

## Security Despite the Possibility of Apostasy

Presbyterian creedal statement on the impossibility of apostasy:

"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.

"This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ; the abiding of the Spirit and of the seed of God within them; and the nature of the covenant of grace; from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof.

"Nevertheless they 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."

Baptist Standard Manual:

"We believe the Scriptures teach that such as are truly regenerate, but being born of the Spirit, will not utterly fall away and perish, but will endure unto the end; that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors; that a special Providence watches over their welfare; and that they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."

The Baptist position is variously interpreted. The escape clause is the word "truly" in the first line. If someone seems to fall away, they can always claim that he wasn't saved in the first place. The Presbyterian position is more strict, specifically describing believers who fall into "grievous sins." Strict Calvinists (some Baptists and all types of Presbyterians) assert that all the passages about "falling away" really refer to punishment on this earth, not at Judgment. Arguments over the possibility of apostasy are the most popular theological battlegrounds because (in my opinion) the argument is always about someone else, concerning whether some hypothetical person is going to heaven. The context of each of the passages typically quoted in this argument will support both positions:

1. The believer can have absolute confidence.
2. It is possible to fall away.

The two positions are not mutually exclusive. First, the assumption is made that the belief is Biblical belief. Secondly, a believer can decide to quit believing and therefore fall away. (If one cannot decide to abandon belief, then free will does not exist and this investigation is pointless. If there is not free choice, we have no responsibility.) But as long as Biblical belief exists, the believer can have absolute confidence.

### Security

John 3:36

"He who believes in the Son has eternal life." (See also John 5:24 and 6:47) (The question is God's definition of belief.)

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- Psalm 37:28 "For the Lord loves Justice, and does not forsake His godly ones; they are preserved forever; but the descendants of the wicked will be cut off." (God will not leave us, although we can leave Him.)
- 1 Corinthians 10:13 "No temptation has overtaken you such as is common to man, and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it."
- Jude 1:1 "Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ." (We are kept, or protected, from temptations which are too strong for us. But we can decide to walk away from that protection.)
- John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."
- John 10:27-29 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall 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." (No one is strong enough to forcibly remove someone from God's protection, but, in keeping with free will, God cannot prevent us from leaving Him.)
- John 6:37 "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." (If we come, we will not be rejected. But if we leave, He cannot make us stay.)
- 1 John 1:7 "If we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin."
- Romans 4:8 "Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account."
- Romans 8:38-39 "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (The only thing that can separate me from the love of God is me.)
- Hebrews 13:5 "I will never desert you nor will I ever forsake you."
- 1 Peter 1:5 [You] "are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last times."

**Is it possible to quit believing?**

- Hebrews 3:12 "Take care brethren, lest there be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God." (Brethren can develop unbelieving hearts)
- Luke 8:13 "And those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away."
- 2 Chronicles 15:1-2 "Now the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Obed and he went out to meet Asa, and said to him, 'Listen to me Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: the Lord is with you when you are with Him. And if you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you.'
- John 17:11-12 Judas was one of those given to Jesus (see John 6:37) yet he was lost.
- 1 Corinthians 10:12 "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."
- Hebrews 6:4-6 "For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit and have tasted the good word of God and the power of the age to come and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame."
- Hebrews 10:26-29 "For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of fire which will consume the adversaries. Anyone who sets aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the spirit of grace?"
- 2 Peter 2:20 "For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first." (Worse than an unbeliever. 1 Timothy 5:8)
- Revelation 3:5 "He who has overcome shall be clothed in white garments and I will not erase his name from the book of life." (on the book of life, see Luke 10:20, Philippians 4:2-3, Hebrews 12:23, and Revelation 21:27)

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- Romans 11:20-23 "They were broken off for their unbelief...if they do not continue in their unbelief, they will be grafted in again." (We can leave and come back.)
- Galatians 5:4 "You have been severed from Christ...you have fallen from grace." (Salvation is the grace that came to us. 1 Peter 1:9-10)
- 1 Timothy 4:1-2 "The Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own consciences as with a branding iron."
- 2 Corinthians 6:1 "We also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain." (those who receive the grace of God reign in life and not death, Romans 5:17)
- 2 Peter 1:10-11 "Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you."