page 192 that: "In view of the eschatology of chapter 3, the eternal kingdom here is not simply 'heaven,' but looks forward to the cosmic reign of God in righteousness in the new heaven and new earth (3:13)".] (*Word Biblical Commentary: Jude, 2 Peter* [Waco: Word Books, 1983], 189-193)

[107] Robert Picirilli: A preliminary question concerns the identity of the "they" in verse 20, who are identified as the apostates: Are these the false teachers, or their intended victims? In view of the fact that Peter will deal with this as an apostasy that has already occurred, I am satisfied that he is identifying the false teachers as the apostates. However, as Bauckham observes, "The false teachers are in the state of definite apostasy described in verses 20-22; their followers are doubtless in severe danger of joining them." For our purposes here, however, it makes no difference which group Peter regards as apostates or in danger of apostasy. The main "movements" of the passage can be indicated

in a relatively simple outline: verses 18, 19 [deals with] the attempts of the false teachers to lure believers astray; verses 20, 21 [deals with] the apostasy which they exemplify; verse 22 [is] an illustrative analogy. The key verses to consider, in discussing apostasy, therefore, are verses 20, 21. Without taking time to analyze everything leading up to them, then, I will proceed to the major questions involved. 1. That these whom Peter regards as apostates had a genuine Christian experience is seen in at least three ways. First, they "got clean away" from the pollutions of the world, which recalls 1:4. The aorist *apophugontes* (verse 20 and in 1:4) harks back to the time of their conversion. Second, they accomplished this escape "by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." ... Peter's use of *epignōsis* leaves me in no doubt that he uses this compound for knowledge consciously as a way of representing the saving knowledge of Christ one gains at conversion. Third, they "have come to know the way of righteousness." The verb "have come to know" is cognate to the noun *epignōsis* just referred to, and is used with the same meaning. That it is perfect tense focuses on the state of the knowledge that followed the initiation therein. The "way of righteousness" is obviously the same as "the way of truth" in verse 2 and "the straight way" in verse 15... It would be hard to find a better description of what it means to become a Christian... 2. The apostasy which Peter ascribes to these and warns his readers against is found in two expressions, each standing in sharp contrast to the experience just described. First, they "have been overcome by being again entangled with these (pollutions)." And this after their escape from those very pollutions! In light of verse 19b, this being overcome is being re-enslaved. Clearly, these apostates have returned to the practice of the fleshly wickedness that previously defiled them. Nor does the fact that this is introduced with an "if" mitigate this conclusion... Even [Simon J.] Kistemaker, a thorough-going Calvinist, acknowledges that the ones referred to were once "orthodox Christians" who "escaped the world's defilements"—and then hurries to make these "orthodox Christians" orthodox in external profession and lifestyle only. He apparently does not realize how self-contradictory this sounds, or how unlike Peter's more obvious meaning. Second, they have come to the place where they "turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them." And this after having come to know the way of righteousness! The "holy commandment" ... [is] "Christianity as a whole way of life." [J. N. D. Kelly] It was "delivered to them" when the gospel was preached to them and its implications taught. It is a holy commandment because it sets people apart as God's and teaches them a way of life appropriated for saints. 3. The seriousness of this apostasy Peter indicates in two expressions and a proverb. First, "the last things have come to be worse for them than the first." No doubt Peter is alluding to Jesus' words in Matthew 12:45 and sees that principle fulfilled in the experience of these apostates. They are in worse condition than before they came to the saving knowledge described above. Second, "it were better for them not to have come to know the way of righteousness." This is incredibly startling thing: can anything be worse than never having come to the saving knowledge of the way of the Lord? As Kelly notes, apostates are worse off than unconverted believers "because they have rejected the light." ... An apostate cannot be recovered; a never converted unbeliever can. Third, Peter illustrates with a two-fold proverbial saying (or with two proverbial sayings). That the idea proverbially represented "has happened" to the apostates means that the proverbs fit their situation. Like a dog that comes back to lick up the spoiled vomit that sickened him in the first place, like a sow that gets a bath and goes back to the mud from which she had been cleansed, these apostates return to the enslaving, polluting wickedness from which they had been delivered. Those who attempt to mitigate Peter's teaching by suggesting that the real nature of the sow or the dog had not been changed, and that this implies that these apostate false teachers were never regenerated, are pressing the illustration beyond what they are intended to convey. Indeed, the proverbs must be interpreted by the clearer words that precede them and not the other way around. The previous paragraph expresses precisely what the proverbs are intended to convey. In conclusion, it is clear that Peter is describing a real apostasy from genuine Christianity. (*Grace Faith Free Will*, 229-232)

- [108] Gene L. Green: Instead of being faithful to Paul and his presentation of the gospel, the false teachers have distorted his message... These people "twist" Paul's teaching, wrenching and distorting it in such a way that the true is tuned into the false (BDAG 948; MM 593). From Paul's own writings we are aware that some in his audience distorted his preaching concerning grace (Rom 3:8), misunderstanding various declarations (e.g., Rom 3:21-27; 4:15; 5:20; 8:1; 1 Cor 6:12; Gal 5:13) as support of antinomianism (cf. Jude 4). Others also perverted his teaching regarding eschatological events (2 Thess 2:2-3; 2 Tim 2:17-18). The Pauline doctrines that the "ignorant and unstable" have distorted have to do with precisely these two points (2:19; 3:4). The false teachers and those who follow them do not solely target Paul's teaching. They twist his teaching ... as even the other Scriptures. During Peter's era, the term "Scriptures" referred specifically to the divinely inspired writings of the Old Testament (2 Peter 1:20-21; Luke 24:27, 32, 45; John 5:39; Rom 1:2; 1 Cor 15:3-4; Gal 3:8, 22; 1 Tim 5:18; 2 Tim 3:16; 1 Pet 2:6). But early in the life of the church, the concept of "Scripture" was expanded to include the teachings of Jesus (1 Tim 5:18; cf. Matt 10:10; Luke 10:7)... In the final clause, Peter underscores the seriousness of distorting the teaching of the Scriptures, whether that of Paul, Jesus, or the Old Testament. The heretics and those who follow them distort this teaching ... to their own destruction [*apōleian*]; see the comments at 2:1, 3; 3:7 regarding *apōleia*. [At 2 Peter 2:1 Green writes: "In the New Testament this word refers to final and ultimate destruction of those who oppose God and his purposes (Matt 7:13; Rom 9:22; Phil 1:28; 3:19; Heb 10:39; 2 Peter 3:7; Rev 17:8, 11; BDAG 127; A. Oepke, TDNT 1:396-397; H. C. Hahn NIDNTT 1:462-66). It is, therefore, the opposite of salvation (Phil 1:28; Heb 10:39) and is the result of the execution of God's wrath (Rom 9:22)."] The result of their error, which includes their embrace of immorality on the basis of their distorted teaching, is condemnation before God. The problem of the false teachers is not that they have poorly understood portions of divine revelation but that they use their twisted interpretation to justify their immorality (e.g., 2:19; 3:3-4). Twisted teaching and twisted practice go hand in hand. Heretical teaching has led to moral decadence. Before the final doxology of the letter, Peter gives his last call that his readers not fall into the error of the false teachers... He exhorts ... Therefore you, beloved, since you know these things beforehand, be on your guard... Since the recipients of this letter have not yet succumbed to the error and since they already have in hand the apostolic argument against the error via this letter as well as the prophetic and apostolic teaching regarding the coming error (3:2-3), they are advised in advance and can guard themselves from heresy... they are to be on their guard against the error of the false teachers lest they succumb to the error (3:17b)... The apostle recognizes that the best antidote against apostasy is a Christian life that is growing. Therefore, in this the final exhortation ... of the letter, Peter urges ... but grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (*Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Jude and Peter* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008], 340-343).

