



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

“Once Saved, Always Saved, or the Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints – III:

Biblical Objections”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the opportunity to study together again. And we ask now that Thou will direct our thoughts as we consider it again the doctrine of eternal life. Guide and direct us into an understanding of Thy word. We pray through the Holy Spirit and remain with the Lord Jesus.

For his sake. Amen.

[Message] This is the third in our series on the subject “Once Saved, Always Saved, or The Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints.” And for the last two times, we have considered the positive side, the teachings of the Scriptures setting forth the biblical support for the doctrine and then the logical support for the doctrine. And, of course, our logical support was taken from the Bible as well. This is the doctrine of eternal life remember, but it is best known as the doctrine of eternal security. And I prefer, for reasons I’ve already given you, the doctrine of eternal life. But, unfortunately, if you say to people “Do you know the doctrine of eternal life” they look blank. But if you say “Do you know the doctrine of eternal security” they either say yes with a smile or they frown and then you know they don’t believe it but at least know it.

Remember, it is to be distinguished from the doctrine of assurance. Assurance is the doctrine that we have salvation as a present possession when you believe in Jesus Christ. Security or the doctrine of eternal life is the doctrine that we have salvation as a permanent possession. So assurance, we have life as a present possession. Security, we have a life as permanent possession. It is possible for us to believe the assurance of salvation and not believe in the eternal security. There are some of our outstanding Christian men have been in that camp, John Wesley, who I've referred to already. Wesley believed in the assurance of salvation and he believed very strongly in it. But he did not accept the doctrine of security. For he felt that theoretically it was possible for a person to apostatize from the faith and thus lose his salvation. He did not think that he could, but he thought that it could be done.

Now, when we considered the biblical defense of this doctrine in our last study I said we'll look at the logical defense, the arguments from election, the arguments of salvation by grace, the arguments from union with Christ, the argument from the ordinances, the argument from the nature of discipline and the argument from the doctrine of sin. I think it is perhaps the most important aspect of this truth to remember that logically if a person believes that he may be saved and then lost. He is in very real danger of losing the salvation which is basically by works.

Now, he, of course, does not accept that often if he is an intelligent worker in that doctrine and there are intelligent believers in that doctrine. But, I think, it is the natural deduction that we should draw from the view that we are saved by what Christ did, but we are kept in our state salvation by what we do after we are saved. Of course, it is possible for us to be saved through the finished work of our Lord Jesus but lose our salvation because of some failure afterwards. Basically, our salvation does not depend only upon what Christ did. It depends upon what Christ did plus what we do. So that logically a person who believes may lose his salvation while he may not admit it, he comes perilously close to believing really logically in a salvation by works.

I had been listening to some tapes of messages that Donald J. Barnhouse gave fifteen years ago given to me by Cory Hunsicker’s father, Mr. Peterson, from Marlin. And I was listening to one of the tapes yesterday and on it he recorded the illustration of the salvation of a Roman Catholic priest through his radio ministry. It happened in 1952. He said he received a telephone call with the question “Are you the Dr. Barnhouse who preaches on the radio?” Dr. Barnhouse said “Yes, I am.” “Did you preach last Sunday on the station WJAZ on Romans and he named the passage.” Dr. Barnhouse said “Yes, I did.” And the man said “I want to be sure that I have the right man.” He said “If I came to Philadelphia could I see you?” Dr. Barnhouse said, “Well it so happens that I’m leaving shortly for New York City to conduct a Bible class in a Lutheran church which is just off Times Square and I’d be glad to meet you there,” for the man lives in New York City. That church, by the way, I’ve spoken in several times for Dr. Barnhouse in his Monday night Bible class which he used to have for many years in New York City. The man said “Well I’m with another religion than you and I cannot meet here in the church.” Dr. Barnhouse said “Are you a Catholic?” He said “Yes.” “Are you a priest? And he said “Yes, I am.” Then Dr. Barnhouse said “Well, meet me on the sidewalk afterwards.” He said it was in May, the last Monday in May.

