

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

1 TIMOTHY LESSON 3 (Chapter 4)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Kevin Pendergrass.

“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith” (1 Tim. 4:1). Welcome to the Gospel of Christ. In this lesson, we are going to be examining 1 Timothy 4 in order to understand the idea of those who “depart from the faith” or “depart from the truth.” There is a popular belief that has been around for many years that is known as “once saved, always saved.” This may be something you’ve heard of before, or even something that you believe. But if you’ve never heard of this doctrine, here is what it says. Once a person becomes a Christian, that person can never lose his or her salvation. There is nothing that a Christian can do (even if he wanted to), or that anyone else can do, to cause a Christian to lose his salvation. Once you are saved, you are always saved. In this lesson, we are going to be looking at that view so we can compare it to what the Bible has to say. I know that this is a very popular view, and you may even believe it. But let’s be honest with ourselves and with the Scriptures, and go only to the Word of God to see what the Bible has to say about this view.

We are going to be looking at three points in this lesson, the first of which is that it is possible to fall from God’s grace. In 1 Corinthians 9:27 Paul was writing to the church in Corinth. He knew that he had to discipline his own body, spiritually speaking. He was a preacher of the truth, yet he realized that he could become a castaway. Paul was an apostle. He was someone who we know was converted to the truth. Formerly, he had been a persecutor of Christianity, but now was one who is preaching Christianity. There is no doubt that he was a faithful member of the Lord’s church, yet he realized that he had to make sure that he continued to discipline his body because he did not want to become a castaway. Think about this for a moment. If an apostle like Paul realized that he could become a castaway, err, and fall from the grace of God, how much more, then, must we understand that we, too, can become castaways. It is vital that we take Paul’s warning and see how it is possible for us to fall from God’s grace. In 1 Corinthians 10 Paul explained his purpose for writing this portion of his letter to the church in Corinth. In verses 1-4 Paul says,

“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.”

What is the context of these comments? Paul makes it clear that he is talking about Israelites who were God’s people under the Old Law. Paul was giving some background about them. Notice, however, what he says in verse 5. “But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.” Most of the Israelites had erred, and with most of them God was not pleased. Paul explains why in verses 6 and 7 when he says, “These things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.’” He is referring to

what happened in Exodus 32 when Moses was still on the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments from God. The people said, "Let us build an idol." They begged Aaron to make them a golden calf so that they would have a physical idol to lead them. That is what Aaron did, and the people erred by doing that. In verses 8 Paul went on to write, "Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell." Twenty-three thousand fell. People today say, "You cannot fall from God's grace. Yet Paul himself said that twenty-three thousand fell in one day. He continues in verses 9-11 by saying,

"Nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."

Paul tells us that the reason he is writing these things is to offer us an example so that we can turn back and use this information. We can learn from that since it is for our admonition. Why is Paul writing to people under the New Law about people who fell away under the Old Law? If it is impossible for people to fall away, then why would Paul be warning them about that? His reasoning is that it is possible for people to fall away. I want us to look at 1 Corinthians 10:12 very carefully. Notice the warning that Paul offers. "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." Those are not my words. They are the words that Paul was writing to the church. He said, "Make sure that you do not fall away like those under the Old Law fell away. You need to learn from them so that you will not fall away as well." Paul proved that is possible for a Christian to fall away.

Peter also wrote about this idea about how it is possible to fall from God's grace. In 2 Peter 2:20-21 Peter said,

"For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them."

Peter is saying that it would be better for somebody to never have known and obeyed the truth than for someone who had obeyed the truth and had escaped the pollutions of the world to leave the truth. They had come to Christ, and they were a Christian. Yet they fell away. It would have been better for that person to never have known Christ at all than to have known and fallen away. Peter offers such a warning to prove that, according to the Scriptures, it is possible to fall from God's grace.