- [109] Gene L. Green: As in verse 17, the emphatic "but you" places the believers in sharp contrast with the heretics whom Jude has denounced in verse 19. These infiltrators are devoid of the Spirit and are trying to cause a division in the church by their teaching. Jude exhorts the beloved members of the Christian family not to be swayed by their teaching but to build themselves up on the foundation of the faith (v. 20a); pray in the Spirit, which they have as the true people of God (v. 20b); and keep themselves in the love of God (v. 21)... One of the issues that Jude has consistently raised in this epistle is the way the heretics, like their ancient prototypes, did not keep their proper place but crossed the line to participate in things outside their allotted domain. Certain angels did not remain in their proper domain but engaged in illicit relations (v. 6). These violated God's order, as had the exodus generation (v. 5) and the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 7). The heretics were trying to divert the church down a similar path (v. 4a) by altering the gospel (v. 4b) and persuading members of the congregation to follow their lifestyle (vv. 22-23). Jude therefore calls the church both to "contend for the faith" (v. 3) and to hold on securely to what they have received (v. 21). Jude previously affirmed that they, as the elect of God, were "kept" for Jesus Christ and his return (v. 1 ...). But in the present verse he turns the indicative of their existence into an imperative as he calls them to "keep" themselves "in the love of God." ... In the face of the persuasive tactics of the heretics, Jude calls the church to keep themselves "in the Love of God." They should not move away from God but remain faithful. Keeping themselves "in the love of God" echoes the thought of verse 1, where Jude identifies the Christians as those who are the beloved of God and kept for Jesus Christ. God's love was the cause of their election, and now Jude exhorts them to stay within this state of grace. This principle imperative is a powerful call to flee from apostasy... Jude adds one final (participial) imperative: ... eagerly await the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life... Jude exhorts the church not only to maintain their faith but also to anxiously await the coming of "the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ" (cf. 1 Thess. 1:9-10). The vivid hope of the parousia ... is linked with Christian ethics. Jude remains the church of the end so that they may live godly lives in the present... The mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ, shown to them upon his coming, will bring eternal life... The hope of eternal life was linked with the expectation of the coming kingdom of God... While John is able to speak about eternal life as a present possession of the believer (John 3:15-16, 36; 5:24; 6:47, 54), this life anticipates the final day with the righteous will be raised (John 6:40, 54). Much of the discussion of eternal life in the New Testament understands it as the future hope of the resurrection (Matt. 19:29; Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30; Rom. 2:7; Titus 1:2; 3:7). This the final act of salvation and, as such, is in contrast with the final judgment and condemnation of the unrighteous (Matt. 25:46; John 3:36; 10:28; 1 John 3:15 ...)... Jude's concern is not simply to inform them about a bright future. His call to await this event also implies that in the hope of eternal life, they should continue to avoid the way of the heretics. (*Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Jude and Peter*, 119-120, 122-124)
- [110] Mitchell Reddish: The persecution would be a time for testing of the church's faith. The time of affliction would be brief ("ten days," that is, an indeterminate, short period) but may result in death for some of the faithful. They were not to fear, however, because Christ will reward the faithful with eternal life ("crown of life"; cf. 1 Cor 9:25; Jas 1:12). Those so rewarded will escape "the second death" (2:11), that is, exclusion from participation in God's final kingdom (cf. 20:6, 14). (*Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary: Revelation*, [Macon: Smyth and Helwys Publishing, 2001], 57)
- [111] Mitchell Reddish: A few in the church in Sardis have remained faithful. They are the faint heartbeats in the nearly dead body of the Sardis church. Apart from their steadfastness and endurance in faith, the church would have been completely lifeless, only a corpse. Since they have not "soiled their clothes" (v. 4), they will be allowed to walk with Christ dressed in white robes, the symbol of purity, celebration, and victory. If the others in the church at Sardis heed the warning and repent, they too will become conquerors and will receive the white robe as a sign of their righteousness. Additionally, those who conquer will not have their names removed from the Book of Life, that is, the registry of those who belong to the people of God. The converse of this assurance to the faithful, though not stated, is certainly implied—those who are not faithful will have their names expunged from the Book of Life and will lose their place in God's fellowship. This is a sobering wake-up call to those who take their relationship to God for granted. As Wilfrid Harrington has noted, "While one cannot earn the right to have one's name in this book, one can forfeit it." Furthermore, Christ will personally acknowledge and claim as true children of God those who are faithful (cf. Matt 10:32-33; Luke 12:8-9). (*Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary: Revelation*, 72) Stanley M. Horton: To all who overcome, who keep on winning victories through Christ, is made the promise of being clothed like the few in Sardis. They will be counted worthy to walk with Christ, their garment having been made "white in the blood of the Lamb." Furthermore, their names will not be blotted out of the Book of Life, and Jesus will confess their names before the Father and before the angels of God. That is, Jesus will confess them as belonging to Him. The plain meaning here is also that those who do not overcome or keep on winning victories for Christ will have their names blotted out of the Book of Life. Some well-meaning Christians today say that this cannot be, because this would make the continuance of our salvation depend on works, a terrible denial of the grace of God. But we must recognize that our overcoming, our winning of victories, is not a matter of our works. The victory that overcomes the world is our faith (1 John 5:4). We have our victory because God give it to us through Christ (1 Corinthians 15:57). We are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8). We continue by grace through faith, obedient faith (1 John 1:7; 2:3-6). The Greek tenses in 1 John 5:5 indicate continuous, or characteristic, action. That is, the person who keeps on overcoming is the one who keeps on believing with active, trusting, obedient faith. The same sort of continuous, characteristic believing causes one to keep on having the witness in himself (1 John 5:10; Romans 8:16). Because eternal life is Christ's life and is only in Christ, only those who keep on having (or holding to) the Son keep on having eternal life, while those who do not keep having (or holding to) God's Son do not keep on having that life (1 John 5:11-12; see also John 3:16; 6:47; the one who keeps believing keeps on having eternal life). (*The Ultimate Victory: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* [Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1991], 59-60)
- [112] Homer Hailey: "Hold fast that which thou hast," which is an open door, His Word, a little power, steadfast endurance, and an assuring promise from the Lord. Hold each of these fast; keep hold of what you have. The promise of keeping these safe (v. 10) implies and imposes continuous steadfastness by the saints. "That no one take thy crown" (the crown of life, 2:10) away from you. The thought does not concern itself with gain to the taker, but with loss to the loser. The crown may be forfeited by any individual who grows careless, complacent, self-satisfied, overconfident, or who neglects opportunity and duty... To forfeit the crown is to lose eternal life. The doctrine that a redeemed