And when he finished his Bible class, he went outside of the church and there the Roman Catholic priest was standing. And he introduced himself. And they got in Dr. Barnhouse’s car and they went off to get a cup of coffee and some ice cream. And they began to talk. And he said that he had been listening to Dr. Barnhouse on the radio but that the beginning of his experience was about three months previously. And he had heard him preach once and he had heard the announcer say that it was possible to get a copy of the sermon. So he said to Dr. Barnhouse, he said “I wrote off for that sermon in the name of Bridgette McGillicutty, [laughter] who happens to be the cleaning woman at my church, but since I open all the mail I knew I would be able to retrieve that reply with the sermon in it. And so sure enough the sermon came addressed to Bridgette

McGillicutty and I took it out and read it. And in the course of reading it I noticed that there was an offer for about six pamphlets which would contain about thirty other sermons." And he said "I put a dollar in and I sent it off again in the name of Bridgett McGillicutty. And when it returned I read all of your sermons." And he said "I have read thirty-five of your sermons now. And I'm convinced that Peter was never in Rome and I'm shaken and I'm confused."

And so Dr. Barnhouse said "Well let's look at what the Scriptures say." And so he opened the Bible and he said "What did Jesus come to do?" The man said "Well he came to die for the sins of the world." Dr. Barnhouse said "Was he successful?" "Yes," he said. "He was successful." Dr. Barnhouse said "Yes, of course, he would have to be successful. Whatever Jesus came to do, he surely accomplished." And then he said "Did he pay for your sin?" And the man said "He came to die for the sins of the world." He said "Did he pay for your sins." He said "Well yes." Dr. Barnhouse said "If he paid for your sins, how many would he have paid for?" "Well, all of them." "So if Jesus paid for all of your sins, how many are left to be removed by the waters of baptism?" He said "None." Then he said "If Jesus paid for your sins, how many are left to be paid for by the death of a piece of bread supposedly turned into Jesus and killed." He said "None." Then Dr. Barnhouse said "If Jesus paid for all your sins, how many are left to be paid for by the oil of extreme unction when someone comes and drops a drop of oil and into the seven holes of your head as you're about to die? He said "None." "Well, if Jesus paid for all your sins, how many are left for you to pay for by going to purgatory and becoming your own savior and suffering?" He said "Well none." Dr. Barnhouse said "Well you're a good Protestant." [Laughter] And through that experience he was converted. And Dr. Barnhouse was preaching just a few years later when he told it and he said this man is now teaching Latin and Spanish in a school forty miles from Philadelphia having left the Roman Catholic priesthood and having become again a Christian.

Now, I think you can see from an illustration like this, that if you really believe that all of our sins were paid for by the suffering by Jesus Christ on the cross and that means all, and consequently, we’re not saved by what Jesus Christ did plus what we do after. If Jesus Christ work was finished, it was finished and, therefore, it is illogical to expect that this salvation which he has given to us is a salvation since we have not earned it by our work, we cannot lose it by our work. And so, consequently, if we accept the doctrine that Christ paid for all of our sins, that his work was a finished work, we can hardly logically and consistently believe that we are saved by what Christ did plus what we do after we have known faith.

Now, I think that is very important and I, of course, realize there are people who do not think all the way through the affirmations of their own faith. There are many people who do believe they are saved by Christ’s work and they may be lost. They do not make these further deductions, but I believe they are logically inconsistent in that faith.

Now, we want to look at the objections to the doctrine because after all it should be obvious to us if we have lived very and been around Christians that there is a great deal of discussion over the doctrine of eternal life. And let me hasten to say it’s possible for us to be very fine Christian and not accept the doctrine of eternal life. It’s logically inconsistent but, nevertheless, it’s possible for us to be a Christian. And one of the reasons that people are confused about this is because some of the passages of Scripture seem to speak that we can lose our salvation. And it is possible for a person who does not study the Bible for himself or study very briefly to be easily misled. And so we’re going to look at some of the passages that have been suggested and passages which deny the doctrine of eternal life. And I have classified them because I think that by classifying them we can eliminate looking at every passage which has been in dispute. Let’s look first at passages which deal with near profession. And first of all, let’s turn to Hebrews chapter 6 verses 4 through 6. Hebrews chapter 6 verses 4 through 6.

Now, here in the midst of one of the warning passages of this great Epistle to the Hebrews we read verse 4.

“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”

And when you see these words fall away many think immediately that this verse teaches, this statements teaches that a man may be saved and fall away the laws of salvation. Now, let us say that it is possible to apostatize from profession of faith but it is impossible to apostatize from the possession of faith. John said, remember in the text that we referred to they, that is the false teachers, “They without promise because they were not of us.” They didn’t really belong. They were not essentially with us in the Christian faith. Then John adds “If they had been of us,” that is, if they had really been Christians, if they had possessed the life that we possess “They would have continued with us. In other words, the very fact that they left the fellowship of the saints is evidence that they did not really belong.

