



CAN A CHRISTIAN EVER BE LOST



MARK SLAY

Once Saved – Always Saved Can A Christian Ever Be Lost?

Mark Slay



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What Started Me Examining What I Was Taught About Salvation

This book is one I have longed to write for some time. There are several reasons why.

It stems back to something the Lord said to me in December 1983 when He spoke to me about my ministry for the first time. I didn't understand back then all He was endeavoring to get over to me, but some of it became indelibly clear, one thing especially... that as Isaiah 60:2 says, "Darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness *the people*."

The Lord let me know in no uncertain terms, that Isaiah was speaking about a *specific* time in human history when darkness would gain momentum, and that I would minister in that time. He said it would be the greatest period of darkness since the flood of Noah.

That being said, I have watched it unfold since December 1983 to the present. America is no exception; it has gone backwards spiritually and will continue to. Some nations are yet to experience great things from God though.

One of the greatest deceptions satan has going is the erroneous idea that holiness is not mandatory, it's an option. This is affecting the world and it's affecting believers in Christ who are being told, "You are saved, nothing you do can send you to hell." What a lie and it needs to be exposed in light of *all* the word of God, not just *part of it*.

Jesus tells us *all* God's Word, on any subject, is important. **But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'"**

Mark 4:4 NASB

There are many Scriptures that tell the full truth regarding eternal security for Christians, and most of us looked past them. One thing that got me searching along this line was the first vision I ever had shortly after I was filled with the Holy Spirit.

I was at my desk as a young man and had been praying, when for some reason I closed my eyes and just laid my head forward on my arm as I continued to pray. When I did, I had a vision.

In the vision I saw a wall of light butted up to a wall of darkness. The light was bright and safe and peaceful. The darkness was pitch black and ominous and terrifying. I was standing in the light. Suddenly I saw an arm reach out from the darkness, grab me on the forearm just above the wrist of my left arm and try to pull me into the darkness.

Suddenly in the vision, I knew I was going to be pulled into the darkness, so I saw myself take a machete or chopping blade with my right hand and cut off my left arm at the middle of my forearm. I did not get pulled into the darkness. Immediately the vision vanished.

But when it ended, I had mixed emotions. I was thrilled that I didn't get pulled into the darkness, but I was shocked to see that I could have been. I had been around folks up to that time that told me once a person is saved, they could never ever be lost.

I could further see that though an attempt would be made by the forces of darkness to bring me back into darkness, it was *up to me* to cut off anything necessary to keep that from happening... and

I did, and I have, and I will. I remembered Jesus' words in Mark's Gospel:

43 If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, 44 [where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.]

Mark 9:43-44 NASB

Jesus is not telling us to literally cut off our hands, but He is speaking so strongly against the dangers of sin and its ultimate consequences.

I remember meditating on that vision for some time, not just that day, but many days in the future. I thought, "If the enemy was attempting to pull me back into darkness...that means he could!" He would have succeeded if *I* hadn't done something about it!

You see, receiving salvation is a personal choice, a decision and act of a person's own free will. But it appeared the Lord was showing me that *staying* in the light also required the continued exercise of man's free will and personal choice. God has ordained to allow men to choose their own eternal destiny...it is completely up to them...completely.

I could see, and it startled me because I was fairly new in the Kingdom of God, the new birth, and salvation, and I had been taught by those around me that "once saved always saved" no matter what, but I could see that the same exercise of my free will to come to Christ and act in accord with His will, that it would take the continued exercise of my faith, free will, *and actions* to keep the salvation that was freely given to me.

You see, there is God's part to play, and there is our part to play. God makes an offer and man's part is to accept it by faith and act in accordance with it. Jesus said:

“Let the one who wishes *take* the water of Life without cost”

Revelation 22:17 NASB

The vision given by the Holy Spirit (visions are part of His work in the last days as recorded in Acts 2:17) helped me to understand many Scriptures that I would not have understood otherwise. It pays to listen to men, as long as what they say lines up with the full counsel of God’s Word.

After all, it was *God* who put teachers in the church, so they must be necessary, but not all teachers know a lot.

Scriptures Come To Life That I Didn't Understand

Have you ever read Scriptures that you didn't understand at first and over time God unfolded their meaning to you? I think we all have.

You see, if the people teaching us don't know anything, then we won't know anything. If they know *some* things then we'll know *some* things. That's why it's good to examine everything in light of *all* the Word of God for yourself.

After I was born again in college reading the Bible on my own, I got acquainted with a campus Christian group. They were a good source of fellowship with people who believed in the Bible; however, they also taught me that now that I was a Christian, I could never be lost. I had eternal security they said.

Well, I believed like that for a few years until that vision came and got me searching the Scriptures more closely on that subject. I was kind of like Peter who went up on the housetop to pray and had a vision from God that went *against* what his denomination had taught him.

You remember in Acts 10 that Peter had a vision where God was trying to tell him that God was going to be saving Gentiles who would believe in Christ (Acts 10:9-23). This was totally against what Peter thought and was taught! He was not supposed to fellowship with Gentiles (Acts 10:45, 11:2-18).

You see, it's not what we think God's Word says, but it's what

it *actually* says that matters. Although Peter knew part of God's will (salvation thru faith in Christ), he didn't understand *all* of God's will (God will also save Gentiles who believe and receive).

So although that group and others I had been around knew that Christ is the source of salvation, they didn't know that we have to continue in the things of Christ and that we are expected to grow and mature in Christ.

31 So Jesus was saying to those Jews *who had believed Him*, “If you *continue* in My word, then you are *truly* disciples of Mine; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

John 8:31-32 NASB

I thought those people Jesus was speaking to were *already* free...after all, they *believed in Jesus*, right? It says they did believe in Him. Well then, what's the comment Jesus made about “if you **continue** in my Word, you are true disciples”? And “you will know the truth”...if they accepted Jesus, don't they know the truth and aren't “they free”?

The new birth in Christ is not the end; it's merely the *beginning* of finding truth. There is a lot of truth to come to know in Christ, as Peter and all of us find out. That's why we must continue.

As we read the Scriptures, we see that Peter himself grew in the full knowledge of Christianity. And speaking of the great Apostle Peter, whom I dearly love, did you ever read what he had to say about “once saved always saved” teaching?

I've heard a lot of folks poke fun at Peter and try to make him out to look like a fool, saying things like he denied Jesus three times, and he tried to keep Jesus from the cross and was rebuked by Jesus for it.

Such attempts to paint Peter as a fool are not reality. Did

you ever stop to think that Peter was one of only three people who saw Jesus transfigured on the mountain? He was the only person we have any record of who walked on *top of water* besides Jesus. He healed a crippled man in Jesus' name at the gate Beautiful. He raised Tabitha from the dead...not sick, but *dead*. An Angel came into a well-guarded cell and walked Peter outside past a bunch of Roman soldiers.

Anyway, Peter says clearly in his letter that Christians who served God can possibly be lost if they're not careful about their walk with Christ.