- child of God cannot so act as to be lost is here clearly denied. (*Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979], 153). Craig S. Keener writes: Despite Jesus' praises for the Philadelphian Christians' perseverance to this point, however, "it's not over till it's over." They must continue to hold fast what they have (3:11), that is, to continue to keep the message that demands their perseverance (3:10), lest their persecutors seize from them their crown (3:11; cf. 2:25). The "crown" is a victor's wreath appropriate to overcomers (see comments on 2:10, where the crown of life contrasts with the second death in 2:11), and losing it means roughly the same as the warning to the preceding church: exclusion from the kingdom (3:5). (*The NIV Application Commentary: Revelation* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000], 151)
- [113] Ben Witherington: Scholars have often pondered over the reason for the list in verse 8, but when one remembers that John's audience is Christians under pressure and threat of persecution, cowardice and faithlessness to the Lord, either spiritually or ethically, must be censured... The intended rhetorical effect of this verse was not to castigate the lost or gloat over their demise, but rather to warn the faithful of the dangers of spiritual and moral apostasy. (*Revelation*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003], 256) Grant R. Osborne: The section [21:1-8] concludes with a challenge to the readers to recognize the difference between those who are faithful and those who are not, that is, decide whether to be a "conqueror" (21:7) or a "coward" (21:8)... The first of the [vice] list ... (*deilois*, cowards), is worthy of special consideration. The ... (*de*, but) that connects 21:8 should have its full adversative force and may well especially be contrasting ... ("the conqueror") with ... ("the cowards"). While the rest of the list describes the unchurched and wicked who were the enemies of Christianity, this first term probably describes those in the church who fail to persevere but give in to the pressures of the world. Whatever one's position concerning the "eternal security" issue, these would be those who fit the description of passages like Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-31; James 5:19-20; 2 Peter 2:20-21; and 1 John 5:16, namely, those in the church who are overcome with sin and leave their "faith." The reader is being asked to make a choice whether to "overcome" the pressure of the world and refuse to succumb to it or to be a "coward" and surrender to sin. Those who do so will join the unbelieving world in eternal damnation. (*Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Revelation*, 739, 741-42) Craig Keener: In the context of Revelation, overcoming addresses such varied tests as compromise with the world's values (2:14, 20), dependence on our own strength (3:17), and persecution (2:10); but persecution is the test Revelation particularly emphasizes for the end-time witnesses of Jesus (12:11; 13:7). Jewish texts often speak of inheriting the world to come (21:7), a common figure of speech among early Christians as well (e.g., Matt. 25:34; Rom. 8:17; 1 Cor. 6:9). Here the overcomers inherit "all this," that is, the new and sorrowless world God has prepared for them (21:1-6). The promise that God will be his people's God and they will be his people is the most basic component of the ancient covenant formula (Gen. 17:8; Ex. 6:7; 29:45; Lev. 11:45; 22:33; 25:38; 26:12, 45; Num. 15:41; Deut. 29:13). The prophets rehearse the same covenant formula (Jer. 7:23; 11:4; 24:7; 30:22; 31:33; 32:38; Ezek. 11:20; 14:11; 36:28; 37:23, 27; Zech. 8:8). But Revelation slightly adapts it: He will be the overcomer's God, and the overcomer will be his own child (Rev. 21:7)... All these promises culminate, however, in a warning: Those who fail to overcome, who prove disobedient, will be damned (21:8). The NIV's "their place will be" is more literally, "they will have their part [or share] in"; this is the language of inheritance, a deliberate contrast with the inheritance of the overcomers in 21:7. The "fiery lake" is the destination for all who will not inherit the new Jerusalem and the new creation of 21:1-6. "The second death" (21:8) contrasts with the abolition of death in new Jerusalem (21:4). Those who begin as believers must "overcome"; apostates, like those who never professed Christ to begin with, will be lost. (*NIV Application Commentary: Revelation*, 488-499)
- [114] Ashby, "Reformed Arminianism," 164-65. Purkiser, *Security: The False and the True*, 27-33. J. Harold, Greenlee, J. Harold. *Words from the Word: 52 Word Studies from the Original New Testament Greek*, 49-52. Daniel Steele, *Mile-Stone Papers: Doctrinal, Ethical, and Experimental on Christian Progress*, 53-65.
- [115] For extensive documentation of Greek Scholars and commentators (Calvinist and non-Calvinist) who note the significance of the Greek present tense verb "believes" in salvation contexts, please see the following External Links: "Saving Faith: Is it Simply the Act of a Moment or the Attitude of a Life?" "Saving Faith is the Attitude of a Life—the Scholarly Evidence;" and "Saving Faith in the Greek New Testament."
- [116] *Words from the Word*, 50-51.
- [117] Greenlee, *Words from the Word*, 52.
- [118] Purkiser, *Security: The False and the True*, 32-33.
- [119] See the external link article: "Arminian Responses to Key Passages Used to Support Perseverance of the Saints," for explanations given by Arminian scholars and theologians.
- [120] Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, 104.
- [121] Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, 104.
- [122] Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, 104.
- [123] Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, 104.
- [124] Ashby, "Reformed Arminianism," 155-156.
- [125] James Leo Garrett says it is important for his readers to recognize that traditional Calvinist and Arminians "do not differ as to whether continuing faith in Jesus Christ will be necessary for final or eschatological salvation. Both agree that it is so. Rather, they differ as to whether all Christians or all true believers will continue in faith to the end" (*Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Theological*, Volume 2, 430).
- [126] *Saved by Grace*, 244. Hoekema goes on to write: "As we have noted, the Bible teaches that God does not preserve us apart from our watchfulness, prayer, and persevering faith" (*Saved by Grace*, 245). Traditional Calvinist John Murray said: "Let us appreciate the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and recognize that we may entertain the faith of our security in Christ only as we persevere in faith and holiness to the end" (*Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 155).
- [127] *Saved by Grace*, 245.



- [128] Norman Geisler believes that "Continued belief is not a condition for keeping one's salvation." ("Moderate Calvinism," *Four Views on Eternal Security*, 109). Zane Hodges says: "... We miss the point to insist that true saving faith must necessarily continue. Of course, our faith in Christ should continue. But the claim that it absolutely must ... has no support at all in the Bible" (*Absolutely Free! A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation*, 63).
- [129] *The Reign of the Servant Kings: A Study of Eternal Security and the Final Significance of Man*, 202.
- [130] Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings*, 199. Charles Stanley writes: "The Bible clearly teaches that God's love for His people is of such magnitude that even those who walk away from the faith have not the slightest chance of slipping from His hand" (*Eternal Security: Can You Be Sure?*, 74). Stanley also writes, "To say that our salvation can be taken from us for any reason, whether it be sin or disbelief, is to ignore the plain meaning of this text [Ephesians 2:8-9]" (*Eternal Security*, 81).
- [131] Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings*, 202. Based on 2 Timothy 2:11-13, Stanley holds that "The unfaithful believer will not receive a special place in the kingdom of Christ like those who are fortunate enough to be allowed to reign with him. But the unfaithful believer will not lose his salvation. The apostle's meaning is evident. Even if a believer for all practical purposes becomes an unbeliever, his salvation is not in jeopardy" (*Eternal Security*, 93).
- [132] Traditional Calvinist Tony Lane writes: "The two historic views discussed so far [Traditional Calvinism and Arminianism] are agreed that salvation requires perseverance [in faith]. More recently, however, a third view has emerged [i.e., non-traditional Calvinist or Free Grace], according to which all who are converted will be saved regardless of how they then live. They will be saved even if they immediately renounce their faith and lead a life of debauched atheism. Many people today find this view attractive, but it is blatantly unbiblical. There is much in the New Testament that makes it clear that discipleship is not an optional extra and that remaining faithful is a condition of salvation. The whole letter to the Hebrews focuses on warning Jewish believers not to forsake Christ and so lose their salvation. Also, much of the teaching of Jesus warns against thinking that a profession of faith is of use if it is not backed up by our lives. Apart from being unbiblical, this approach is dangerous, for a number of reasons. It encourages a false complacency, the idea that there can be salvation without discipleship . . . Also it encourages a 'tip and run' approach to evangelism which is concerned only to lead people to make a 'decision', with scant concern about how these 'converts' will subsequently live. This is in marked contrast to the attitude of the apostle Paul, who was deeply concerned about his converts' lifestyle and discipleship. One only needs to read Galatians or 1 Corinthians to see that he did not hold to this recent view. The author of Hebrews was desperately concerned that his readers might lose their salvation by abandoning Christ . . . These three letters make no sense if salvation is guaranteed by one single 'decision for Christ'. This view is pastorally disastrous" (*Exploring Christian Doctrine: A Guide to What Christians Believe*, 216).
- [133] For a Traditional Calvinist critique of Moderate Calvinism as presented by Zane Hodges, see Kim Riddlebarger, "What is Faith?" in *Christ the Lord: The Reformation and Lordship Salvation*, editor Michael Horton (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 81-105. See also John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988, 2008). For an Arminian critique see Ashby, "Reformed Arminianism," 156-167.
- [134] *Renewal Theology*, 2:133-34.
- [135] The Catholic teaching on apostasy is found in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (first published in the United States in 1994, and the Second Edition in 2003). According to Pope John Paul II it is "presented as a full, complete exposition of Catholic doctrine" (*Catechism*, "Apostolic Letter"). See sections 161-162; and 1849-1861, obtained at [http://www.scborromeo.org/ccccc\\_toc2.htm](http://www.scborromeo.org/ccccc_toc2.htm)
- [136] While the Orthodox Church has no statement of faith or position paper on the possibility of apostasy, two Orthodox resources support the conditional security of the believer and the possibility of apostasy—see <http://evangelicalarminians.org/files/Orthodox%20Church%20Affirms%20Conditional%20Security.pdf>
- [137] "The Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord" reads: "Thus many receive the Word with joy, but afterwards fall away again, Luke 8:13. But the cause is not as though God were unwilling to grant grace for perseverance to those in whom He has begun the good work, for that is contrary to St. Paul, Philippians 1:6; but the cause is that they wilfully turn away again from the holy commandment [of God], grieve and embitter the Holy Ghost, implicate themselves again in the filth of the world, and garnish again the habitation of the heart for the devil. With them the last state is worse than the first, 2 Peter 2:10, 20; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 10:26; Luke 11:25" (XI. "Election," paragraph 42). Obtained at <http://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/LCMS/soliddeclaration.pdf>
- [138] *Cyclopaedia of Methodism* (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1882): "Arminian churches . . . do not believe that those who are converted will necessarily be [finally] saved. They ground their belief further on the warnings which are given by our Savior and his apostles, in teaching the necessity of watchfulness and prayer, in the warnings against falling away contained in many passages of Scripture, and the express declaration that some had been made 'shipwreck of faith' and had fallen away. . . . The Methodist Churches, being Arminian in theology, totally reject the doctrine of the necessary perseverance of the saints, while at the same time they teach that the prayerful and obedient, while they remain in that condition, can never be separated from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. They believe it, however, to be necessary to use all diligence to make their 'calling and election sure'" ("Perseverance, Final," 708-709). Leland Scott, in *Encyclopedia of World Methodism*, (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1974): [John Wesley says] "Arminians hold, that a true believer may 'make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience;' that he may fall, not only foully, but finally, so as to perish forever." (The Question, "What is an Arminian?" Answered. 1770). . . . [According to Wesley] "a man may forfeit the free gift of God, either by sins of omission or commission." ("What is an Arminian?" question 11) How important, therefore, for every believer to beware, "lest his heart be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin;" . . . lest he should sink lower and lower, till he wholly fall away, till he become as salt that hath lost its savor: for if he thus sin wilfully, after we have received the experimental 'knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins' . . ." (Sermon on the Mount, IV, i, 8, 1747). . . . Perseverance in grace, therefore, was conditioned upon the believer's persevering! Although the believer continued dependent upon atoning, redeeming grace throughout the course of his salvation, nevertheless—for Wesley—such grace (as seen through