Now, it is possible for us to apostatize from profession of faith but it is not possible for us to apostatize from the possession of faith. Now, in this passage, Hebrews chapter 6, verse 4 through verse 6, it’s obviously impossible for us in ten minutes or five minutes to analyze all of the angles of these verses. As you know, if you were here in Believers Chapel about a year and a half ago, I spoke from Hebrews and we spent three times on Hebrews chapter 6. And so if you’re interested in the exposition in detail you can see Mr. Wheeler in the tape room and he would be glad to get you the tapes for Hebrews chapter 6. But now here I can only indicate and to almost all theology classes it

is necessary to do that this is not an exegesis class. I can only indicate to you the conclusion of exegesis of the passage. The key is to recognize the character of the addressee and the meaning of the terms that are used of them. Those who are addressed in this epistle are professing Hebrew Christians. The majority, the author states in several places in the epistle, are undoubtedly genuine believers. But some of them have so backslidden that the author has some questions in his mind about their salvation. So the majority are undoubtedly genuine Christians, but he is doubtful of a minority. Of the latter, it is possible that they have never really believed, and if they never really believed although they all made a profession of faith, it is possible for them apostatize from the faith. But he says “If they apostatize from the faith having received all of this tremendous light which the Holy Spirit has given he warns them that it is it may be impossible to renew them again unto the place where they were.”

Now, as we said this in more than one place in the epistle I want you to turn to chapter 3 in verse 12 and let’s read this. He says “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing.” Now, the word departing here is the translation of the Greek word from which we get the English word apostasy. And so we could render this “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.” In other words, beware there may be one among this company of Christians who is in danger of apostatizing from the faith having made a profession but now their life suggests that there is some question about the possession of the reality of eternal life. Turn to chapter 10, verse 26. The author states verse 26. I’m going to make a few changes, slight changes, just to give you the force of the Greek as I read along.

“For if we go on sinning willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.”

In other words, if we live a life of constant sin our life is characterize by habitual sin, then as he says if we sin willfully this habitual sin woefully after we have received the knowledge of the truth then there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but judgment. Let me illustrate from the Old Testament. He says.

“He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord.”

Now, no child of God is ever subject to God’s vengeance. He says “Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord.” And again, the Lord shall vindicate his people by bringing judgment upon those who are not his people.” Now, I’ve added something there because if I didn’t do that you might be misled. But if you will take a look at that text and then go back into the context of Deuteronomy, from which it is a citation, you will see that it is cited in the context in which God says he’s going to vindicate Israel by judging the Gentiles, the word judge meaning vindicate. So when we read here, “The Lord shall judge his people,” he means he’s going to vindicate the people who really are his by bringing judgment on those who are not his so that the world will know who does really belong to him. And he adds that it’s a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

And so it is possible then for us to apostatize, having received the knowledge of the truth, to turn away from it, never having really received it in the heart. And these warnings, such as the warning in Hebrews chapter 6, are warnings against apostasy on

the part of a professing believer. Because you see when the Holy Spirit brings to us the light of the word of God and the truth of God, brings the light of common grace to us and we reject that grace, and that light, then there begins a process of judgment. The same thing happened to Israel. Jesus said with reference to the generation that rejected him he said these things that come to pass they might see and not understand. And so he began to speak in parables by way of judgment upon that generation, having received light and having turned away from it, there is an inexorable and inevitable law of blindness. You know it’s a dangerous thing to receive the truth of God. And it’s even more dangerous to receive light until you understand a perceptibly what the gospel is but you do not act upon it. That’s a very, very terrible thing for, of course, judgment is increased by reason of the increased light.

Now, you’ll notice that in Hebrews chapter 6 the 9th verse confirms this. For after having said “It’s impossible to renew again unto repentance” the author says in verse 9 “But beloved” by the way this is the only time I think that the word beloved occurs in the Epistle of the Hebrews and it’s a very good time to occur because even the saved might be stirred by warnings like this. And so he said “But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak” as we have in this war against apostasy. And so by fact that he says in verse 9, “We are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.” He shows that these preceding verses do not have to do with salvation. “We are persuaded better things of you than things that accompany salvation.” So really it is possible then for us to fall away from a profession of faith but not from the possession of it. The warnings are then against, this warning specifically, is against the possibility of final apostasy.

