

What happens to a believer that enters into carnality and even apostasy?

It is a legitimate question to ask about what happens to a believer who does fall from grace, strays, shrinks back, becomes hardened, or even reject his faith completely and walks away from God? Does such a backsliding Christian lose his salvation because of his own failures? According to the many passages we have been looking at, the answer to that is “no”.

2 Tim 2:13 if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.

Rom 3:3 What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? ⁴ By no means!

Okay, because the believer cannot lose his salvation does that mean he has a license to sin and just get away with his sinful behavior? No! Taking away the backslider’s salvation as discipline is not the only arrow in God’s quiver, in fact, THAT particular arrow isn’t even in His quiver.

Any believer, whether one who periodically slips into carnality, as we all do daily, or one who completely walks away from God, will face God’s divine discipline, which we call “chastisement”.

Heb 12:5 ...My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. ⁶ For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”

That word “discipline” is translated “chastise” in other translations and literally means to scourge, but in this usage it refers to a form of discipline that is designed to encourage the believer back to his right relationship (fellowship) with God. The believer who continues to resist will face increasing levels of chastisement, and it can get very painful. Depending on the individual case, such as when there is a lack of potential for recovery or the offense is so severe, and especially when the offending backslider becomes a threat to God’s plan, then the only remaining solution is physical death. God will take the believer out of this life. This is called the

“sin unto death” and more accurately translated should be referred to as “sinning that leads to death”.

1 John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. **There is sin that leads to death**; I do not say that one should pray for that. ¹⁷ All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.

“There is a sin that leads to death.” That is from the ESV. The NKJV and the NIV say, “There is sin *leading* to death.”

Let’s pick apart that phrase “sin that leads to death”. “Sin” is the Greek hamartia *ham·ar·tee·ah* and means an offense, a violation of the divine law in thought or in act. It is usually and correctly translated here as “sin”. “Death” is the Greek thanatos *than·at·os* refers to physical death of the body but can carry the idea of future misery in hell. “That leads to” is *pros* and usually means to the advantage of, at, near, to, or towards. “That” in the English is implied by the Greek *pros*. However, “sin leading to death” is probably a more accurate translation.

The translation “sin that leads to death” or “sin leading to death” should be taken literally. It says there is sin that can end in the death of the one sinning, but notice there is no definite article before “sin,” although some translations do add the “a,” but it is a more accurate translation without it. That is because it isn’t “a sin” or “the sin,” it can be a single sin but usually it is a pattern of sinning, and that can include any sin you can think of or combination thereof. There are situations where one single act of sinning can incur this death penalty, such as Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) or as a result of a series of sinful acts such as seen in those abusing the Lord’s table in Corinth (1 Cor 11:27-32).

Two kinds of death are pictured in the Bible, spiritual death and physical death. There is one other “death” called the “Second Death” that is experienced by unbelievers after the Gog Revolution at the end of the Millennium. That one is not our concern in this discussion.

The 1 John 5:16 and following passages that reference “death” are referring to physical death. There is no suggestion that the “deceased” loses their salvation to experience some form of eternal spiritual death. They die a physical death.

Ezekiel 18:24 But when a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice and does the same abominations that the wicked person does, shall he live? None of the righteous deeds that he has done shall be remembered; for the treachery of which he is guilty and the sin he has committed, for them he shall die.

Ezek 18:26 When a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it; for the injustice that he has done he shall die. ²⁷ Again, when a wicked person turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he shall save his life.

Both of these passages speak of a righteous person (saved) committing unrighteousness. The penalty for that action is physical death, not the loss of salvation. The Hebrew word used here is *muwth* /mooth/ and refers to physical death.

Born again believers have the following options:

1. Advance to spiritual maturity through the intake of spiritual food (the Bible with all the assets God left there for us to use) and become fruit producers in God’s Kingdom here and now.
2. If said believer gets involved in carnality, he/she will face chastisement to encourage them back to where they belong—that place being a faith-based relationship with God (Heb 12:5-6).
3. To accomplish that return to right relationship with God, the sinning believer must confess any known sins under the provisions of 1 John 1:9 and will be forgiven and cleansed of all unrighteousnesses.
4. Failing to do that and willfully continuing into more carnality and rebellion, the backsliding believer will see increasing levels of chastisement pain and potentially face the penalty for sinning that leads to death—and be physically removed from this world.
5. But the loss of salvation is not a possibility.

The Mechanics of the Spiritual Life

Whose slave are you?

God's willing servant or a slave to your sin nature?