- Scripture) must be considered finally resistible, the Spirit could finally be quenched. Thus the believer is "saved from the fear, though not from the possibility, of falling away from the grace of God" (Sermon 1. ii. 4.) ("Perseverance, Final," 1888-1889). Mark B. Stokes says: "Other people say, 'once in grace always in grace.' . . . But we United Methodist believe that we are still free to turn away from Christ even while we are Christians. . . . The Bible is filled with examples of people who started out well and ended up tragically. . . . We experience no state of grace which is beyond the possibility of falling" (*Major United Methodist Beliefs*, Revised and Enlarged [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990], 117-118). **Article XII—Of Sin After Justification:** "Not every sin willingly committed after justification is the sin against the Holy Ghost, and unpardonable. Wherefore, the grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after justification. After we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and, by the grace of God, rise again and amend our lives. And therefore they are to be condemned who say they can no more sin as long as they live here; or deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent. (*The Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church*, obtained at <http://archives.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=1650>) Charles Yrigoyen writes: "Article XII addresses the problem of our disobedience and sin after we have been prepared by grace and have accepted God's offer of pardon and forgiveness (justifying grace) by faith. . . . After justification, any of us 'may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and, by the grace of God, rise again and amend our lives.' In this Article there is a plain denial of what some call 'eternal security' or 'once saved, always saved,' which claims that once people have received the saving grace of God, they cannot lose their salvation" (*Belief Matters: United Methodism's Doctrinal Standards* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001], 85).
- [139] See "Does Doctrine Matter?" By Donald N. Bastian available at <http://fmhistory.org/Documents/Does%20Doctrine%20Matter.pdf>
- [140] "We believe that those who abide in Christ have the assurance of salvation. However, we believe that the Christian retains his freedom of choice; therefore, it is possible for him to turn away from God and be finally lost. (A) Assurance: Matthew 28:20; I Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 5:9. (B) Endurance: Matthew 10:22; Luke 9:62; Colossians 1:23; Revelation 2:10-11; 3:3-5. (C) Warnings: John 15:6; Romans 11:20-23; Galatians 5:4; Hebrews 3:12; 10:26-29; 2 Peter 2:20-21. (D) Finally Lost: John 15:6; 1 Corinthians 9:27; Hebrews 6:4-6." "Statements of Faith," obtained at <http://www.generalbaptist.com/cofa/statements.htm>
- [141] See *Salvation Story: Salvationist Handbook of Doctrine*, 83-84, obtained at [http://www.salvationarmy.org/ihq/www\\_sa.nsf/50f73564cddae39480256cf4005d2262/f46673a32c86611a80256e4e00477c1f/\\$FILE/sastory.pdf](http://www.salvationarmy.org/ihq/www_sa.nsf/50f73564cddae39480256cf4005d2262/f46673a32c86611a80256e4e00477c1f/$FILE/sastory.pdf)
- [142] "We believe that all persons, though in the possession of the experience of regeneration and entire sanctification, may fall from grace and apostatize and, unless they repent of their sins, be hopelessly and eternally lost." "Articles of Faith," obtained at <http://www.nazarene.org/ministries/administration/visitorcenter/articles/display.aspx>
- [143] See Position Paper "The Security of the Believer" at [http://www.ag.org/top/beliefs/position\\_papers/pp\\_downloads/pp\\_4178\\_security.pdf](http://www.ag.org/top/beliefs/position_papers/pp_downloads/pp_4178_security.pdf)
- [144] See *A Treatise of the Faith and Practice of the National Association of Free Will Baptists, Inc.*, Chapter XIII Perseverance of the Saints and the Appendix to Chapter XIII available at <http://www.nafwb.org/files/images/treatise09.pdf>
- [145] See Position Paper "The Assurance of the Believer," available at <http://www.mcusa.org/AboutMC/PositionPapers/TheAssuranceoftheBeliever.aspx>
- [146] See J. C. Wenger, *Introduction to Theology: A Brief Introduction to the Doctrinal Content of Scripture Written in the Anabaptist-Mennonite Tradition* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1954), 306-309, obtained at <http://evangelicalarminians.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Wenger-Anabaptist-Mennonite-on-Apostasy.pdf>
- [147] See *Faith and Practice: The Book of Discipline* 2007. "We further believe that the fullness of the Holy Spirit does not make believers incapable of choosing to sin, nor even from completely falling away from God, yet it so cleanses and empowers them as to enable them to have victory over sin, to endeavor fully to love God and people, and to witness to the living Christ. [2 Corinthians 7:1; 2 Peter 2:20-22; Acts 1:8]" (*Faith and Practice*, 11). "Security of the Believer: Evangelical Friends believe that the security of the believer, even for eternity, is indicated in God's Word and witnessed to by the Holy Spirit to the individual, but we do not hold this security to be unconditional. As repentance and faith are the human conditions of acceptance of God's free offer of salvation, so faith manifested by obedience is necessary to continuance in that salvation (Hebrews 5:9; I John 2:4)." (*Faith and Practice*, 22) Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region is associated with Evangelical Friends International.

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## Further reading

### Multiple views

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## External links

- "Perseverance of the Saints: A History of the Doctrine" (<http://evangelicalarminians.org/files/Davis History of the Perseverance of the Saints.pdf>) by John Jefferson Davis (a Traditional Calvinist)
- "Early Christian Writers on Apostasy and Perseverance" (<http://evangelicalarminians.org/files/Early Christian Writers on Apostasy.pdf>) by Steve Witzki
- James Arminius: The Security of the Believer ([http://evangelicalarminians.org/files/James Arminius \(The Security of the Believer\)\\_0.pdf](http://evangelicalarminians.org/files/James Arminius (The Security of the Believer)_0.pdf))
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# Perseverance of the saints

Calvinism		
		
John Calvin		
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spiritual death to spiritual life none choose salvation of their own accord.