There is such a thing you know. There is such a thing in which it is possible for man to come to a place where he has no hope. Now,

we never know that, of course, but from God’s standpoint it is possible for man or even a nation to reach the point by reason of the rejection of light that we cannot respond

because have not responded. Some of you are looking as if no one has ever told you that. I’m sorry they haven’t. You should have been warned about this a long time ago. It’s very possible. Let me turn to a passage in the Old Testament and show you, 2 Chronicles chapter 36 in verse 15. I think I’ll read 14 while you’re finding it, 2 Chronicles chapter 36 in verse 14. Look it up. Look at it with your all two little eyes.

“Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the Lord which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place, but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy.”

See? “Till there was no remedy.” In other words, there comes a time in the judgment of God when he has to say there is no remedy. They have refused the light. They have turned into darkness and darkness they have. That is what is meant when our Lord referred to, in the text I referred to, after Israel had continually rejected him in the 13th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew.

“Begin to speak unto the children of Israel in parables.” And he said “For whosoever hath.” Verse 11 “Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand;

and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.”

So it is a parable fact that it is possible for us to hear truth and hear truth and hear truth and not act upon this great light which God has given us and then turn into darkness until there is no remedy. I do not know when that happens. No one can know, but the fact that there is such a thing is enough to make a man tremble. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews warns against apostasy. By the way, if this is not correct interpretation of this passage, I have no doubt in my on mind that this is a correct interpretation, but if it is not, it still does not take the loss of salvation. Notice what it says. It is impossible to renew them again after it’s happened. It is impossible.

Let me illustrate what I mean. About twelve or fourteen years ago when I was in Nacogdoches, Texas, preaching in the Grace Bible Church in the series of meetings that year, I used to go there every year for a week of meetings, that year I gave a series of messages of problem texts of the Bible. And among them was a message on Once Saved Always Saved with a question mark. And that night there was a young man of about thirty of years who came in the church who sat right down just about ten feet in front of me. And he listened, I think, he listened to every word that I said. And when I finished he came up to me after and he said, “Dr. Johnson I’d like an appointment with you in the morning if I may have one to discuss the subject you just preached on tonight.” I said “Certainly.” And so the next morning about eleven o’clock after the morning meeting, we went into the kitchen of the church and began to discuss the doctrine that I had taught the night before, once saved always saved.

He told me first of all that he was a Pentecostal preacher. And he said “I do not accept the doctrine that you taught last night and I would like to discuss some of the things with you that are problems for me and which it seems to me you have not properly considered.” And he said “First of all did you know that Matthew Henry does not agree with you on the interpretation of this subject?” And I said “Yes, I knew Matthew Henry did not that’s why I don’t recommend matching him in his commentary to most of the Christians unless they have good discernment. He’s a very good devotional commentator. And there are lots of good things in his set but when it comes to the doctrines of the Bible theology you have to use it with a great deal of fear.” He said “Well.” I said “Well what passage would you like to discuss.” He said “Well Hebrew chapter 6.” And so we turned to Hebrews chapter 6 and I read a passage and he had his Bible. I had mine and I said “Now do you believe this teaches that we can fall from salvation?” He said “Yes.”

And I said “Well my doctrine is once saved always saved and your doctrine is once lost always lost.” And he looked startled when I said that. “Well,” I said “You see, the text says it’s impossible to renew them again after repentance. If you take the repentance to be salvation and then a man may fall away, then the text plainly says that you cannot renew them again unto repentance. So your doctrine is once lost always lost.” And he didn’t like that at all because he did not believe that. So I can now never forget it. He just looked at me kind of stunned. And he said “What about 2 Peter chapter 2. [Laughter] He dropped Hebrews 6 like a hot potato and he went to 2 Peter chapter 2. And so let’s turn over to 2 Peter chapter 2 because this is the second of the passages that I wanted to discuss anyway because it falls into the same category as Hebrews chapter 6, 2 Peter chapter 2 verse 20 through verse 22. And here we read “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 therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness.” By the way, do you notice how much may be known?

Now, I didn’t I say have time to talk about Hebrews 6 in detail. I should have pointed out to you that in that passage although there were many great blessings said to be conferred upon those professors, there was no justification mentioned. There was no possession of life mentioned. Salvation was not referred to, although, he then said afterwards we are persuaded better things of you and things that accompany salvation though we just have spoken about these in the third person. And there was no indwelling of the Holy Spirit. There was a reference made to a partaking of his ministry but not the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And so it is possible for us to have great deal of knowledge on the out perceptive side. That is, that we perceive truth and yet not have truth in the heart.