Peter's Witness Of The Need To Walk In Holiness As A Believer

Folks that think believers could never possibly, under any condition, be lost are not considering the full counsel of God's Word. I bet they're like most of us who just *assumed* things are a certain way or were *taught* things are a certain way.

No one who honestly and carefully examines 2Peter chapter 2 could ever come away with the idea that once a person comes to Christ, he could *never* under any circumstances be lost.

We're going to go over it in part here, but no one, I repeat *no one*, who examines this chapter with an honest heart could ever come away believing that Peter believed in "once saved always saved". One would have to have stubborn pre-conceived notions to not accept what Peter is saying to us in this section of Scripture or else they're afraid of what it *could* be saying and brush it out of their mind because of fear of what it means. Neither excuse is any excuse at all to reject what Peter is clearly saying.

Peter begins Chapter 2 talking about false prophets and false teachers rising "among the believers" ("among you" v.1). He speaks in verses 2 and 3 about people following "their sensuality... and greed".

And then Peter goes into a lengthy discourse about some startling facts about God's judgment...not God's love, but His judgment is explained.

We certainly know of God's exceeding love for mankind in sending Jesus to earth to pay a price for us. We exult in that mind

boggling expression of His concern for us. We know that God is love (I John 4:8).

But **the same** Bible that tells us God is love, also tells us that God judges mankind according to His standards and ways. Did people forget that this same Bible tells us that God is both *kind* **and** *severe* (Romans 11:22). He is both, He's not just one of them, He's both. And He can be both without being in contradiction of His character at all. We'll come back to Romans 11:22 in a bit, but let's stay on 2 Peter 2 for now.

Peter, after talking about false teachers coming among the people (believers), begins discussing God's judgment.

He spoke of angels being cast into pits of darkness (v.4).

He spoke of God judging the entire earth and sparing only Noah and his family (v.5).

He spoke of Sodom and Gomorrah being an "example of what will happen to those *who would live ungodly thereafter*" (v.6).

Peter spoke of how God can rescue the Godly from temptation and "keep the *unrighteous* under punishment for the day of judgment" (v.9).

And especially those "who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desire" (v.10).

Peter goes on to say some shocking and sobering truths.

13 suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you, 14 having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in

greed, accursed children; 15 *forsaking the right way*, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of *unrighteousness*; 16 but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, for a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the *madness of the prophet*. 17 *These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved*. 18 For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by *fleshly desires*, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, 19 promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved. 20 For if, *after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*, they are *again entangled in them and are overcome*, the last state has become worse for them than the first. 21 For it would be better for them not to *have known the way of righteousness*, than *having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them*. 22 It has happened to them according to the true proverb, “A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT,” and, “A sow, after washing, *returns to wallowing in the mire*.”

2 Peter 2:13-22 NASB

Notice in verse 15 it says they have “forsaken the right way”. You can’t forsake the right way if you’ve never been on it.

In verse 15 it says Balaam, who was a prophet of God (that heard from heaven and Jesus appeared to on his way to Balak) “loved the wages of unrighteousness”.

In verse 17, speaking of Balaam and all unrighteous living people, Peter says, “These (Balaam and others) are springs and

mists driven by a storm, *for whom the black darkness has been reserved.*” Peter just got through saying that Balaam did not make Heaven. This would make sense though. Joshua and the children of Israel put Balaam to death when they were entering the promised land (Joshua 13:22). Well, they wouldn’t have executed a good prophet of God would they? No.

Balaam, although he heard from Heaven, had visions, had the pre-incarnate Christ Jesus appear to him on his way to Balak, Balaam was eternally lost and is now in hell as you read this. Although one could say he believed in the true God (and he did), he was unrighteous in his daily living and disqualified himself from the reward of Heaven God had planned for him.

Peter says in verse 20 “that if **after** they have escaped” the world by “the knowledge of Jesus” and again are entangled in the habits of the world and “are overcome”, their last state is now worse.

A key phrase here to recognize before we go on is “and are overcome”. You see, some people get away from God (backslide) and then get back; and some get away from God and never get back to God...they were ultimately overcome. Thank God for those like the prodigal son who “come to their senses” and repent and turn back to God. But sad to say, Peter tells us there are those that will go on living unrighteously and *never* get back to God. Verses 17 & 21 tell us their outcome.

Notice clearly now that Peter is speaking specifically about those that came out of the world thru the knowledge of Jesus, but are again entangled in them (this could imply that it wasn’t *an intentional* departure at first), and that they would have been better off never having come to know the truth about Jesus (v.21).

Can you believe that Peter is telling us that those who go on or go back to living unrighteously after they receive Jesus, will be worse off than those who never accepted it to begin with! Well you better believe it, because that’s exactly what he said.

Notice verse 22, “a sow *after washing* **returns** to wallowing in the mire”.

Notice they were washed, cleansed. Notice also they returned to the mire of wrong living. And don't forget, Peter told us that these are “stains and blemishes” (v.13) “springs without water” for whom the black darkness has been reserved (v.17).

But do you realize they never **had** to live un-righteously... they chose to. Lot is mentioned in verse 7, and we are told that God knows how to rescue the ungodly from temptation (v.9). Notice God can keep you *out of sin*, not merely forgive you for failing in it. He expects the Godly to change their behavior as they grow in Christ. This won't happen totally over night, but we can and should grow out of our foolish or harmful ways.

Jude's Witness Regarding The Necessity Of A Holy Walk

Jude's letter, written *to believers* by the way – not sinners (Jude v.1), is another extremely clear warning against turning “the grace of our God into licentiousness (loose behavior or living)”.

For certain persons have crept in (to Christian churches, gatherings, or pulpits) unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Jude 4 NASB

Before going any further I must make something very, very clear for you to get the full impact of what's being said. It is a very overlooked truth written in the Scripture.

It is this: For one to deny the Lord Jesus, it **does not**, I repeat **does not**, have to be done by verbally saying, “I reject Jesus.” It can be done *without those words ever being spoken*.

This is a principle of Scripture that is almost never taught, but it is very valid. Let me show you some verses that tell us how denying God is done.

They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.

Titus 1:16 NASB

Notice their profession of words out of their mouth is acceptance of God, but God says their deeds (behavior, actions, attitudes) are making another profession...a profession loud and clear: that you don't believe in God the way He says to. God wants Godly desires, actions, and behavior. So desires and behaviors are talking louder than their mouth. This is a very significant verse.

Why do you call Me, “Lord, Lord,” and do not do what I say?

Luke 6:46 NASB

Now back to Jude's letter to the believers. Don't forget that. It's written to people *who are already believers in Christ*.

So Jude continues after speaking about those who “sneak in” and teach by word or *example* that the grace of God extends to anything you might do as a believer.

Now I desire to remind you (believers), though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe.