Calvinists maintain that God selected certain individuals before the world began and then draws them to faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. They believe that when Jesus said, "No man can come unto Me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him", that Jesus was saying that men had to be drawn to Him by God before they would believe. Calvinists have long taught that when the apostle Paul wrote "God hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4), he was indicating that God actually chose believers in Christ before the world was founded. According to Calvinism, God begins a good work in some and then continues it. They attempt to prove this with the text from the book of Phillipians where the apostle Paul writes, "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ".

There also are many non-Calvinists who also maintain that once a person is saved they can never be lost. This Free Grace or non-traditional Calvinist doctrine is found predominantly in "free will" Baptist theology, but also other Protestant churches of the evangelical tradition.

The doctrine of Perseverance of the Saints is distinct from the doctrine of Assurance which describes how a person may first be sure that they have obtained salvation and an inheritance in the promises of the Bible including eternal life. The Westminster Confession of Faith teaches on Perseverance of the Saints in its Chapter 17 and on Assurance of Grace and Salvation in its Chapter 18.

## History

See also: History of Calvinist-Arminian debate

Church Father Augustine of Hippo taught that all whom God chooses to save are given, in addition to the gift of faith, a gift of perseverance (*donum perseverantiae*) which enables them to continue to believe, and precludes the possibility of falling away.


The traditional Calvinist doctrine is one of the five points of Calvinism that were defined at the Synod of Dort during the Quinquarticular Controversy with the Arminian Remonstrants, who objected to the general predestinarian scheme of Calvinism. Wesleyanism agrees with Arminianism that true Christians can fall away, but they disagree over whether or not such fallen Christians can return again to salvation (Wesleyans believe they can, and Arminians deny that they can).

The traditional Calvinist doctrine of perseverance is articulated in the Canons of Dort (chapter 5), the Westminster Confession of Faith (Chapter XVII), the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith (Chapter 17), and may also be found in other Reformed Confessions. Nonetheless, the doctrine is most often mentioned in connection with other salvific schemes and is not a major locus of Reformed systematic theology (for instance, it does not even get a subheading in the three volume *Systematic Theology* by Hodge). It is, however, seen by many as the necessary consequence of Calvinism and of trusting in the promises of God.

Traditional Calvinism voiced its opposition to carnal Christianity and the non-traditional Calvinist doctrine in the recent controversy over Lordship salvation.

## Reformed doctrine

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The Five Points of Calvinism	
	
Total depravity	
Unconditional election	
Limited atonement	
Irresistible grace	
Perseverance of the saints	
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The Reformed tradition has consistently seen the doctrine of perseverance as a natural consequence to predestination. According to Calvinists, since God has drawn the elect to faith in Christ by regenerating their hearts and convincing them of their sins, and thus saving their souls by His own work and power, it naturally follows that they will be kept by the same power to the end. Since God has made satisfaction for the sins of the elect, they can no longer be condemned for them, and through the help of the Holy Spirit, they must necessarily persevere as Christians and in the end be saved. Calvinists believe this is what Peter is teaching in 1st Peter 1, verse 5 when he says, that true believers are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation". Outside Calvinist denominations this doctrine is widely considered to be flawed.

Calvinists also believe that all who are born again and justified before God necessarily and inexorably proceed to sanctification. Failure to proceed to sanctification in their view is considered by some as evidence that the person in question was never truly saved to begin with.<sup>[3]</sup> Proponents of this doctrine distinguish between an action and the consequences of an action, and suggest that after God has regenerated someone, the person's will has been changed, that "old things pass away" and "all things are become new", as it is written in the Bible, and he or she will therefore persevere in the faith.

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* has defined perseverance as follows:

They whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved. —*Westminster Confession of Faith* (chap. 17, sec. 1).<sup>[4]</sup>

This definition does not deny the possibility of failings in one's Christian experience, because the *Confession* also says:

Nevertheless [believers] may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins; and for a time continue therein; whereby they incur God's displeasure, and grieve his Holy Spirit: come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts; have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded; hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves (sec. 3).

Theologian Charles Hodge summarizes the thrust of the Calvinist doctrine:

Perseverance...is due to the purpose of God [in saving men and thereby bringing glory to his name], to the work of Christ [in canceling men's debt and earning their righteousness ], to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit [in sealing men in salvation and leading them in God's ways], and to the primal source of all, the infinite, mysterious, and immutable love of God.<sup>[5]</sup>

On a practical level, Calvinists do not claim to know who is elect and who is not, and the only guide they have is the verbal testimony and good works (or "fruit") of each individual. Any who "fall away" (that is, do not persevere in the Christian faith until death) is assumed not to have been truly converted to begin with, though Calvinists do not claim to know with certainty who did and who did not persevere.

Essentially, Reformed doctrine believes that the same God whose power justified the Christian believer is also at work in the continued sanctification of that believer. As Philippians 2:13 <sup>[6]</sup> says, "It is God who is at work in you, both to will and work for His good pleasure."

Thus, all who are truly born again are kept by God the Father for Jesus Christ, and can neither totally nor finally fall from the state of grace, but will persevere in their faith to the end, and be eternally saved. While Reformed theologians acknowledge that true believers at times will fall into sin, they maintain that a real believer in Jesus Christ cannot abandon one's own personal faith to the dominion of sin. They base their understanding on key scriptural passages such as Christ's words, "By their fruit you will know them" <sup>[Mt 7:16,20]</sup> <sup>[7]</sup> and "He that endures to the end will be saved." <sup>[Mt 24:13]</sup> <sup>[8]</sup> Similarly, a passage in 1 John says, "This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God." <sup>[1Jn 3:7-9]</sup> <sup>[9]</sup> The person who has truly been made righteous in Jesus Christ did not simply have faith at some point in life, but continues to live in that faith ("the righteous will live by faith." <sup>[Rom 1:17]</sup> <sup>[10]</sup> This view understands that the security of believers is inseparable from their perseverance in the faith.<sup>[11]</sup>

## Free Grace doctrine

The Free Grace or non-traditional Calvinist doctrine has been espoused by Charles Stanley, Norman Geisler, Zane C. Hodges, Bill Bright, and others. This view, like the traditional Calvinist view, emphasizes that people are saved purely by an act of divine grace that does not depend at all on the deeds of the individual, and for that reason, advocates insist that nothing the person can do can affect his or her salvation.

The Free Grace doctrine views the person's character and life after receiving the gift of salvation as independent from the gift itself, which is the main point of differentiation from the traditional Calvinist view, or, in other words, it asserts that justification (that is, being declared righteous before God on account of Christ) does not necessarily result in sanctification (that is, a progressively more righteous life). Charles Stanley, pastor of Atlanta's megachurch First Baptist and a television evangelist, has written that the doctrine of eternal security of the believer persuaded him years ago to leave his familial Pentecostalism and become a Southern Baptist. He sums up his deep conviction that salvation is by *faith alone in Christ alone* when he claims, "Even if a believer for all practical purposes becomes an unbeliever, his salvation is not in jeopardy... believers who lose or abandon their faith will retain their salvation."<sup>[12]</sup> For example, Stanley writes:

Look at that verse [John 3:18 <sup>[13]</sup>] and answer this question: According to Jesus, what must a person do to keep from being judged for sin? Must he stop doing something? Must he promise to stop doing something? Must he have never done something? The answer is so simple that many stumble all over it without ever seeing it. All Jesus requires is that the individual "believe in" Him.

— Charles Stanley (p. 67).

In a chapter entitled "For Those Who Stop Believing", he says, "The Bible clearly teaches that God's love for His people is of such magnitude that even those who walk away from the faith have not the slightest chance of slipping from His hand (p. 74)." A little later, Stanley also writes: "You and I are not saved because we have an enduring faith. We are saved because at a moment in time we expressed faith in our enduring Lord" (p. 80).