Now, Bob Theme likes to talk about gnosis and epic gnosis. It’s really should be pronounced a little differently because the accent on the epic gnosis rather than the epic gnosis but he likes to make a great deal over apperception by grace or gap. Grace what is it? Anyway some of you are listening to his tapes, I know. They are worth listening to. But anyway the point is that it is possible for a person to have great deal of knowledge and yet not really be Christian. So look. He says that they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Verse 21 “It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.” Why did this happen unto them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.”

Now, this passage is easier than Hebrews chapter 6, I think. That it concerns apostates very aptly because we read in verse 1.

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow

their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.”

So it concerns apostates. It concerns men who have turned but not turned completely. And these verses speak of a turning from Paganism to Christendom but not from Paganism to Christianity in the true sense. They have known the way of truth. They have even wearied in verse 20 “Escaped the pollutions of the world” through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. They are men, someone has said, who have been twice washed but not washed twice. They are dogs. They are swine. They are not true. They are men who have been influenced outwardly by Christianity. They’ve come in the midst of the Christian church. When the preacher said to them do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God? They said yes. Do you believe that Jesus Christ died for you? They said yes. Do you believe that salvation is by grace? They said yes but they didn’t really believe in their hearts. They joined the company of the faithful who were characterized by holiness and righteousness and justice. And they even took on some of the flavor of the holiness of the saints escaping some of the pollutions of the world. As a preachers whose sermons I have read, they said quit. They simply quit their meanness. Now, we all have known people like this who have for a long time outwardly apparently changed but inwardly later it seems did not really do it.

E.T. Lawson was one of the good Bible teachers of the generation or two ago and one of his books he tells an illustration of the incident in his life in which he has spoke to a man after he had spoken to him on the subject of eternal security. And at the close of the meeting, the man came up to him and he said he was a good man. And the man said “I don’t agree with you at all. You’ve been telling us that when once a person is saved he’s saved forever. Now, I believe that like the sow I may returned to my wallowing in the mud.” Mr. Lawson said “Oh I see. You’re a pig then.” And he said he flushed and

he thought he was going to be angry at him but then he broke into a smile and he said "No of course I'm not a pig." He said "I see it. I'm a sheep. I'm not a pig." And, of course, that's what Peter is talking about. A dog will vomit up that which disagrees with him, but then he will later turn and eat his own vomit. A sow may be washed and become clean but the minute it sees the mud puddle it runs and dives in. Now, in order to make a sow act like a sheep, we have to give it a sheep's nature. Now, if you give a sow a sheep's nature, it will pass by mud puddles without any difficulty whatsoever. You give a dog a sheep's nature. He won't have difficulty with his vomit. Are you getting sick by the way? [Laughter] It's in the Bible, you know. It's in the Bible. That's what I like about the Bible. It's right down to earth. [Laughter]

You see, it is important to remember that a genuine Christian one whose nature has been changed by God. Changed by God. He cannot be the same. Cannot be the same. So there are passages that deal with profession. I've selected the two most difficult. Others fall into the same category. So when you read a passage that seems to say oh this seems to teach you can lose your salvation. Remember there are passages that deal with those who have professed faith, who have a great deal of knowledge but they do not really possess it. They can fall from profession. They cannot fall from possession because they have a new nature if they've been born again. Where is the profession? Not the same old person. So you cannot lose a new nature.

Now, secondly, passages dealing with legalism. The leading passage here is Galatians chapter 5 in verse 4. So let's turn over to that passage. I've had a lot of fun in years past with Galatians chapter 5 verse 4. I don't preach on it too much now because it's very difficult to preach on it without making a mistake. [Laughter] You have to be really on your toes because basically what this passage teaches is that it is possible to fall from grace but not from salvation. And that the way you fall from grace is by falling into legalism.

Now, when you preach for about fifty minutes on that topic sooner or later you’re going to make a mistake and when you mean to say you cannot fall from salvation you will say you cannot fall from grace and your audience will look confused. In fact, the first time I ever preached on this subject was in Abilene, Texas, and Mary went with me. And I was a young preacher and look I’m still a young preacher [laughter] but I was a very young preacher then. And I spoke on the subject of falling from grace. And I noticed about halfway through the lesson that Mary began to get a frown on her face and that should have been a red flag to me.