Jude 5 NASB

So you see that these folks were expected to grow in their walk with the Lord. God proved Himself, saved them out of Egypt and Pharaoh's bondage (a type of satan's bondage), but because they wouldn't continue with Him by believing what He said, He gave them over to the error of their own way – which is always destruction.

Then Jude follows up with about the same examples that Peter gave of angels or people who return to walk in unholiness. Angels are given as an example of those who lived in the spirit world and saw many things we don't see, and yet still chose sin and were sentenced to eternal destruction for not walking in holiness (v.6). Think about that...angels who could see so much, were eternally

condemned because they wouldn't maintain holiness.

And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day,

Jude 6 NASB

Then Jude writes to believers to remind them of what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah. **Why do that Jude, these readers are already believers and they can't be lost, right?**

Why remind the believers that the Lord subsequently destroyed the disobedient and unholy, Jude? What are you thinking, Jude? They can't be lost. Jude must have had a reason.

11 Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. 12 These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; 13 wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.

Jude 11-13 NASB

Notice Cain, Abel's brother, did not make Heaven. Whenever you see in Scripture the words "woe to them!", it is a sign of eternal damnation...being lost.

Balaam was a prophet of God, but he's mentioned in the "woe to them".

Notice Korah (Numbers 16) is mentioned also, who rose up

against Moses and tried to rebel against him and become a leader of those that wouldn't listen to Moses. He is clearly stated as one who "perished". The word "perished" is a very strong word. Not "died", *but perished*. Remember Korah was one of the believers in God at that time. He was following Moses, he was a member of Israel, he saw the power of the Holy Spirit manifested first hand! *He claimed to be following God in his rebellion against Moses* (Numbers 16:1-3). This cannot be over emphasized. Jude verse 12 tells us that these types of men are "hidden reefs" (of destruction) in your Christian love gatherings...so they are in church, right?

They (Korah and his group) assembled together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You have gone far enough, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is in their midst; so why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?"

Numbers 16:3 NASB

Jude verse 12 says they are "without fruit", and Jesus said in Matthew 7 we would know them by their fruit. Also notice this extremely important yet very overlooked statement in verse 12. Jude says they are "doubly dead" (NASB).

A simple study of what other translations and the original Greek read on this will tell you exactly what Jude is saying. Notice the following translations:

- "twice dead" – King James Version
- "twice dead" – New English Translation
- "twice dead" – Holman Christian Standard Bible
- "twice dead" – Young's Literal Translation
- "twice (doubly) dead" – Amplified
- "having died twice" - Jay P. Green Literal
- "twice dying" – Literal Greek

How do these people, who are active in Christian circles

and functions, associating with believers, involved in their activities “die twice”? Paul said in Ephesians 2:1, 5 that we were dead in our trespasses and sins, but we believers are made alive in Christ. *But* when a Christian does not walk in the commands of God, He must repent and come back to walking with God. If he refuses to, he can eventually be given over to the error of his choices, and die spiritually again. This does not happen to baby or young Christians that are trying, but only to those who simply refuse to change and grow.

We’ll discuss this more when we get to Hebrews, but just know Jude said some believers are “dead twice”. In verse 13, Jude makes it imminently clear that these people he mentioned in verse 11-13, Korah, Cain, and Balaam included, are going forever into the black darkness.

...for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.

Jude 13 NASB

Was Korah a believer at one time? Was Cain? Cain had direct conversations with God. Was Balaam? He prophesied for the Lord and the Lord even *appeared to him* and spoke to him. Jude uses these Old Testament examples, comparing them to those “hidden reefs” in the believers’ gathering of Jude’s day, and makes it clear that they all will be eternally lost because of their behavior that would not be repented of.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

I John 1:9 NASB

This cannot be a casual rehearsal of words of repentance, but a determined heart-felt commitment to *amend* our ways.

Hebrews' Witness

There is no question for me that Paul wrote the book of Hebrews. In fact, I know he did, but how I know isn't important here. Let's look at the book of Hebrews in regard to can a Christian, once born again, ever wind up in hell because of a failure to keep believing or a failure to live justly and holy.

As with all proper Bible interpreting, it helps to know who the writer is sending the message to. Their message very often extends beyond the intended recipients, but it certainly for sure includes the one(s) he's writing to.

Charles Ryrie, Th.D., Ph.D. points out in his *Ryrie Study Bible*, that the readers were Hebrews who were in danger of abandoning their faith in Christ and reverting to Judaism because of persecution.

Dr. Ryrie is absolutely correct. That background helps us understand fully what the author of Hebrews (Paul) meant by some comments. He's writing to *believers in Christ*.

Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.

Hebrews 3:12 NASB

Startling thing to write to believers, if once they were saved they could *never* be lost...“in any one of **you** an **evil unbelieving heart**”. Evil? Unbelieving heart?

How are you going to refute the facts of that statement?

You're not. It stands as Paul said it. But look at the next part.

For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast (tight) the beginning of our assurance firm until the end...

Hebrews 3:14 NASB

Can I ask you a question? If once a person is saved they could never, under any conditions be lost, why would Paul put an "if" in that statement? Because you couldn't be lost anyway if you're a "brethren", right? No, that's wrong.

If we could never be lost after receiving Christ, then Paul's exhortation to the Jewish Christian readers would be a lie. Paul says we have become partakers of Christ only if we hold tight to Him until the end of our life...so that means we might not...it's up to us entirely whether we continue in the truth, otherwise a believer can fall away from the living God and ultimately be lost. He doesn't have to, but it's obviously possible.

But Paul's not through. Look at a previous verse.

...but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house— whose house we are, if we hold fast (tight) our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.

Hebrews 3:6 NASB

Why put an "if" in there Paul, if once you're a believer, you could never be lost? You better re-think your position. You better re-evaluate what you've been taught about "eternal security".

So we can see thus far that Peter & Jude say a believer can be lost for living unrighteously as some in their day did, and between them they quoted Cain, Korah, & Balaam as examples of previous believers in God that were lost because of their unrighteous behavior, fruits or deeds.

Now we see Paul says one could fail to keep believing all of God's Word as a New Testament believer and wind up lost because of it. So it *is* possible.

Paul's not done.

4 For in the case of those *who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame. 7 For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; 8 but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned. 9 But, *beloved*, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and *things that accompany salvation*, though we are speaking in this way.*

Hebrews 6:4-9 NASB

Paul says that there exists some who:

- were enlightened
- tasted of the Heavenly Gift
- have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit
- tasted of the Word of God
- tasted of the power of the Holy Spirit

Then Paul says:

- they fell away and
- it is impossible to renew them again to repentance
- they crucify (to themselves) the Son of God
- they have put Him to open shame

You see, there's a difference between someone making a mistake, getting out of fellowship with God, and then *coming back to Him*, from those who get away from Him and never make it back.

Some get into error and recover themselves.

Some get into error and never come back to the Lord with full, utter, or complete repentance. They never get back.

In the case of those who got away from God and don't come back and amend their ways, they can be lost, and in those cases, it is impossible for them to ever be "born again" again.