The doctrine sees the work of salvation as wholly monergistic, which is to say that God alone performs it and man has no part in the process beyond receiving it, and therefore, proponents argue that man cannot undo what they believe God has done. By comparison, in traditional Calvinism, people, who are otherwise unable to follow God, are enabled by regeneration to cooperate with him, and so the Reformed tradition sees itself as mediating between the

total monergism of the non-traditional Calvinist view and the synergism of the Wesleyan, Arminian, and Roman Catholic views in which even unregenerate man can choose to cooperate with God in salvation.

The traditional Calvinist doctrine teaches that a person is secure in salvation because he or she was predestined by God, whereas in the Free Grace or non-traditional Calvinist views, a person is secure because at some point in time he or she has believed the Gospel message (Dave Hunt, *What Love is This*, p. 481).

## Evangelical criticism

Both traditional Calvinism and traditional Arminianism have rejected Free Grace theology.<sup>[14]</sup> The former believes Free Grace to be a distorted form of Calvinism which maintains the permanency of salvation (or properly speaking, justification) while radically divorcing the ongoing work of sanctification from that justification. Reformed theology has uniformly asserted that "no man is a Christian who does not feel some special love for righteousness" (*Institutes*),<sup>[15]</sup> and therefore sees Free Grace theology, which allows for the concept of a "carnal Christian" or even an "unbelieving Christian", as a form of radical antinomianism. Arminianism, which has always believed true believers can give themselves completely over to sin, has also rejected the Free Grace view for the opposite reason of Calvinism: namely, that the view denies the classical Arminian doctrine that true Christians can lose their salvation by denouncing their faith (see conditional preservation of the saints). Free Grace theology struggles to maintain a middle ground, hoping to grasp the permanency of salvation (Calvinism) with one hand, while maintaining a true believer can still give up faith and choose to live a life of sin and unbelief (Arminianism). Both Calvinists and Arminians appeal to Biblical passages such as 1 Cor. 15:2<sup>[16]</sup> ("By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain"), Hebrews 3:14<sup>[17]</sup> ("We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first"), James 2:21-22<sup>[18]</sup> ("faith without works is dead"), and 2 Tim. 2:12<sup>[19]</sup> ("If we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us").

## Biblical evidence

In addition to fitting neatly in the overarching Calvinist soteriology, Reformed and Free Grace advocates alike find specific support for the doctrine in various passages from the Bible:

- 1Peter 1:23<sup>[20]</sup>: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."
- John 5:24<sup>[21]</sup>: "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life."
- John 6:35-37<sup>[22]</sup>: Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out."
- John 10:27-29<sup>[23]</sup>: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."
- Romans 5:9<sup>[24]</sup>: Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.
- Romans 8:1<sup>[25]</sup>: There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
- Romans 8:35<sup>[26]</sup>: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?
- Romans 8:38-39<sup>[27]</sup>: For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- Romans 11:29<sup>[28]</sup>: For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.
- Hebrews 3:14<sup>[17]</sup>: For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

- 1 John 2:19 <sup>[29]</sup>: They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.
  - 1 Corinthians 15:10 <sup>[30]</sup>: But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.
  - 2 Corinthians 5:19 <sup>[31]</sup>: ...that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.
  - Ephesians 2:4-6 <sup>[32]</sup>: But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, Even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved — and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...
  - Ephesians 4:30 <sup>[33]</sup>: And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.
  - Philippians 1:6 <sup>[34]</sup>: And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.
  - 2 Timothy 1:12 <sup>[35]</sup>: ...which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.
  - 2 Timothy 2:13 <sup>[36]</sup>: ...if we are faithless, he remains faithful — for he cannot deny himself.
  - Hebrews 13:20-21 <sup>[37]</sup>: Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.
  - 1 John 3:9 <sup>[38]</sup>: No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.
  - 1 John 5:4-5 <sup>[39]</sup>: For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?
  - Ephesians 1:13-14 <sup>[40]</sup>: In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.
  - John 17:2,12 <sup>[41]</sup>: "...since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him." (12) "While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled."
  - 1 Corinthians 1:6-8 <sup>[42]</sup>: ...even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you — so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.
  - 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 <sup>[43]</sup>: Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.
  - 2 Thessalonians 3:3 <sup>[44]</sup>: But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.
  - Hebrews 9:12 <sup>[45]</sup>: ...he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.
  - 1 Peter 1:3-5 <sup>[46]</sup>: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
  - 1 John 5:11-13 <sup>[47]</sup>: And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.
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- Hebrews 6:17-19 <sup>[48]</sup>: So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain...
- Jeremiah 32:39-40 <sup>[49]</sup>: I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.
- Psalms 121 <sup>[50]</sup>
- Isaiah 46:3-4 <sup>[51]</sup>: Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been borne by me from before your birth, carried from the womb; even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save.
- Romans 9:6-8 <sup>[52]</sup>: But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.
- Psalms 20:6 <sup>[53]</sup>: Now I know that the LORD saves his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving might of his right hand.
- Psalms 31:23 <sup>[54]</sup>: Love the LORD, all you his saints! The LORD preserves the faithful but abundantly repays the one who acts in pride.
- Psalms 37:28 <sup>[55]</sup>: For the LORD loves justice; he will not forsake his saints. They are preserved forever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off.
- Psalms 55:22 <sup>[56]</sup>: Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.
- Psalms 125:1-2 <sup>[57]</sup>: They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever.

## Difficult passages

### Calvinist interpretations

Some Calvinists admit that their interpretation is not without difficulties. One apparent consequence is that not all who "have shared in the Holy Spirit" <sup>[Acts 10:44-48] [58]</sup> are necessarily regenerate. This is a consequence Calvinists are willing to accept since the Bible also says that King Saul had the "Spirit of God" in some sense and even prophesied by it, <sup>[1Sam 19:23-24] [59] [11:6] [60]</sup> but was not a follower of God. Calvin says,

God indeed favors none but the elect alone with the Spirit of regeneration, and that by this they are distinguished from the reprobate... But I cannot admit that all this is any reason why he should not grant the reprobate also some taste of his grace, why he should not irradiate their minds with some sparks of his light, why he should not give them some perception of his goodness, and in some sort engrave his word on their hearts.<sup>[61]</sup>

Some challenge the Calvinist doctrine based on their interpretation of the admonishments in the book of Hebrews, including several passages in the Book of Hebrews,<sup>[62]</sup> but especially Hebrews 6:4-12 <sup>[63]</sup> and Heb 10:26-39 <sup>[64]</sup>. The former passage says of those "who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come" that, when they "fall away", they cannot be "restored to repentance." <sup>[6:4-12] [63]</sup> The latter passage says that if one continues in sin, "no sacrifice for sins" remains for that person but "only a fearful expectation of judgment." <sup>[10:26b-27a] [65]</sup> The author of Hebrews predicts grave punishment for one who "has trampled the Son of God under

foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace." [10:29] [66]

The debate over these passages centers around the identity of the persons in question. While opponents of perseverance identify the persons as Christian believers, Calvinists suggest several other options:

- These passages are not clear enough to describe a regenerate person (or "true Christian"), and thus they do not describe the situation of a true believer. Instead, the persons in question may well have been part of the church community and had the advantages concomitant with that membership (citing the benefits of being a member of the covenant community in the Old Testament mentioned in Romans 3:1-4 [67] and 9:4-5 [68]) without being truly "saved"—as with King Saul. In an effort to corroborate this interpretation, they also cite such passages as 1 John 2:19 [29]: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us."
- These passages can refer to a regenerate person, but what is described is not a loss of salvation (because they believe other scriptural passages say that this is impossible), but instead a loss of eternal (or millennial) rewards.
- The author is employing hyperbole to effect positive change in his audience's behavior, possibly referring to Christians leaving fellowship in Hebrews 10:25 [69].
- The passages refer to Jewish Christians who were reverting to Judaism.
- The passages refer to the rejection of the covenant community as a whole, not individual believers (Verbrugge).