Inside the Will of God

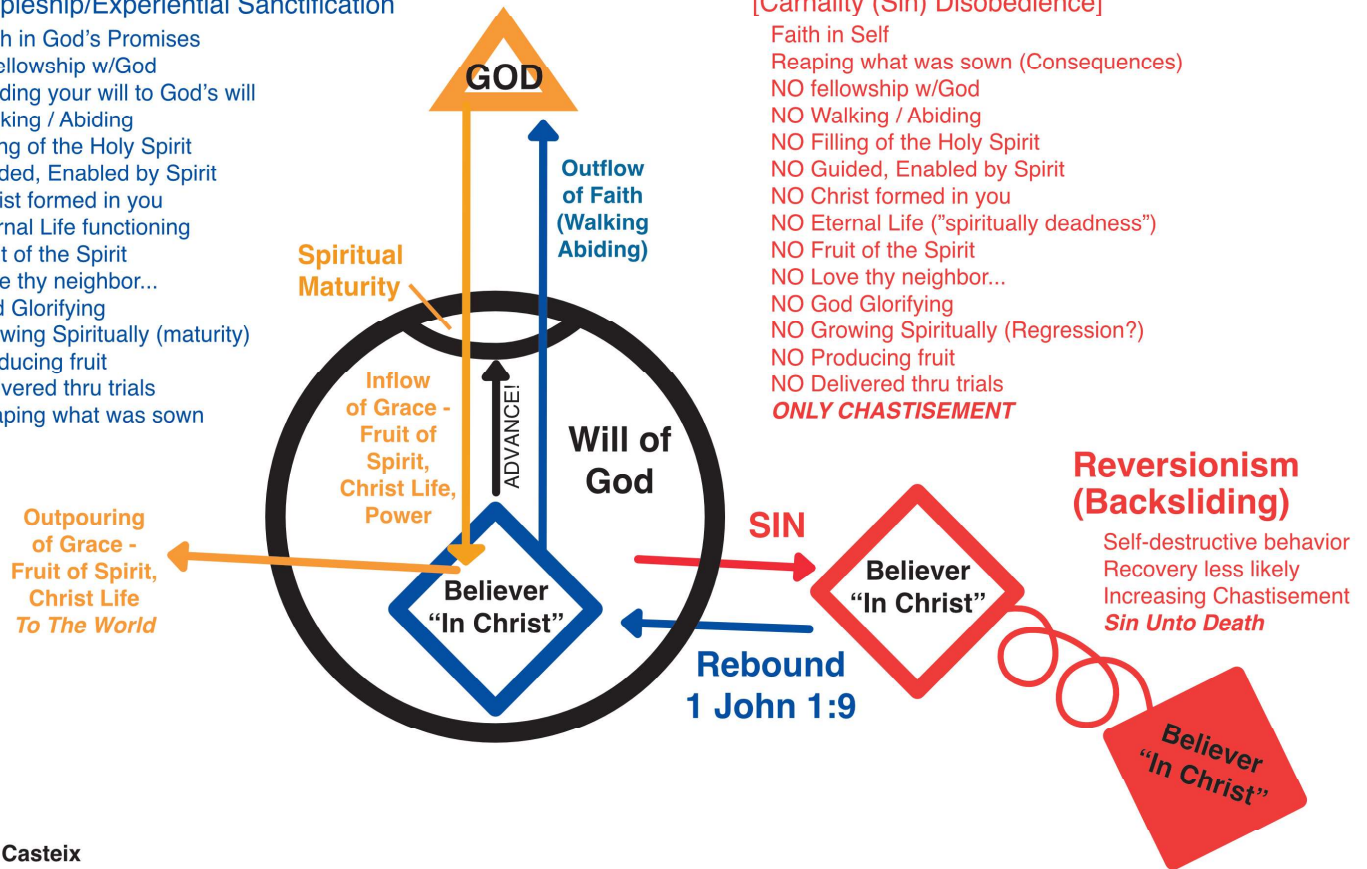
Discipleship/Experiential Sanctification

- Faith in God's Promises
- In fellowship w/God
- Yielding your will to God's will
- Walking / Abiding
- Filling of the Holy Spirit
- Guided, Enabled by Spirit
- Christ formed in you
- Eternal Life functioning
- Fruit of the Spirit
- Love thy neighbor...
- God Glorifying
- Growing Spiritually (maturity)
- Producing fruit
- Delivered thru trials
- Reaping what was sown

Outside the Will of God

[Carnality (Sin) Disobedience]

- Faith in Self
- Reaping what was sown (Consequences)
- NO fellowship w/God
- NO Walking / Abiding
- NO Filling of the Holy Spirit
- NO Guided, Enabled by Spirit
- NO Christ formed in you
- NO Eternal Life ("spiritually deadness")
- NO Fruit of the Spirit
- NO Love thy neighbor...
- NO God Glorifying
- NO Growing Spiritually (Regression?)
- NO Producing fruit
- NO Delivered thru trials
- ONLY CHASTISEMENT**