In other words, there do exist cases, especially concerning mature and experienced believers, that wander from God and go off into error, and as Peter said "are overcome". In these cases they cannot be "born again" again, they are as Jude said "twice dead".

In Hebrews 6:7-8 again, Paul uses an example of ground producing the right fruit and ground producing the wrong fruit. Paul says that if the ground ultimately produces "thorns and thistles" it is eventually burned. Sad, but very, very, very, true.

But Paul's not done yet in addressing these pressured Christian believers.

26 For if we go on *sinning willfully after* receiving the knowledge of the truth, there *no longer* remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES. 28 Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant *by which he was*

sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know Him who said, ‘VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY.’ And again, ‘THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE.’ 31 It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Hebrews 10:26-31 NASB

Look what Paul tells these Christians. How silly of Paul to even write these things to believers in Christ, I mean, why waste your breath Paul? What are you thinking, Paul? They could never be lost; they’ve been born again and now are “under grace”. Oh brother, help me Jesus.

I’m sorry, but these believers, and even preachers that live worldly just like the world, and say it doesn’t matter, say “grace has got you covered” are gravely mistaken.

Paul tells them:

- if we go on sinning willfully
- after receiving the knowledge of the truth
- they trample the Son of God under foot
- regard unclean the blood of the covenant by which *he was sanctified*
- *insulted* the Holy Spirit
- vengeance will be brought on *these believers* by God
- it’s terrifying

Notice verse 30 says “the Lord will judge His people”, not *the world*, but His *own* people, as the previous verses make astonishingly clear. These people Paul is speaking of already had *received* the knowledge of the truth and **were sanctified by Christ’s blood**.

So sad for those believers that don’t really believe...not the way Jesus expects you to.

Real believers believe in living right.

3 If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, 4 he is conceited and understands nothing;

I Timothy 6:3-4 NASB

14 As *obedient* children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, *be holy yourselves also in all your behavior*; 16 because it is written, “YOU SHALL (must) BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.”

I Peter 1:14-16 NASB

You see, what we did in our ignorance God will forgive, but when we learn better we're expected to **do** better.

You're probably feeling a bit beat up about this difficult subject to hear, but don't be. God loves His people who are honest and sincere and don't want any part of worldliness, but also gives grace to overcome sin instead of sin continually overcoming you.

For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Romans 6:14 NASB

Many misread that Scripture. It's not grace to be forgiven of sin (though that is true also) but it's grace to *overcome sin*. Look at the previous two verses to that comment made by Paul in Romans 6:14.

12 Therefore (you) do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, 13 and (you) do not go on presenting the members of your

body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

Romans 6:12-13 NASB

You see, it's grace to defeat sin *before it's accomplished*, not after *it's engaged in*. Are you there, or did you put the book down already?

Look, I know that even as believers we are going to make mistakes...I have myself as a Christian...but I never *wanted* to. I do all I can **not** to...and I don't make excuses to continue in sin saying things like "it's okay, we're under grace". It's not okay.

New believers will make a bunch of mistakes...the Kingdom of God, holiness, turning from habits and worldliness...it's all new to them. So God is patient...but He or His Word is not to be ignored or trifled with.

A Look At More “Ifs”

We’ve already looked at some “ifs” in regard to salvation of believers. Let’s look at them again along with others and go further.

31 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

John 8:31-32 NASB

but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house— whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.

Hebrews 3:6 NASB

For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end,

Hebrews 3:14 NASB

Why the “if” Jesus? Why the “if” Paul? We could never be lost. Yes we can. Nothing is the matter with Jesus or Paul, you better re-think your position in light of *their* words.

Stop reading the Word how you think it *should have been* written, and start reading it how it is written.

Look at what Paul says to the church at Corinth...a Spirit-filled, full-Gospel, tongue-talking, miracle-believing group:

1 Now I make known to you, *brethren*, the gospel

which I preached to you, *which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast (tight) the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.*

I Corinthians 15:1-2 NASB

Uh oh...by which you are saved *if* you hold tight, unless you believed *in vain*... Gulp!

Come on Pastor Mark, stop it. No you stop it. I didn't write these verses, I'm just pointing them out to you since no one else did.

How about what Paul wrote to the Christians in Colossians? Will you get mad at me for that one too?

22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach— 23 *if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.*

Colossians 1:22-23 NASB

How are you going to explain away that verse? You're not.

The Scriptures undeniably tell us that our salvation, our new birth, will only do us good if we continue to walk *and grow* in our walk with Jesus.

Holiness is not an option. Our faith and maturity in Christ must reach its intended end.

Did you ever look at Romans 11:20-23 in light of this? Paul speaking of the Jewish Nation says this:

20 Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; 21 for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either. 22 Behold then the *kindness and severity* of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, *if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.* 23 And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

Romans 11:20-23 NASB

“If you continue”...there it is again, and he's not speaking of a mere verbal profession of Christ as your Lord. We've already seen Paul's word to Titus:

They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.

Titus 1:16 NASB

I am always saddened by those excessive “grace” teachings that lead believers to think that they need not come out from the world and be separate.

14 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? 16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, “I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. 17 Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,”

says the Lord. “AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you. 18 And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,” Says the Lord Almighty.

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 NASB

The Bible is not talking about *segregation* here (I Corinthians 5:10) but *separation*. We’re in the world, but by no means are we to think, believe, live or desire like the world.

Therefore, having these promises, *beloved*, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

2 Corinthians 7:1 NASB

Did you notice there’s a part we play mentioned in that verse above? I thought Jesus cleansed us Pastor Mark! He does, but you can clearly see that after His initial entry in our life, **we also** have a part to play. God has His part, we have our part. God provides grace, but **we** must cooperate with that grace in right conduct and desires. It’s grace to change us, not just grace to forgive us.

Has anybody ever preached on I Corinthians 5 to you? Of course not, then they’d have to say something “negative” and that thins out the crowd. They wouldn’t want to risk offending you by preaching right Godly living...it might cost them your tithes, and they don’t want to lose that, even if it means compromising the truth.

It’s the Pastor’s job to give his members the full truth, not just one side of the Gospel.

God is love. We believe that. He has totally demonstrated His love for us repeatedly. But do you know that verse we quoted in Romans 11:22 ?

Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God’s kindness,

if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.

Romans 11:22 NASB

Did you notice that God is **both** kind *and* severe? It says He is. I'll say it again: It says He is.

I John 4:8 says, "God is love". But that's not the only verse in the Bible on the subject. Romans 11:22 says He is both kind and severe. One is not *more true* about Him than the other. God is kind. But He is also severe if He is trifled with over a long period of time. He is both.

And those truths about God's character are not inconsistent. He can be (and is) both.

Any verses you may find that you think contradict the ones we've already looked at cannot be true contradictions. They only appear that way. For these verses are undeniably true.

One more "if" Scripture to help you.