Look at Hebrews 3:12, which says, "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." The writer first says that he is writing to people who are "brethren." These were not people who were some sort of heathens who did not believe in God. These were not people who were not children of God. The writer makes it clear that they were "brethren." However, not only were they brethren, but he was warning them to make certain that they did not have an evil heart of unbelief, since that was a possibility. The last part of the verse says, "...because there is a chance that you can depart from the living God." How can someone say that there is no way you can fall from God's grace when Hebrews 3:12 plainly says the opposite? Notice the idea of "departing from God." Sometimes people have the following mentality when it comes to the idea of "once saved, always saved." They say, "If you fall away from God, then you were never really saved to begin with." But consider this. If that was the case, then why was Paul writing to "brethren" to tell them that they could depart from God? Have you ever been in an airport? In order to "depart" from the airport, you first have to be "in" the airport. You can-

not depart from something that you were never at or in to begin with. If these people were brethren, then how could they depart from God if they were never with God to begin with? The truth is that they **were** with God. They had a relationship with God. They were brethren, which is why the Hebrews writer was warning them to make sure that they did not fall away and that they did not have an evil heart of unbelief. The Hebrews writer continues this thought in Hebrews 6:4-6 where he spoke of how certain Christians were once enlightened, had tasted of the heavenly gift, had been partakers of the Holy Spirit, and had tasted the good Word of God. But then Paul went on to say that those people who once had the Holy Spirit could fall away. Those are not my words. Those are found in the Word of God in Hebrews 6:4-6.

Now let's look at another argument which shows that it is possible to fall from God's grace. I want to talk about the Book of Life, which is mentioned in Revelation 21:27 and Revelation 20:15. In those verses it is clearly taught that if your name is written in the Book of Life, then you are saved. But if your name is not written in the Book of Life, then you are lost. So we understand that, yes, we want our names in the Book of Life. Why? Because that means we are saved. But if our names are **not** there, then we are lost. When we go to those Scriptures, notice what Revelation 3:5 has to say. "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will **not** blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels." Jesus is writing the church of Christ, and tells them that He is writing the church—a group of saved people—to tell them that if they do not repent, He will blot their names from the Book of Life. We know that this group of people is saved because their names are written in the Book of Life. But we also know that there is a possibility of them falling from God's grace because Christ says that He can, and will, blot out their names if they do not repent. "Blot out" means to obliterate or erase—to totally wipe away so that something is not there any more. This plainly teaches that one can fall from God's grace.

Now I would like us to look at some failed arguments that people sometimes try to use to justify the idea of "once saved, always saved." These may be some arguments that you have used in the past. But let's compare those to the Word of God in order to see what the Bible has to say. I heard a preacher say one time, "When you become a Christian, you gain eternal life. Therefore, it is impossible to fall away because eternal life is eternal, and that is what you have gained." When you become a Christian, you do not gain eternal life in the sense that you are in Heaven automatically. When one is baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38), that person does not automatically enter Heaven. But he does gain the promise of eternal life—which we learn from 1 John 5:13. That promise from God has conditions that we, for our part, must meet. In Hebrews 3:14 we are told that we will have eternal life "if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end." God's promise has conditions that we must meet. We do not receive the crown until we die (and because we have been faithful unto the end). Think about it this way. A sinner has the promise of eternal condemnation. But a sinner is not in Hell yet. Why? Because he can change. The promise is conditional. He can change his life, repent, and become a Christian. We are not judged based upon what we did 25 or 30 years ago. Rather, we are judged by the way we are living our lives now. If we have repented of our sins, if he have changed, if we have come to Christ, and if we have had our sins washed away in baptism, then we no longer are sinners, and we have the promise of eternal life. But in the same way, if we had our sins washed away 25 or 30 years ago, the Lord added us to the church (Acts 2:47). But if are not faithful, then we no longer have the promise of eternal life because we have fallen from the grace of God. Yes, we have a promise, but the promise comes with conditions.

Another argument that people try to use to justify the doctrine of “once saved, always saved” is found in John 10:27-29. It is the idea that no one can snatch us out of God’s hand. God knows who we are, and no one can snatch us from Him. If we are faithful, then no one can ever snatch us away. That’s true. However, we can choose to leave whenever we want to. If we are living a faithful Christian life, there is nothing or no one who can do anything about that because it is our choice to live faithfully. But, we can choose to be unfaithful. We know from John 8:31 that we are faithful to God only if we do whatever He commands us. I wanted us to look at some arguments that people try to use to justify “once saved, always saved,” so that we can see that they shatter against God’s Word when we open the Bible to see what it has to say.