Some other passages put forth against the Calvinist doctrine include:

- Romans 11:22 [70]: Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off.
- 1 Corinthians 9:25-27 [71]: Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.
- Galatians 5:4 [72]: You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.
- 2 Peter 2:20 [73]: For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.
- Colossians 1:21-23 [74]: And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.
- Revelation 3:2-5 [75]: "Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you. Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels."

In general, proponents of the doctrine of perseverance interpret such passages, which urge the church community to persevere in the faith but seem to indicate that some members of the community might fall away, as hortatory rather than objective in character. That is, they view the prophets and apostles as writing "from the human perspective", in which the members of the elect are unknowable and all should "work out [their] own salvation" [Phil 2:12] [76] and "make [their] calling and election sure," [2Pet 1:10] [77] rather than "from the divine perspective", in which those who will persevere, according to Calvinism, are well known. The primary objection to this approach is that it might equally be said that these difficult passages bear the objective meaning while the passages urged to support this doctrine of perseverance are hortatory in a positive sense, revealing God's perpetual grace towards believers.



### Other interpretations of Hebrews 6:4-6

Hebrews 6:4-6<sup>[78]</sup> is said by some to be one of the Bible's most difficult passages to interpret, and may present the most difficulty for proponents of the Eternal Security of the Believer. The passage is understood by some to mean that "falling away" from an active commitment to Christ may cause one to lose their salvation, after they have attained salvation either according to the Reformed or Free Grace theology. However, numerous conservative Bible scholars do not believe the passage refers to a Christian losing genuinely attained salvation.

For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.

— Hebrews 6:4-8<sup>[79]</sup>

- One interpretation holds that this passage is written not about Christians but about unbelievers who are convinced of the basic truths of the gospel but who have not placed their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior. They are intellectually persuaded but spiritually uncommitted. The phrase "once enlightened"<sup>[6:4] [80]</sup> may refer to some level of instruction in biblical truth. "...have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away..." could be a reference to those who have tasted the truth about Jesus but, not having come all the way to faith, fall away from even the revelation they have been given. The tasting of truth is not enough to keep them from falling away from it. They must come all the way to Christ in complete repentance and faith.<sup>[1]</sup>
- A second interpretation holds that this passage is written about Christians, and that the phrases "partakers of the Holy Ghost", "enlightened", and "tasted of the heavenly gift" are all descriptions of true believers. Some passages, including Hebrews 6:4-6<sup>[78]</sup> and 10:23-31<sup>[81]</sup>, are taken by some to suggest that a 'saved' person can lose their salvation. Others see them as severe warnings which do not include the loss of salvation, but in many cases fiery judgment for those who were never saved and only playing at Christianity.<sup>[82]</sup>
- A third interpretation maintains that Hebrews 6:4-8 describes only those who temporarily backslide in their faith, and does not address the issue of the loss of salvation. This interpretation is well presented in an exegetical outline of the book of Hebrews found on the website of Ariel Ministries, a Messianic-Jewish organization founded by Arnold Fruchtenbaum in 1971. Some advocates of this position claim that the passage says that those who experience the five spiritual privileges mentioned in verses 4 and 5 cannot lose their salvation *and then be saved again later* (i.e. be "restore[d]... again to repentance") because that would require a recrucifixion of Christ (v. 6), thus rendering ineffectual his initial propitiatory death, putting Him to open shame. This position maintains that the Greek word used for "repentance" in verse 6 refers to "salvation repentance" rather than "repentance to restore fellowship." Supporters of this interpretation also cite the overall context of chapters 5 and 6 as evidence for their position: chapter 5 concludes with a rebuke to the recipients of the epistle for wasting time, dawdling in spiritual infancy, while chapter 6 begins with an exhortation not to continue wasting time as spiritual infants, but to "press on to maturity."
- Finally, theologian David DeSilva writes that "Many interpreters are driven to treat this passage as either a 'problem passage' or crux for a specific theological or ideological conviction."<sup>[83]</sup> DeSilva agrees that the passage cannot refer to "saved" individuals since the author of Hebrews views *salvation* as the deliverance and reward that awaits the faithful at the return of Christ. Those who have trusted God's promise and Jesus' mediation are "those who are about to inherit salvation" which comes at Christ's second coming.<sup>[Heb 9:28] [84]</sup> He argues that the passage refers to unbelievers who have received God's gifts and have benefited from God's grace, yet still remained skeptics.

## Objections

The primary objection lodged against the doctrine is that such teaching will lead to license. That is, objectors contend that if people know they can never lose their salvation they will feel free to sin without fear of eternal consequences.

Traditional Calvinists see this charge as being justly leveled against the Free Grace doctrine, which doesn't see sanctification as a necessary component of salvation, and in the controversy over Lordship salvation, traditional Calvinists argued against the proponents of the Free Grace doctrine. Traditional Calvinists, and many other non-Calvinist evangelicals, posit that a truly converted heart will necessarily follow after God and live in accordance with his precepts, though perfection is not achievable, struggles with sin will continue, and some temporary "backsliding" may occur.

## Arminian view

Main article: Conditional preservation of the saints

The central tenet of the Arminian view is that believers are preserved from all external forces that might attempt to separate them from God, and further that God will not change His mind about their salvation, but that these same believers can themselves willingly repudiate their faith (either by a statement to that effect, or by continued sinful activity combined with an unwillingness to repent). Thus, their salvation is conditional on remaining faithful.

Traditional Calvinists do not dispute that salvation requires faithfulness, and the point of difference between these Calvinists and Arminians is over whether God allows true Christians to fall away. Free Grace advocates agree with traditional Calvinists that salvation cannot be lost but with the Arminians that true Christians can backslide or fall away. However, the Free Grace advocates and the Arminians do not define repudiation in the same way: the former sees backslidden believers as merely "carnal", hindering their sanctification process, whereas the latter sees them as having fallen from the saving grace they once possessed.

## Roman Catholic view

The twenty-second Canon of the Decree Concerning Justification of the Council of Trent (Sixth Session, 13 January 1547) has this to say regarding perseverance: "If anyone says that the one justified either can without the special help of God persevere in the justice received, or that with that help he cannot, let him be anathema." In this canon, the Council reaffirmed that perseverance absolutely requires divine help—a divine help that cannot fail.

Respecting these parameters, Catholics can have a variety of views as regards final perseverance. On questions of predestination, Catholic scholars may be broadly characterized as either Molinists or Thomists. The views of the latter are similar to those of Calvinists, in that they understand final perseverance to be a gift applied by God to the regenerated that will assuredly lead them to ultimate salvation. They differ from Calvinists in but one respect: whether God permits men to "fall away" after regeneration. Thomists affirm that God can permit men to come to regeneration without giving them the special gift of divine perseverance, so that they do fall away. Calvinists, by contrast, deny that an individual can fall away if they are truly regenerate.

## Lutheran view

Like both Calvinist camps, confessional Lutherans view the work of salvation as monergistic in that "the natural [that is, corrupted and divinely unrenewed] powers of man cannot do anything or help towards salvation",<sup>[85]</sup> and Lutherans go further along the same lines as the Free Grace advocates to say that the recipient of saving grace need not cooperate with it. Hence, Lutherans believe that a true Christian (that is, a genuine recipient of saving grace) can lose his or her salvation, "[b]ut the cause is not as though God were unwilling to grant grace for perseverance to those in whom He has begun the good work... [but that these persons] wilfully turn away..."<sup>[86]</sup>

## Comparison among Protestants

This table summarizes the views of three different Protestant beliefs.