12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Romans 8:12-13 NASB

Again, God has His part, but we have our part. I get a bit concerned for those ministers who always misquote Romans 8:1. Oh, they quote it as Paul wrote it, but they never quote it in full context of the entire 8th chapter.

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:1 NASB

Romans 8:1 is only valid if you keep reading to the 12th and 13th verses stated above. That is, there is no condemnation for those “putting to death the deeds of the body” and who won’t “live according to the flesh”...for those folks “who are living according to the flesh” Paul says are going to die. He’s not speaking of mere *physical death*, because all of them...*all* of them...were going to die physically...and did. Not one of Paul’s Roman readers is still alive *physically*. (I’m pretty sure Paul knew that fact.) No, he’s speaking of *dying spiritually*.

Even though these were Roman Christians he was writing to, he told them if they continued to live according to the flesh, they would eventually die. If we do sin, as believers, we cannot excuse it, we must confess it is wrong and begin to amend our ways. God’s grace to overcome sin is just as real as His grace to forgive it for the sincere.

The Witness Of James

Most people who have studied the book of James are familiar with his teaching on works vs. faith.

Most folks can recite James' teaching that real faith will always be exhibited in real fruit...the fruit of righteous and holy living.

They often quote these well-known and very true verses:

17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself 18 But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." 19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. 20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? 22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God. 24 You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.

James 2:17-24 NASB

James is *not at all* contradicting Paul's teaching on salvation

by faith alone. The answer lies in this: James is simply saying that genuine faith is always going to be demonstrated in genuine works of holiness and righteousness...that's the answer.

This is what Jesus meant by “you’ll know them by their fruits” and “by your deeds” you’ll be judged...because all genuine faith coming from a pure heart will always result in good fruit.

So most believers know those verses well, and they’re correct.

But I’ve never heard even one sermon on James 5:19-20, I mean in regards to “eternal security”.

19 My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, 20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

James 5:19-20 NASB

Did you notice a *brother* can stray, and can be turned back to God. And the one who aids him in turning back to God will save a *sinner's soul* from death. Not his body from death, but his soul. This is eternal death.

Notice this is a *brother*. But notice James says if that brother strays, he’s now referred to by James as a sinner, and his soul is in jeopardy of eternal separation from God.

Look at that verse real closely. A “brother” became a “sinner” and was in jeopardy of being lost if he hadn’t listened to what God was trying to get him to see.

And notice this...God was talking to him through a fellow believer. God help these poor folks who say “if God wants to speak to me, I’m saved and He can show me directly.” He was showing

you...through another Christian.

Korah thought the same thing (Numbers 16:1-2), but God **was** showing Korah...**through** Moses. Don't be an island.

The Apostle John also corroborates James' testimony. Remember these men were writing by the unction and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The entire Bible was written by the Holy Spirit.

Before we look at John's teaching, let me share an experience I had one day...Monday January 12, 1987.

I was lying in bed on my right side facing that direction as I had just awakened. I was lying there with my eyes closed but fully awake.

Suddenly out in front of me a cloud formed. It was like a pillar of cloud with billows overflowing billows similar to smoke. There seemed to be a light in it.

Suddenly I heard the audible loud voice of the Lord speak. To me, even though I was the only one in the room, it seemed everyone would have heard it. The voice said loud and clear "see what the Holy Spirit has to say about this subject" and He gave me the subject.

I jumped out of bed and grabbed my concordance and Bible and began to study what He had just asked me to study. But here's a very important fact.

In the vision, (I was seeing a vision in the spirit realm and my eyes were closed and I was fully awake) the voice of the Lord said, "See what the Holy Spirit has to say..."

I was seeing a pillar of cloud similar to what Moses and the children of Israel saw and I heard His audible voice speak to me. But He *did not* say "see what Paul has to say" or "see what James

has to say”. He said loud and clear, “See what the *Holy Spirit* has to say.”

So you see, I just get amused at these poor souls that say “man” wrote the Bible. How sad...if they only knew. Man may have recorded it, but the Holy Spirit was giving it. Bless their hearts.

20 But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

2 Peter 1:20-21 NASB

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

Timothy 3:16 NASB

I said all that to you to show you that the Scriptures are not merely man’s ideas, but they are God’s heart and mind given for man to understand.

So the Apostle John also makes a similar statement as the Apostle James regarding the possibility of spiritual (or eternal) death for believers.

16 If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this. 17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death.

1 John 5:16-17 NASB

Let me start by repeating an important theme. God is very

loving and kind, but *He is also* severe (Romans 11:22). Notice these verses in 1 John *follow* the verses that tell us that God will give us *everything* we ask for within the framework of His will.

14 This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

I John 5:14-15 NASB

But then John, led by the Holy Spirit, tells us that this same *kind and gracious* God is also no one to trifle with and that sin is extremely dangerous for the believer too, not just the sinner.

Those verses 16 and 17 are speaking of *eternal* death, not merely *physical* death.

There is a “sin” leading to death (the Greek reads sin, not a sin). And in the cases of believers who have gone back completely on the Lord (like Paul stated by the Holy Spirit in Hebrews 6 and 10), they will be lost forever and can never be “born again” again. Hence John states, “I do not say he should make request for this” (or in these cases) because they cannot ever be saved again, they are “twice dead” as Jude said.

And then have fallen away (permanently), it is impossible (in those cases) to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.

Hebrews 6:6 NASB

I like this translation regarding the person who has followed sin leading to eternal death:

“...I am not saying he should pray about that.

1 John 5:16 HCSB

But don't just look at the bad side of that 16th & 17th verses, look at the *good side* too. God is telling us in no uncertain terms that those who stray from God (and haven't sinned to the place of never getting back) that **we** can ask God and He will breathe life into those straying from truth and honor **our** prayers that seek to bring them back to repentance. Think about that marvelous promise. I have used it successfully several times in the past *and it works*. Just like every other promise of God, *it can be trusted*.

However, the Holy Spirit through John is also showing us that a believer going astray into sin is on risky territory. As I said previously, I've seen some get back to God and I've seen some who *never* got back to God. Both outcomes are equally possible if care and caution are not exercised.

Can God ever tell us to stop praying regarding a situation or a person? Absolutely yes.

I remember back in the 1980's, I got a call in my office from someone I knew that was delivering their baby prematurely.

I didn't know what to tell them for sure, but down in my spirit I just knew I should tell them to make vows to God and commit to go back to church (they hadn't been going).

I hung up the phone after telling them that and put my head down on my desk and said, "Lord, I don't know what to tell them, or how to help them. What should I tell them?" Suddenly I heard the soft voice of the Holy Spirit clearly say within me, "Psalms". I said, "Okay Lord, Psalms, but there's a lot of Psalms". Then I heard that soft voice in my spirit say "50".

I opened my Bible to Psalm 50, and my eyes fell on verses 14 & 15:

**14 "Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving and
pay your *vows* to the Most High; 15 Call upon Me**

in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me.”