Not only is it **possible** for people to fall from God’s grace, but some **will** fall from God’s grace. I want us to now look at some examples of people who did fall from God’s grace, as found in the Bible. In Mark 4:14-19 we have the parable of the sower. He went out to sow seed. Some heard the Word and accepted it, thereby becoming a Christian. But then the text goes on to say that after some time they ended up falling back into the world. People say, “Well, this is just a parable.” True, it is a parable. Mark 4:14 shows that. However, at the same time Christ never used something that was **false** to illustrate a **truth**. He always used truth to illustrate truth. A live example of this is found in Acts 1:25. A disciple by the name of Judas, who had been a faithful disciple at one time, betrayed Jesus. In Acts 1:25 we read that he “fell by transgression.” He fell by sin, and was lost, and will be lost in Hell for eternity. Someone who was once a disciple of Christ, who lived with Christ, and who walked with Christ, betrayed Jesus and fell away.

In Acts, there are many examples. We will look at several of these. In Acts 5:1-11 we find the example of Ananias and Sapphira, who were Christians. Yet they sinned by lying. As a result, they were struck dead on the spot for their sins. We know that they died in their sin. According to Romans 6:1-2, we cannot continue in sin that grace may abound. When one dies in sin, he or she dies in a lost state. That person cannot go to Heaven, but will go to Hell as their eternal home. Nobody wants to see that happen.

In Acts 8:20-22 we see the example of a man by the name of Simon who, at one point in his life, had been a sorcerer. Yet he saw the truth and became a Christian, as we learn from Acts 8:13. However, when he saw the things that were being done by Peter and some of the other apostles, he desired to purchase the gift of God with money. Peter did not turn around and say, “Well, you sinned. But because you were **once** saved, you are **always** saved.” Rather, he said, “Repent, because your heart is not right with God.” Simon was lost, and was told that he had to repent if he wanted to be right with God again. Here is an example of someone who, at one point, was in a saved state, yet who sinned and immediately lost his salvation. Fortunately, the text tells us that Simon did repent. How grateful we are to see that.

In 1 Corinthians 5:1-11 we find another strong argument of one who had fallen from God’s grace. Paul was writing to the church in Corinth, and he talked to the Christians there about the idea of disfellowshipping. He commanded them that if there was someone who was living unfaithfully who was a Christian, then other Christians could not continue to fellowship such a person. This goes hand in hand with Matthew 18, where the Bible says that if we have a problem with a brother, we should go talk to him about it. What happens if he does not repent? We are to go back to him and take two or three more witnesses. If he does not repent at that point, then we are to tell it to the whole church and make it public. Then if the person does not repent, we are to remove our fellowship from that person. That is what Paul is talking about in 1 Corinthians 5. But he makes it clear that he is not talking about a worldly sinner like an idolater or fornicator. He is talking about those who are brothers in

Christ, who once had made a commitment, and who were Christians. Yet those people fell away from the truth. Paul made it clear that he was not talking about everybody, but rather about those who once were faithful Christians, yet no longer are. He said that we could not continue to fellowship such people. Instead, we should remove our fellowship from such a person. How much clearer could Paul have been in saying that it was possible for someone to fall away? In 1 Corinthians we read of a man who was living with his father's wife. Yet we read in 2 Corinthians the wonderful story of him coming back to God and Christ. So, while it is true that we do see examples of people falling away from God's grace, we must keep in mind that if a person repents, he can always come back to the truth as well.

Look in Galatians 1:2 where we see that Paul is writing to the church in Galatia. He is writing to Christians. I want us to examine Galatians 5:4 where Paul says, "You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace." They had done what? They had "fallen from grace." People try to say that a person cannot fall from grace, yet these words from the Bible say that a person **can** fall from God's grace. This is something that it is possible for a person to do. And we see examples here of people who were doing it. They had become strangers to Christ. Think about it this way. It says that they had fallen from God's grace. We know this book was written to Christians (Gal. 1:2), but people have claimed that the book was written to people who really weren't Christians. How can you "fall from grace" if you weren't "in grace" to begin with? People say, "I've fallen out of love." In order to "fall out of love," what do you have to do? You first had to "be in love." The same principle applies to falling from grace. In order for people to fall **from** grace, they first had to be **in** grace. In 1 Timothy 1:19 and 2 Timothy 2:17-18 we read about Hymenaeus, Alexander, and Philetus. These were people who had fallen from God's grace. Demas had been a traveling companion of Paul's, 2 Timothy 4:10 tells us. Yet Paul wrote that Demas "loved the things of this world," and because of that had erred and left the Truth. How sad that was. Demas had traveled with Paul, but he loved the world more than spiritual things that had to do with Christ. Because of that, he fell from God's grace. In 1 Timothy 4 Paul predicted that there would be a departure from The Faith. We therefore know that it is possible to depart from The Faith. Not only is it possible, but people **will** depart from The Faith. We have seen examples of people who **did** fall from God's grace.