Lane Casteix
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Consequences and Rewards

The rebellious believer faces consequences in this life in the form of chastisement, which, as we have seen, is discipline for his apostate behavior that is designed to urge him/her back into right relationship with God. The "urging" can be painful, especially if the rebellion is persisted in. And it can ultimate result in the physical death of the believer who persists to the point of no return or the sin is so grievous and a threat to the plan of

God. Ananias and Sapphira faced this, and King David came near to facing it for his sins related to the Bathsheba affair. But there are potential eternal consequences, as well.

2 Cor 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

1 Cor 3:11 For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— ¹³ each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴ If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

These passages concern the Bema Judgment for Church Age believers. That word translated “judgment seat” is the Greek *bema* /**bay**·ma/, a step, pace, a foot-breath, a raised place mounted by steps, a platform, tribune. As the definition suggests, it is a place of measurement (step, pace, foot breath) or more accurately a place of evaluation or being measured. It is not a judicial judgment seat as is seen in Revelation for the Last Judgment, which is the Greek *thronos* for throne.

It is also defined as a raised platform mounted by steps. The three level platform seen in the Olympic Games where the top three winners stand to receive their medals would be a *bema*.

The Bema Judgment is a place where believers, specifically Church Age believers, will be evaluated right after the Rapture of the Church while the Tribulation is going on back on earth. Each believer will stand before the judge, Christ, and give an account of his spiritual life after salvation. Sin will NOT be even be mentioned; sin was judged at the Cross. In fact, sin is not mentioned in any judgment after the Cross, not even at the Last Judgment of the Wicked Dead at the end of the Millennium.

The Church Age believer will be called to give an account of his spiritual life. Some things that will need to be explained include:

- Did you follow the leading of the Holy Spirit to do what He was calling you to do?
- Did you walk by means of (faith in) the Holy Spirit to guide and empower you?
- What did you do with all the spiritual and physical assets God gave you to accomplish your spiritual calling? That could be anything from natural talent, spiritual gifts, financial support, etc.

I'm sure there will be a lot more we might need to explain, but the real issue is that God has a plan for the life of every believer and He supplies everything we need to accomplish it, so the question will be to what extent were you successful in accomplishing that plan?

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The foundation of that spiritual walk and plan for your life is Jesus Christ (v11-12). Potentially the believer can produce “gold, silver, precious stones” or “wood, hay, straw” (v12), and our production will face a “fire” test (v13). The fire will destroy any worthless human production even if someone actually benefitted from it because it was not inspired and enabled by the Holy Spirit as part of the believer's spiritual calling. “Wood, hay and straw” are worthless works of no value to God's plan and were usually done for self gratification. However, works that survive the fire test are “gold, silver, and precious stones” and are of value to God's plan and were done in the leading and power of the Spirit using the assets God gave us. It is this “gold, silver, and precious stones” that are rewarded at the Bema judgment (v14) precisely because they were done in the leading and power of the Spirit and glorify God.

But notice verse 15, “If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, **though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.**” Even though a believer is a total loser spiritually and failed miserably to accomplish God’s plan for his life, and all his works, if any, are worthless and burn up, **it has no impact on the person’s salvation.**

There are indeed consequences for a failed spiritual life both in this life through chastisement even to the point of God taking the believer out under the penalty of “sin leading to death,” and also in eternity where the believer’s spiritual production is evaluated, and he receives rewards for a successful spiritual life or no rewards for failure.

It is suggested by some that this may be the one time in eternity when a saved believer will feel embarrassment for having failed God. If that is true, I would suspect that embarrassment would be deep and profound.

Conclusion

In this series I have attempted to present arguments for the eternal security of the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. My objective has been to deal with “troublesome” passages and concepts that are often cited by those who claim it is somehow possible to lose one’s salvation, and my purpose was to deliver scriptural evidence that supports the doctrinal position that salvation is by grace through faith and it cannot ever be lost by human works. That concept is captured in the term “once saved / always saved” or shortened to OSAS. More accurately, it should be described as “eternal security,” that is being eternally secure in your salvation.

Any other doctrinal position requires one to reject grace and embrace works, and we know from numerous passages that ...

1. We are saved by grace
2. Works and grace cannot be mixed
3. If works are involved in any way then why was the Cross even necessary?

I have a dear friend who professes faith in Christ but also believes it is possible to lose his salvation through some form of human failing on his

part. He once said to me, “I wish I could believe as you do, because I don’t like feeling this way.”