And finally when the message was completed I went up to her “Well now Mary why did you frown? Did I make a mistake when I was trying to say that we can fall from grace but not from salvation?” I thought she hadn’t understood my point. I said “You can fall from grace but you cannot fall from salvation. And you fall from grace by falling into laws.” She said “Yes, I understand that but you had us falling from both grace and salvation at one point there.” So let’s take a look at this passage and I’m going to read it first as the Authorized Version has it and I’m going to read it again and make a slight change which I’m sure you would probably sense if you had an opportunity to read it over several times anyway. Galatians 5 verse 4 “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.”

Now, you know if you were to speak tot the average man in the streets and if he were a Methodist and knowledgeable in his doctrines of his church. It’s very difficult to find such a man in the twentieth century but in the nineteenth century perhaps you could have. And if you said to him “Does your church believe in falling grace?” He would say “Oh yes. Oh yes, we believe in falling grace but the Calvinists they don’t believe they can.” And then if you saw a Presbyterian and he was knowledgeable in the doctrines of his faith, and you said, “Do you believe in falling from grace? He’d say, “Oh no, oh no. We cannot fall from grace but those Methodist those Wesleyans they believe you can fall

from grace.” And this term has come to mean the fall from salvation. It doesn’t mean that at all. It means to fall from grace.

Now, grace is not salvation. Grace is a method of salvation. We are saved by grace, but grace is not salvation. Now strictly speaking this text says that you can fall from grace. Paul says “Ye are fallen from grace.” So regardless of what we think we must think that it is possible to fall from grace. But what does it mean to fall from grace?” Does it mean the fall from salvation? Well, before we answer that question I’m sure you would have realized that a man cannot be justified by the law. Yet Paul said here “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law.” Now, since we cannot be justified by the law, it is obvious Paul doesn’t mean you can be justified by the law. He really means he’s referring to those who are trying to be justified by the law, who are trying to be justified by doing the law.

Now, this is what we call in Greek a covenantal present tense and I’m going to translate the verse. “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are trying to be justified by the law; you are fallen from grace.” Now, I said that grace is a method of salvation. Turn back to chapter 1 verse 6. Chapter 1 verse 6 Paul says “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel, into the grace of Christ unto another gospel” Now, I’m going to read that in the Greek text for you. Galatians chapter 1 in verse 6. “I marvel that so quickly you are removing yourselves from the one who calls you by the grace of Christ to a different gospel.” Now, you can see that grace is a method of being called. It is a method of salvation called you by the grace of Christ. Look at verse 15, “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace” called me through his grace. Grace is a method of salvation.

Now, turn over to verse 21 of chapter 2. Paul says “I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness comes by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” And so he contrasts law and grace. A man is saved by law hypothetically. Well the Jews thought

they were and in Paul's preaching he is saved by grace. Grace is a method of salvation. So what Galatians 5:4 has to do with is methods of coming to Christ not moral conduct. He's not talking about moral conduct at all. He's talking about coming to Jesus Christ. Shall we come to Jesus Christ through law or shall we come to Jesus Christ through the principle of grace? That's the question.

Now, we can fall from grace, but we cannot fall from salvation. And the way we fall from grace is by trying to be justified by the law after we've been saved having believed in Jesus Christ as our savior then we become confused. Someone comes and upsets us and says "Ah you've believed in Christ that's step number one but have you taken step number two. What you mean is to be baptized. And then if you are baptized then you will really be saved but not until then." As a matter of fact, you will always run into people who say you not only need to be baptized but you need to repent, confess, believe, and be baptized. And if you were to repent and believe and confess you're still not saved. You need to be baptized and preferably by one of our preachers in our church.

Now, I have had experience with that. I think I told some of you this. A number of years ago a man who was an Episcopalian listened to me preach. And he came to me after and he said Lewis I've received Jesus Christ from listening to you preach. He said you know you haven't told me anything new because I believed all these things. In fact, when I was at the university, I was the leader. I was the president of our denomination's work on the campus. You haven't told me anything new but he said you have stressed the personal relationship to the Lord and through this you have come to Christ. He said I never thought that Christianity was anything but having prayer book in your hands and attending meetings and being active in the church.