The last point I want us to consider is this: What must we do to ensure that we do not fall from God's grace. In 1 Timothy 4:7 Paul says, "Reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness." We should not get caught up in matters of opinion or fables. Rather, we should simply stick to the Word of God. Let's not worry about these other things. In 1 Timothy 4:10 Paul told Timothy to "labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe." We may have to suffer reproach as we labor for Christ, but we need to endure that and stay faithful to the end. In 1 Timothy 4:15-16 we find a command that Paul gave to Timothy:

"Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you."

Paul told Timothy to meditate on the truth. He was to give himself entirely to the truth, and to continue in such things. He was to talk about doctrinal issues in order to be sure that he was seeing what the Bible had to say on such matters so that he did not fall away. In 1 Timothy 6:20-21 Paul told Timothy to guard the truth and not stray from it. I also want us to look at Colossians 2:8, which says, "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ." Isn't it ironic that Paul warned us about these things, because the idea of "once saved, always saved" is a false philosophy that is sending many

souls straight to Hell. Just as Paul has issued such a warning, we, too, want to issue such a warning. Do not be cheated through the false idea of "once saved, always saved," which is not found in the Bible. You cannot believe it, practice it, or approve of it (Rom. 1:32). In 2 Peter 3:17 the Bible says, "You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked." We see here that we can fall from God's grace.

In Matthew 10:22 we see that Christ said, "You will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved." I want you to know that we must always go to the Scriptures to see what the Bible says. The false view of "once saved, always saved," is always wrong. You should not be a part of that view. Maybe you are not even a Christian. If that is the case, we hope that you will look to the Scriptures to see what you must do to be saved. In Acts 2:37 the question was asked, "What must we do?" The answer was, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." If you have not done that, you are lost. But the good news is that you can be saved. If you have not obeyed the truth, we pray today that you will obey the Gospel of Christ.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR 1 TIMOTHY LESSON 3 (CHAPTERS 4)

1. In 1 Timothy 4:1, what prediction did the apostle Paul make (based on information given to him by the Holy Spirit)?
2. This lesson repeatedly addresses a popular-but-false doctrine that pertains to a person's salvation. What is that doctrine?
3. What did Paul say in 1 Corinthians 9:27 about actions he took in his own life to ensure his salvation?
4. What group of people is Paul discussing in 1 Corinthians 10:1-5?
5. In 1 Corinthians 10:7, why did Paul say that he had discussed the people and events that he mentioned in 1 Corinthians 10:1-5?
6. In 1 Corinthians 10:12, what warning does Paul offer to Christians?
7. According to the instruction found in this lesson, what topic was the apostle Peter discussing in 2 Peter 2:20-21?
8. What instruction for Christians is contained in Hebrews 3:12?
9. Hebrews 6:4 speaks of certain Christians who "once were enlightened," who "had tasted of the heavenly gift," who "had been partakers of the Holy Spirit," and who "had tasted the good Word of God." But verse 7 says that something might happen to such Christians. What was that "something"?
10. Revelation 20:15 and 21:27 clearly teach that if a person's name is written in the Book of Life, then that person is numbered among the saved. In Revelation 3:5, we also are told, "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will **not** blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels." In what state would a Christian find himself if his or her name **was** blotted out of the Book of Life?
11. In Hebrews 3:14 Christians are told that they will receive eternal life if they do something. What is that "something"?
12. John 10:27-29 teaches that no one can snatch Christians from God's hand. However, can a Christian, of his own volition, leave God's embrace? If a person was to do that, in what state would he or she then be—saved or lost?
13. Judas Iscariot was one of Christ's twelve apostles. What important piece of information is found in Acts 1:25 about Judas?
14. Acts 5:1-11 discusses two Christians by the name of Ananias and Sapphira. What happened to them—and why?
15. What does Galatians 5:4 say had happened to certain first-century Christians?