That was terribly distressing for me to hear a Christian say something like that. God did not intend for us to have doubts but to have confidence, and that confidence should always be in Him—not us or our weak abilities. This awful, demonic, false doctrine that teaches one can lose his salvation is removing all assurance from faith in God and placing it squarely on the back of man. If we grasp anything else about the Christian life, it should be that nothing depends on man. It ALL depends on God.

We were not called to a life where we are to feel frustration and discouragement, never knowing if we had done enough to be saved or done enough to keep from losing our salvation, and not finding out if we made the “cut” until we die. That is not a life of assurance. Anytime you add any human works to salvation you have nullified grace. If you hold the position that **you** can lose or keep your salvation through some act on **your** part, then **you** cannot claim to be saved by grace through faith and are compelled to reject Ephesians 2:8-9 and similar passages as lies. Furthermore, if you have held such a position since you were “saved” then I would suggest you consider the possibility that you are not saved at all. You need to put ALL your faith in what Christ did for you. If you have not put ALL of your faith in what Christ did on the Cross and held back even a little of it for your own use, then you are not saved. If that concerns you, and it should, then put ALL your faith and trust in Christ. Hold nothing back.

In this series we have spoken about *reconciliation*, which is related to the Old Testament term “atonement,” and how, in salvation, the sinner is thoroughly changed and adjusted to God’s standard by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ through faith in Christ.

Then we looked at *propitiation*, which is the Godward side of the work of Christ on the Cross. God recognizes what Christ did on the Cross on behalf of man, which changes how the man relates to Him.

For the believer this results in *justification*, a declaration of God, whereby God pardons all our sins and accepts us as righteous in His sight because of the righteousness of Christ received by faith alone in Christ alone. That

righteousness is not our own, which is worthless in the sight of God. God loves the believer, and this is not the same love he has for the world, which is a form of *impersonal love* that depends on the integrity of the one doing the loving not the “loveably” of the object. God has perfect love for His own perfect righteousness, and when He looks at a believer He sees His own perfect righteousness, not our sins, and He has *personal love* for the believer.

Out of that came *redemption*, whereby the believing sinner is purchased from the slave market of sin by the blood of Christ and the believer’s faith in that work.

The new believer is then said to be *regenerated*, which speaks of the creation of the human spirit, making him a trichotomous being again—body, soul, and spirit—and that spirit is perfect in the likeness of God.

And as part of the process, God *sanctifies* the believer, that is sets them apart from the rest of the human race as one of His own, and the believer is forever “identified” with Christ through the baptism of the Spirit. As such “we are His” and nothing can take us away from Him.

Consider for a moment that if we could lose our salvation then all this (and much more) would have to be reversed. There is not the slightest mention in Scripture that is possible. Nowhere does it say you can be un-regenerated, un-sanctified, un-redeemed, un-propitiated, or un-reconciled. That would suggest the possibility does not exist. If it were possible, don’t you think there would be very clear and specific warnings about it?

We also looked at the false teachings of “persevering” and “overcoming” and saw how that had absolutely nothing to do with salvation but had everything to do with the spiritual life of the believer and victory over sin and overcoming temptation and tribulations specifically related to the Tribulation in most textual instances.

Lastly, we looked at key passage in Hebrews that is often used by the false teachers of this heresy that a believer can lose his salvation. We saw how that passage was not about salvation at all but was a call to Hebrew believers not to revert to the Law, which would avail them nothing, because

now that Christ had come we are not under the Law but are under grace, and they can no longer go back because back is not there anymore. What the Levitical system only pictured has been replaced by the reality of the Cross.

No, the believer is secure in Christ and cannot lose his salvation. **To suggest otherwise is to put your faith in yourself to keep yourself saved.** If you depend on doing or not doing something to preserve your salvation (past tense), then you have indeed fallen from grace and into apostasy.

I hope those of you who might have held doubts and thought it possible you can lose your salvation have found assurance in these lessons. I know where I am going when I die without a shadow of a doubt, and that fact does not depend on me. If it did, my goose would be thoroughly cooked, because I am human and subject to human failings. Yes, I do sin and more often than I would like to admit, and so do you, but each night one thing I pray about is I give thanks to God for his mercy and patience with me even when I so utterly fail Him.

As Christians we can depart from the faith, deny the faith, or stop believing in Christ as our Savior, but since the security of our salvation depends on God's faithfulness, not our own, we can never lose eternal life. A Christian may leave the faith, but God never leaves the Christian. Apostasy from the faith does not forfeit salvation, though it will forfeit future rewards.

Salvation cannot be obtained by our performance, nor can it be kept by our performance.

Romans 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed

all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ 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.