Calvinism	Lutheranism	Arminianism
Perseverance of the saints: the eternally elect in Christ will certainly persevere in faith. <sup>[87]</sup>	Falling away is possible, but God gives assurance of perseverance. <sup>[88]</sup>	Preservation is conditional upon continued faith in Christ; with the possibility of a final apostasy. <sup>[89]</sup>

## Notes

[1] <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Template:Calvinism&action=edit>

[2] <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Template:TULIP&action=edit>

[3] Grudem, Wayne, *Systematic Theology*, p. 788)

[4] *Perseverance of the Saints* (<http://www.biblebb.com/files/MAC/J93-41-1.htm>)

[5] Hodge, Charles. "Systematic Theology." Web: 20 March 2010. *Systematic Theology*, 3.16.8 (<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/hodge/theology3.iii.ii.viii.html>)

[6] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+2%3A13&version=ESV>

[7] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mt+7%3A16%2C20&version=ESV>

[8] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mt+24%3A13&version=ESV>

[9] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1John+3%3A7-9&version=NIV>

[10] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom+1%3A17&version=ESV>

[11] See also ; ; ;

[12] Stanley, Charles. *Eternal Security: Can You Be Sure?* Nashville: Oliver Nelson, 1990. ISBN 978-0-8407-9095-8 pp.1-5

[13] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3A18&version=ESV>

[14] Traditional Calvinist Tony Lane writes: "The two historic views discussed so far [Traditional Calvinism and Arminianism] are agreed that salvation requires perseverance [in faith]. More recently, however, a third view has emerged [i.e., non-traditional Calvinist or Free Grace], according to which all who are converted will be saved regardless of how they then live. They will be saved even if they immediately renounce their faith and lead a life of debauched atheism. Many people today find this view attractive, but it is blatantly unbiblical. There is much in the New Testament that makes it clear that discipleship is not an optional extra and that remaining faithful is a condition of salvation. The whole letter to the Hebrews focuses on warning Jewish believers not to forsake Christ and so lose their salvation. Also, much of the teaching of Jesus warns against thinking that a profession of faith is of use if it is not backed up by our lives. Apart from being unbiblical, this approach is dangerous, for a number of reasons. It encourages a false complacency, the idea that there can be salvation without discipleship . . . Also it encourages a 'tip and run' approach to evangelism which is concerned only to lead people to make a 'decision', with scant concern about how these 'converts' will subsequently live. This is in marked contrast to the attitude of the apostle Paul, who was deeply concerned about his converts' lifestyle and discipleship. One only needs to read Galatians or 1 Corinthians to see that he did not hold to this recent view. The author of Hebrews was desperately concerned that his readers might lose their salvation by abandoning Christ . . . These three letters make no sense if salvation is guaranteed by one single 'decision for Christ'. This view is pastorally disastrous" (*Exploring Christian Doctrine: A Guide to What Christians Believe*, 216). Arminian scholar J. Rodman Williams says of this view: "Any claim to security by virtue of the great salvation we have in Christ without regard to the need for continuing in faith is totally mistaken and possibly tragic in its results. . . . A doctrine of "perseverance of the saints" that does not affirm its occurrence through faith is foreign to Scripture, a serious theological misunderstanding, and a liability to Christian existence" (*Renewal Theology: Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective*, 2:133-34).

[15] 3.6 (<http://ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes.iv.iii.vii.html>)

[16] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1Cor+15%3A2&version=esv>

[17] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+3%3A14&version=ESV>

[18] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James+2%3A21-22&version=ESV>

[19] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2Tim+2%3A12&version=esv>

[20] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1Peter+1%3A23&version=ESV>

[21] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+5%3A24&version=ESV>

[22] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+6%3A35-37&version=ESV>

[23] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+10%3A27-29&version=ESV>

[24] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+5%3A9&version=ESV>

[25] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8%3A1&version=ESV>

[26] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8%3A35&version=ESV>

[27] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8%3A38-39&version=ESV>

[28] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+11%3A29&version=ESV>

[29] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1Jn+2%3A19&version=ESV>

[30] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1Cor+15%3A10&version=ESV>

[31] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2Cor+5%3A19&version=ESV>

- [32] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+2%3A4-6&version=ESV>
- [33] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+4%3A30&version=ESV>
- [34] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Phil+1%3A6&version=ESV>
- [35] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2Tim+1%3A12&version=ESV>
- [36] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2Tim+2%3A13&version=ESV>
- [37] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+13%3A20-21&version=ESV>
- [38] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1Jn+3%3A9&version=ESV>
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- [40] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+1%3A13-14&version=ESV>
- [41] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+17%3A2%2C12&version=ESV>
- [42] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1Cor+1%3A6-8&version=ESV>
- [43] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1Thes+5%3A23-24&version=ESV>
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## External links

#### Traditional Calvinist view

- "Can You Lose Your Salvation?" (<http://modernmarch.com/2009/08/06/can-you-lose-your-salvation/>) by Brandon Smith
- "Perseverance of the Saints" (<http://custance.org/old/grace/ch10.html>) from *The Sovereignty of Grace* (1979) by Arthur C. Custance
- "Perseverance of the Saints: A History of the Doctrine" by John Jefferson Davis ([http://evangelicalarminians.org/files/Davis History of the Perseverance of the Saints.pdf](http://evangelicalarminians.org/files/Davis%20History%20of%20the%20Perseverance%20of%20the%20Saints.pdf))
- "The Perseverance of The Saints" (<http://www.prca.org/fivepoints/chapter5.html>) from *The Five Points of Calvinism* (1976) by Herman Hanko, Homer Hoeksema, and Gise J. Van Baren
- "The Perseverance of the Saints" (<http://ccel.org/ccel/boettner/predest.iv.vi.html>), chapter 14 from *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* by Loraine Boettner

#### Arminian view

- Arminian Responses to Key Passages Used to Support Perseverance of the Saints ([http://evangelicalarminians.org/files/Arminian Responses to Passages for Perseverance of the Saints.pdf](http://evangelicalarminians.org/files/Arminian%20Responses%20to%20Passages%20for%20Perseverance%20of%20the%20Saints.pdf))
- Saving Faith: Is it Simply the Act of a Moment or the Attitude of a Life? ([http://evangelicalarminians.org/files/Saving Faith \(Act of a Moment or Attitude of a Life\).pdf](http://evangelicalarminians.org/files/Saving%20Faith%20(Act%20of%20a%20Moment%20or%20Attitude%20of%20a%20Life).pdf)) by Steve Witzki
- Saving Faith: The Attitude of a Life—the Scholarly Evidence ([http://evangelicalarminians.org/files/Saving Faith is the Attitude of a Life \(Scholarly Evidence\).pdf](http://evangelicalarminians.org/files/Saving%20Faith%20is%20the%20Attitude%20of%20a%20Life%20(Scholarly%20Evidence).pdf)) by Steve Witzki
- See 13 part series on "Perseverance of the Saints" (<http://arminianperspectives.wordpress.com/category/perseverance-series/>) by Ben Henshaw
- "Serious Thoughts Upon the Perseverance of the Saints" ([http://evangelicalarminians.org/files/John Wesley \(Serious Thoughts on Perseverance of the Saints\).pdf](http://evangelicalarminians.org/files/John%20Wesley%20(Serious%20Thoughts%20on%20Perseverance%20of%20the%20Saints).pdf)) by John Wesley

#### Free Grace or non-traditional Calvinist view

- "Eternal Security" ([http://www.rochesterbible.org/how\\_to\\_go\\_to\\_heaven.html#eternal\\_security](http://www.rochesterbible.org/how_to_go_to_heaven.html#eternal_security))

## Confessional Lutheran view

- WELS Topical Q&A: Perseverance of the Saints ([http://web.archive.org/web/20090927073121/http://www.wels.net/cgi-bin/site.pl?1518&cuTopic\\_topicID=10&cuItem\\_itemID=17945](http://web.archive.org/web/20090927073121/http://www.wels.net/cgi-bin/site.pl?1518&cuTopic_topicID=10&cuItem_itemID=17945)), by *Internet Archive*
  - WELS Topical Q&A: Once Saved Always Saved ([http://arkiv.lbk.cc/faq/site.pl@1518cutopic\\_topicid10cuitem\\_itemid9372.htm](http://arkiv.lbk.cc/faq/site.pl@1518cutopic_topicid10cuitem_itemid9372.htm)), by Lutheran Confessional Church
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