Now, I've discovered something personal. For almost immediately, he began to talk about his salvation and he worked in an office in which there was a Church of Christ man. He was a very bitter Church of Christ man, a very active man. Of course, he first

the first thing he began to tell this new Christian was have you been baptized since you’ve become a believer. He said no. And over a period of a number of months, about six, he began to work on this man. And unfortunately, he did not come to me. He just allowed this to fester. And so finally, I noticed he was absent. And so I saw him. And he said well Lewis I have left your church and I’ve become a member of the Church of Christ. And so I said to him he had fallen from grace. For that is precisely what had happened. If he had genuinely believed in the Lord Jesus and had become a Christian and now had become confused and had sought to be justified by being baptized, he in that act had fallen from grace. You see Paul wanted to warn the Galatians that having believed in Jesus Christ they must not fall for the teaching of the Judaizers. It was a man needed to be circumcised also in order to be saved. Or if he was tried to be justified by keeping the law, circumcision, having believed in Christ, he’d fall from grace not from salvation. He falls from the grace method into the legalistic method. So the one way that you fall from grace is to fall into law. There’s only one way to fall from grace and that one way is to fall into law. Do you get it? I hope you don’t fall from grace. If you’re a genuine Christian you cannot fall from salvation. So fall from grace.

Now, capital C - passages dealing with fellowship. Passages dealing with fellowship. Now, I think we can list such passages as 2 Peter chapter 1, verse 10, under this category. Let’s turn again to 2 Peter but this time to the 1st chapter. 2 Peter chapter 1. In your notes, you might also put 1 Corinthians chapter 10 in verse 12 and James chapter 5 in verse 12. 2 Peter chapter 1, verse 10, listen “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.”

Now, let me read this from the Greek text for you. 2 Peter chapter 1 in verse 10. Peter writes “Wherefore rather, brethren, give diligence to make for yourself calling and election sure: for in doing these things, you shall by no means ever stumble, stumble.”

Now, it is possible for a Christian who has been saved to stumble. It’s possible for a Christian to fall in the sense of falling out of fellowship with the Lord, but it is not possible for a Christian to stumble and fall out of salvation. And so Peter in discussing the virtues of the Christian life that are to be added says that if we do these things we shall never stumble. Not lose our salvation but never stumble, lose fellowship.

Now, we could illustrate it, I think, by Peter and Judas. They were both apostles. Think of that. Judas, his title was Apostle of Jesus Christ. Think of it. Peter’s title was Apostle of Jesus Christ. Judas had the same title. As a matter of fact, Judas was probably the leader of the twelve. I suggest that to you because he was the one held the money. They elected him and they elected him to hold the money over Matthew, who was imminently qualified. He was used to handling some of the money but they picked the one who did. Judas a man of great leadership. When Mary came, broke the oil of Spikenard, very costly. Poured it over our Lord. Judas had indignation. He snorted at her. And the other accounts say the disciples did. In other words, they followed the lead of Judas. And so look what Judas is saying. So they did it too. Whatever Judas said they said. He was the leader of the twelve.

Now, Judas fell. So did Peter. Peter denied the law. Judas betrayed the law, but there is just as much difference between Judas and Peter as there is between night and day. Judas went out committed suicide, one final act of rebellion against God. That is what suicide is. He said I have betrayed the innocent blood. Think of that. Peter confessed his sins, but he did not repent. Oh the text says he repented himself but remember I’ve referred to this several times. That word is a word that means to regret not the word *metanaeo* which means “to repent.” It’s the word that means to regret. He regretted what happened because he did not like what was taking place in his heart. He did not go to our Lord and say oh Lord I have sinned against thee, forgive me. But he regretted what happened because of the blackness of darkness into which his soul was sinking. And he regretted himself and went out and committed suicide, but Peter who

lived in the eye of the Lord went out and wept miserably. And that’s the difference between a man who has a nature of a sheep and one who has the nature of a swine.

I think we could illustrate it by a trip on a ship. Mr. Host who was a missionary, and his parents were missionaries too I think to china, said that on the first journeys that he set on a boat coming back from a foreign field to England. He said while we were on our way, the cargo of the ship shifted and the ship began to lisp considerably. And he said he could still remember that he was just a little child, and they had all the difficulty in the world staying on their feet when they walked on the deck of that ship which was lipping. And he said frequently as we walked on the deck we slipped. And he said, sometimes we slipped down into the [indistinct] to our discomfort, too, and our physical damage. But he said we never fell overboard because we were kept in the boat by the sides of the boat. And so it is possible for a Christian fall in faith but he cannot fall out of the faith. It’s possible for him to stumble in his Christian life and lose fellowship but it is not possible for him to stumble and fall and lose his salvation.