Psalm 50:14-15 NASB

I had just got my answer for them. I hurriedly called them back and told them the Lord has spoken to me, and what I told you in our previous conversation was correct...make vows to God and keep them and He'll help you!

I hung up the phone thinking they would accept what the Lord was saying to them...but they didn't. I leaned back in my chair speaking in other tongues as the Holy Spirit was giving me the utterance and suddenly that loud audible voice of the Lord *spoke out loud*. If others had been there, I was sure they would have heard it also.

The Lord said out loud something that shocked me. At that time I was still relatively new to the baptism of the Holy Spirit and still had much to learn about God's dealings with man.

That voice said, “Stop praying, the baby will die.”

I was so amazed and sad and shocked all at the same time.

You see, it **is** God's desire and will to answer all our prayers, yet the reality is that we must respond to God in both faith (believing) and obedience. The Bible has a lot to say about obedience for believers and it would pay you well to study that subject.

Without faith (believing God), we cannot please Him (Hebrews 11:6). But did you know without commitment we cannot please Him either? If you don't know it you better learn it so you're not in delusion years from now.

So you see, God *wanted* to answer their request, and He even gave me their answer, yet they had no intentions of doing anything about it and God knew it.

I'm sure He moved in such a spectacular way speaking audibly because if He hadn't and the baby died, it would have confused me. You see He was teaching me so I could one day accurately teach you.

So there will be cases, even in the area of those who have *permanently* gone back out into sin, where God will tell you that it won't do any good to pray for that one. But there will be *many* that your prayers will work for...many.

The Witness Of Jesus

Jesus also addressed the subject of believers who live unjustly, unholy, or unrighteously.

I warn you ahead of time...your head is going to “freak out” (if that’s even a word).

How about Matthew 7:13-23? Keep in mind these verses are in the same chapter as “ask, and it will be given to you, seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For *everyone* who asks receives...” Matthew 7:7-8

So you see God is very loving, very kind, and very willing to help us. But as you’ll see once again this same chapter of Matthew clearly tells us that He is severe too.

Why is that so hard for folks to grasp? It is not inconsistent with love. For love is not only kind, but it is also just and righteous. It can be, *and is*, both. God can be both *severe and kind* without taking away from the fact that He is love.

That being said, listen to Jesus about the outcome for some believers.

13 “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. 14 For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. 15 “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16

You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? 17 So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 So then, you will know them by their fruits. 21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ 23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’

Matthew 7:13-23 NASB

Notice it’s not merely the exercise of the *gifts and power* of the Holy Spirit that pleases God...it’s the **fruits** *also*. In fact, though both the power and the fruits in demonstration are important to God, He is **more** concerned with the **fruits**.

It’s important you don’t misunderstand or get out of balance what I’m saying. Jesus wants **both** the *gifts and the fruits* in our lives, it’s just that the fruits are most important. Not the only thing He’d like, but the most important thing He likes.

For those who believe that believers could never be lost, please explain verses 21-23.

- “Did we not prophesy *in Your name*” – that’s a believer operating by the power and gifts of the Spirit
- “And *in Your name* cast out demons” – that’s a believer exercising the authority in Christ’s name
- “And *in Your name* perform many miracles” – that’s a believer

Do you know anybody that can do these things apart from the anointing and power of the Holy Spirit? No you don't, and I don't either. Also notice it says they were not only doing these by the anointing, but were doing them **in His name**. So you see, these are believers, filled with the Holy Spirit and operating in the gifts of the Spirit and Jesus' name. But their outcome is stated in verse 24; "Depart from Me, *you who practice lawlessness.*"

So you have to agree, this is not a follower of some false religion, or they wouldn't be saying "in your name Jesus we did these".

You see, these believers only believed in faith's confession and the operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but they did not believe in being honest and just and giving and holy and upright. They didn't think the fruits of a good life were important, only the gifts.

They never realized that the "gifts and calling of God are irrevocable" (Romans 11:29). They never realized that God will call and gift believers, and that is *His gift to them*. But the development of the fruits are *their gift to Him*.

Once God has determined your gifts, He will anoint you... even if you use them unrighteously.

Remember when King Saul was backslidden, *trying to murder David*? I Samuel 19:23-24 tells us that the Holy Spirit came upon murderous and unjust King Saul.

23 He (Saul) proceeded there to Naioth in Ramah; and the Spirit of God came upon him also, so that he went along prophesying continually until he came to Naioth in Ramah. 24 He also stripped off his clothes, and he too prophesied before Samuel and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Therefore they say, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

I Samuel 19:23-24 NASB

It's not the *gifts* of the Spirit alone that make us pleasing to God, but the *fruits* also.

He wants us to be humble, caring, compassionate, honest, submitted, and loving believers...not just anointed ones. God will give you whatever anointing is needed for you to occupy the place He's called you to, but He fully expects you to live right (in every dimension of what "right" means to Him).

Some wonder why Jesus would say to a *believer*, "I never knew you." The answer lies in two things.

First, God knows those who will ultimately end up finally saved and in that respect, He never knew them as those who would ultimately and finally stay saved.

Second, these unrighteous believers didn't know God places greater importance on the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) than He does the gifts of the Spirit (I Corinthians 12:8-10). And they did not know love (God), therefore God did not know them.

By the way, before we finish with Jesus' testimony, did you ever notice a verse in Galatians chapter 5 that Paul wrote in connection with living in the flesh vs. living in the fruits of the Spirit?

19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things *will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Galatians 5:19-21 NASB

Did you notice Paul by the Holy Spirit is writing to Spirit-filled, tongue-talking, miracle-believing believers?

What is Paul thinking? These people are saved eternally by grace, they've received Jesus and the sacrifice of His blood. Also, they received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Why in the world *would he forewarn them as he had forewarned **them** in the past* that those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God?

That's a funny thing to say to those who couldn't possibly be lost, don't you agree? But Paul said "I forewarn *you*" speaking to the whole church at Galatia.

I remember one day attending a wedding and a wealthy Baptist business man found out I was a preacher and was "feeling me out" to see what I believed at my church.

He said finally, "Do you believe in eternal security?" I replied, "Yes, I believe in eternal security." He relaxed a bit and smiled some, but then I followed up with saying, "Yes, I believe in eternal security. I believe a person can be saved as long as he wants to be." His smile dissipated quickly.

Really that's the truth; we can all be as secure as we are determined to be, by walking in *all* of God's word every single day.

In Luke's Gospel, he records this parable spoken by Jesus.

42 And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time? 43 Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. 44 Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 45 But if that slave says in his heart, 'My master will be a long time in coming,' and begins to *beat the slaves*, both men and women, and to eat and drink and *get drunk*; 46 the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect *him* and at an hour he does not know, and

will cut him in pieces, and *assign him a place with the unbelievers.*

Luke 12:42-46 NASB

Notice in the parable that the person is a bonafide servant of the Master (v.45) and is among fellow slaves. Notice also that his Master comes for him suddenly and unexpectedly and “*cuts him in pieces*” and “*assigns him a place with the unbelievers*”. That means he’s talking to a *believer*.

Although he was a servant of the Master, he lived unrighteously and would not repent, and was sadly then assigned a place with the unbelievers. That means he wasn’t an unbeliever originally, but he received the same reward of an unbeliever *because of how he lived*. Got it? Do you see it?

It’s the facts of Scripture. It’s how God’s Kingdom really operates, not how the excessive grace teachers present it. You better live right as a Christian, your future depends on it. These thoughts will help you understand the statement Jesus made in Matthew 22:8-14.

8 Then he said to his slaves, “The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. 9 Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast.” 10 Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with guests. 11 But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes, 12 and he said to him “Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?” And the man was speechless. 13 then the king said to the servants, “Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” 14 For

many are called, but few are chosen.

Matthew 22:8-14 NASB

The wedding hall was full of evil and good people that responded to God's invitation. But those not properly clothed with righteous obedience to the Word (as well as with Christ Himself) will be cast out of the wedding hall. For many are called and born again, but few will be chosen, because they don't value living and doing right. Somebody said, "But Pastor Mark, Jesus is our clothing and our righteousness". That is true, but that is **not all the Bible has to say about our clothing.**

It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Revelation 19:8 NASB

Are you willing to face the reality of another section of Scripture where Jesus again is instructing believers? He's not speaking to the world in this section; He's clearly addressing *His disciples*.

1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. 2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. 3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. 5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. 6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If ye abide in

me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. 8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. 9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. 10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. 11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

John 15:1-11 KJV

Verse 3 clearly tells us He was speaking *to believers*. Remember, it is *believers that obey* that make it to Heaven.

In that section of Scripture Jesus is talking not merely of *coming* to Him, but *abiding* in Him. The Greek word translated “abide” in the King James Version and the NASB version is the word “menō” and it is undebateably translated “to abide” or “to remain”.

The word has the thought of “staying in” or “remaining in”. In this 15th chapter, the words translated “abide” in v.4-7 and 10; “continue” in v.9; and “remain” in v.11 & 16 in the KJV are from this same Greek word.

The word is translated “remain in” very consistently in many of your translations. We’ll look at a few.

“v.4 remain in me, and I in you” - Young’s Literal

“v.4 remain in me, and I in you” – Jay P. Green’s Literal

“v.4 remain in me, and I in you” – HCSB

“v.4 remain united to me, and I will remain united to you” – TCNT

“v.4 remain in me, and I will remain in you” – NET

I like those literal translations because they give us a very clear picture of how salvation works. We know it comes by our

decision of faith, a decision *to believe*.

All the Scriptures we've covered make it clear that the believer *must continue* to believe. Christ will not forsake us, but we could sure forsake Him. Some for a period, some forever.

Did you notice verse 6 *carefully*?

If a man abide *not* in me, *he* is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and *they* are burned.

John 15:6 KJV

If anyone does not abide in me, *he* is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and *they* are burned.

John 15:6 NASB

If any one may not remain in me, *he* was cast forth without as the branch, and was withered, and they gather them, and cast to fire, and *they* are burned;

John 15:6 YLT

If anyone does not remain in Me, *he* is thrown aside like a branch and he withers. They gather them, throw them into the fire, and *they* are burned.

John 15:6 HCSB

I've actually heard dear people try to "explain away" what Jesus *clearly said*. Their "eternal security no matter what" so-called explanations are a bit amusing.

Some have said in error that Jesus is speaking of our works being burned up. But notice Jesus *didn't* say *their fruit* would be burned up, it clearly...**very clearly**...says *the branch itself* is burned up. "*He* is thrown away (NASB)", "*he* was cast forth (KJV, YLT)" and "*they*" are burned.

Jesus makes a clear distinction between the branch and its bearing fruit (v.2-4). In fact, He says the branch will stop bearing fruit if it doesn't *remain* attached to the **vine** (Jesus), and they will take that unfruitful and "withered" (KJV, YLT), "dried up" (NASB), **branch** and eventually burn it (v.6).

Now, to bring the full truth about this subject, you must realize that the Bible also teaches that a Christian's *works* can be burned up at the judgment seat of Christ, and they could still be saved; but here in John 15, Jesus is clearly talking about the unfaithful believer themselves being lost.

Paul gives us a tremendous revelation of what outcomes are possible at the judgment in I Corinthians 3:8-15. In those verses, Paul is discussing the efforts of various ministers, including *himself*.

8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. 9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. 10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. 11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. 14 If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. 15 If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

I Corinthians 3:8-15 NASB

Paul speaks of Christians whose works will be found useless towards any rewards from Jesus. Their works (part of fruit bearing) will not be found wrought in Christ, but from other sources...and their works will be burned up and they will lose any potential rewards *they could have had* (v.15).

However, Paul slides an interesting statement into verse 15 that most pay no attention to; and it's a big clue that unjust, unholy, unrighteous living believers can be lost.

In other words, (v.15) Paul is telling us that there will be **two** tests for the believer at the judgment seat; and when you understand what Paul was alluding to here, it makes absolute perfect sense in light of all the Scriptures we'll cover in this book.

Paul is saying there are two tests for the believer...one for *his works* and one *for him*. Yes, that's absolutely the truth.

Let me say it another way. One for his works, and one for *his character*. His motives, holiness, justice, honesty, *his character*; will all be judged *in addition* to merely his works. There will be two tests to pass...one for your works and one for **you**.

Notice v.15 again.

**If any man's work is *burned up*, he will suffer loss;
but he himself will be saved, *yet so as through fire*.**

I Corinthians 3:15 NASB

The NASB has a very good rendering of the original Greek here. Why didn't Paul just stop after he wrote "but he himself shall be saved"? Why did Paul add..."yet so as through fire"? Why add that? Why not stop after saying his works will be burned up but he'll be saved?

The answer lies in the fact of what we've been pointing out with all these Scriptures. Believers that are corrupt, and I've seen

more than a few, will perish forever.

Jesus, Peter, Jude, Paul...all of them made it exceedingly clear that believers are *obligated* to walk in the light of all the Word of God. When you don't know better God will have mercy, but once we know better, we're expected to **do better**.

Consider this Scripture.

47 And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes, 48 but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.

Luke 12:47-48 NASB

And have you ever wondered what the following verse meant?

For many are called, but few are chosen."

Matthew 22:14 NASB

You do now. Remember, that verse was written concerning the servant who responded to the invitation to come to the wedding but wasn't clothed properly, and was cast into outer darkness (Matthew 22:10-14). It is speaking of servants of Christ who are unholy, unforgiving, unjust, or unrighteous. You say is that possible? Yes. Being born again brings us in the light, but many writers in Scripture make it clear that their deeds, motives, and behavior should match their profession of faith in Christ.

Almost every full-Gospel believer has heard a sermon on Hebrews 4:12...about how powerful the Word of God is...and it certainly *is*.