Now, capital B passages dealing with discipline. Into this category, there falls passages like 1 John chapter 5, verse 16 and verse 17. Let me read it quickly. We’ve got to finish this subject tonight in one minute. [Laughter] verse 16 and verse 17. We would have finished this if you had not had so much trouble finding these passages in the Bible. [Laughter] 1 John 5:16-17. Now, John writes “If any man see his brother” notice he’s a brother. “If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death” oh I wish I knew what that sin is. That sin which is not unto death and then that sin which is unto death. Wouldn’t you like to know what that is? No, you don’t want to know because you see there is no death. There is no article in the Greek text and it doesn’t always refer to a particular thing when there is no article. It just refers to sin in general. Let me retranslate “If any man see his brother sin sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he

shall ask for information concerning this.” A different word for ask there. “All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.”

Now, if John does not make any distinction between sin unto death and sin not unto death, specifically by telling us what is sin unto death and what is not unto death, what must the distinction that he is talking about mean? If there is no -- we have a faculty member who loves the word specificity; he made it up. If there is no specificity about the sin, then how may they be distinguished? Well, the only way they may be distinguished is that one is persisted in. In other words, sin that is not unto death is sin that is not persisted sin. Sin unto death is persistent sin, any sin, any sin may be sin unto death, if it is persisted in. You see, the fact that it is persisted in is what makes sin so foolish before God in this passage. So why don’t we translate it. “If any man see his brother sin sin not persistent with is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death in a persistent way. There is, however, persistent sin that leads to death: I do not say that he shall ask for information about it”

Now, don’t get down on your knees and pray, O God what sin is my brother committing? It’s not your business, partly. “All unrighteousness is sin: and there is sin which is not unto death.” I wish I had time to talk about the context of this. I cannot do it because we just don’t have time but this passage has to do with discipline. And the sin that is unto death is persistent sin and it is not unto spiritual death but it is unto what? Physical death. Physical death.

Do you remember the Corinthians at the Lord’s table? Turn back to 1 Corinthians 11 and we’ll have to stop with this. 1 Corinthians chapter 11. Remember they were having disorders at the Lord’s table? And one of the things that accompanied their disorders was the fact that they got drunk off that Welch’s grape juice which they had [laughter] at the Lord’s table. By the way, in one of the tapes of Dr. Barnhouse, he made the comment that grape juice was not known until 85 years ago. There was no such thing as grape juice until the time Pasteur. I’d like to investigate that. He made it? He just

threw it in. He had improvised it. He said grape juice was absolutely unknown in the time of our Lord.

Now, we know, of course, they were drinking real wine because you do not get drunk off of Welch's grape juice [laughter] and they were drunk from the wine that they took at the communion table, so do not let anybody mislead you about this.

Now, he says in verse 29, "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause" because of these disorders at the Lord's table. "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you." You see they had been coming together at the Lord's table and it was not the Lord's table. They had made it just in time to eat and drink. And this had been going on over a period of time. It was persistent and so what had happened? Some of the saints were getting sick. Where's Sister Jones tonight? Oh she's in bed. I wonder if that has anything to do with the fact that she always gets tight at the Lord's Supper. [Laughter] Well, that's what he says. Perhaps they didn't use that expression. "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you." Some are sickly, weak, first stage in the discipline in the family, sickly next stage. Where's Brother Johnson? Well, a horse ran over him. Broke his leg. Can't come to the meeting, have to give him more [indistinct]. Brother Johnson's daughter was killed today, but this is sickness apparently that is physical. These other things also are possible however. Brother Johnson may be at the point of death. And then he says and [inaudible]. You remember what happened to Steven when he died, he fell asleep. Here's the word means to the Christians death. For this cause, because of disorders at the Lord's table may awake the assistance and many have died. What happened to them? They sinned, sinned unto death. They didn't lose their salvation. They lost their physical life. They were good enough for heaven because Jesus died for them but they were not good enough for the earth because they were really a blasphemy against the Christian faith and a hindrance to the work of the Lord because people would say "Ah he's a Christian running like he does?" And so God took their physical lives. You see a change

does take place when a man is saved. You come into the family of God and you are subject to his discipline. And so there are passages which are designed to warn us. We shall have to stop with B.

Let’s close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for the warnings of the word of God. We thank Thee for the fact that our salvation is sure because Christ died for us but, Lord, we pray that we shall not forget that it is a solemn responsibility to be a child of God and move from falling, plundering the Christian faith. We are making ourselves subject to divine differences.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.