But I have been around full-Gospel, Spirit-filled, tongue-talking, believers for over 30 years, and I have never heard *even one* sermon on the *second part* of that verse in Hebrews 4:12.

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12 NASB

Notice God is looking at, discerning, scrutinizing and is *more concerned with* the condition of a believer's heart...his motives and his intentions behind what he is doing on the outward. Hebrews 4:12, as is the whole book of Hebrews, was written to believers...*to believers*.

Please get it clear in your thinking saints...God is concerned with *the why* behind your *what*. In other words, He's *way more* concerned with what you're doing *behind* what you're doing... motives, intentions, inward desires.

Did you ever notice in Matthew chapter 6 that Jesus discusses three important subjects *for believers*? They are giving, prayer, and fasting.

In His discourse on those three subjects, He was telling us that God was looking much closer at **why** we were doing those things than He was that we were just doing them. He makes the most important part of His discussion the motives of the one doing them.

He said, in essence, please go ahead and give, pray and fast, but **don't be doing it ever to be noticed**. If that's your motive, you get no reward.

So the why is more important to Jesus than the what. This

fact can never be over emphasized.

Here's one thing that will keep any of us, believer or otherwise, out of Heaven...how about this statement Jesus made to His disciples in that same 6th chapter of Matthew.

**14 For if you forgive others for their transgressions,
Your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15
But if you do not forgive others, then *your Father*
*will not forgive your transgressions.***

Matthew 6:14-15 NASB

Let me make something clear in case you didn't catch it, because it's vital. *Jesus is addressing His disciples, His followers.* And He tells them that if they do not forgive others, then they **will not be forgiven by the Father**. Permit me to ask another question: do you know anyone who is going to be in Heaven that got there without all their sins being forgiven? No you don't...no one does. Because there isn't *anyone*...not even **one** person in Heaven that got there without having *all* their sins remitted, forgiven, and eliminated.

In other words, if the Father doesn't forgive your sins, you won't be there. Yet Jesus warned His disciples that if they, *as followers of Christ*, refuse to forgive others, then God would refuse to forgive them. That's one thing that is clearly stated in undeniable terms as being something that will keep any of us out of Heaven. You may as well go ahead and accept it brother or sister, because it's a fact of the Kingdom, and I'd rather just operate on the positive side of that warning and forgive *everyone* for *everything*. It's not the only thing that can keep us out of Heaven, but it sure is one thing.

But be certain, that the negative side of that verse is just as true as the positive side of that verse.

The Witness Of The Old Testament

I was in Nagpur, India teaching on the subject of Ministerial Ethics. And I was getting into the edge of this teaching as the Spirit was leading me along the lines of the importance the Word places on the fruits of the Spirit and not merely the gifts.

So as I covered some of these verses in the New Testament, I asked, “Do you want any more Scriptures to confirm the truth of this?” One student spoke out loud (there were about 180 students there that day) and said, “Yes, from the Old Testament!” So I obliged (cooperated).

In the book of Ezekiel, God records in the 18th chapter this same truth about those walking with God must be careful to walk holy and uprightly.

21 “But if the wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed and observes all My statutes and practices justice and righteousness, he shall surely live; he shall not die. 22 All his transgressions which he has committed will not be remembered against him; because of his righteousness which he has practiced, he will live. 23 Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked,” declares the Lord GOD, “rather than that he should turn from his ways and live? 24 “But when a *righteous man* turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity and does according to all the abominations that a wicked man does, will he live? *All his righteous deeds which he has done will not be remembered for his*

treachery which he has committed and his sin which he has committed; *for them he will die.* 25 Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not right.’ Hear now, O house of Israel! Is My way not right? Is it not your ways that are not right? 26 When a *righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity and dies because of it,* for his iniquity which he has committed he will die. 27 Again, when a wicked man turns away from his wickedness which he has committed and practices justice and righteousness, he will save his life. 28 because he considered and turned away from all his transgressions which he had committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die. 29 But the house of Israel says, ‘The way of the Lord is not right.’ Are My ways not right, O house of Israel? Is it not your ways that are not right? 30 “Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, each according to his conduct,” declares the Lord GOD. “Repent and turn away from all your transgressions, so that iniquity may not become a stumbling block to you. 31 Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel? 32 For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,” declares the Lord GOD. “Therefore, *repent and live.*”

Ezekiel 18:21-32 NASB

God isn't speaking here about mere physical death. He's speaking about the death of a wicked man. The *death of a wicked man* doesn't just end in mere physical death, but eternal death also.

19 “Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. 20 And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores,

21 and longing to be fed with the *crumbs* which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. 22 Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. 23 In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and *saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.' 25 But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. 26 And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.' 27 And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house— 28 for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' 29 But Abraham *said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' 30 But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' 31 But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"

Luke 16:19-31 NASB

Notice *after* the wicked man died *physically*, he died forever in Hades, being in torment. Evil behaving people don't just die physically...they die *eternally*.

Notice Ezekiel says, "A righteous man *can turn from his*

righteousness.” They could *then*, they can *now also*. God cannot deal unjustly. If He judges one person who turns to evil, He will judge anyone who turns *away from* righteousness to evil.

It is prudent to always be more concerned about how *you’re living* than how you’re ministering, or witnessing, or teaching. I heard one man say that in an effort to become good ministers, some people become lousy Christians. I believe that. They place great emphasis on the gifts and on presentation, and little or no emphasis on developing the fruits in their life, which are most important.

There are many other Scriptures I could give that prove that we are not immune from the devil just because we’re Christians. Peter writing to the church said:

8 Be of sober spirit, *be on the alert*. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, *seeking someone to devour*. 9 But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your *brethren* who are in the world.

I Peter 5:8-9 NASB

Peter wrote that to *believers*.

Always remember what Paul wrote **Timothy**, and if it mattered for Timothy, it matters for us.

Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure *salvation* both for *yourself* and for those who hear you.

I Timothy 4:16 NASB

Timothy ensuring *salvation* for **himself** and *his hearers*.

I had an experience many years ago that both shocked me

and taught me. Back when I was still somewhat new to all this, the Lord was driving home this revelation so that I would see it clearly and be able to teach it properly. The Lord took an experience that came up to get this across to me, the need to hold on to your salvation and reject anything that God calls “wrong”.

What some person’s version of “right” is doesn’t matter, only God’s version of “right” or “wrong” will matter in the end.

There was a minister of the Gospel that came to our town and I went to hear him. He had never seen me and I had never seen him before. He delivered a wonderful message from the Bible that night.

Then the Holy Spirit began to move upon him and he began to operate in the gifts of the Holy Spirit and pray for some of us there in the service. I was one to whom he ministered by the Holy Spirit. And as he began to speak to me supernaturally by the gift of prophecy, without me ever meeting him before, he accurately began to speak things that only God and I knew about.

He said God had called me to the ministry...and he was right. He told me some things about that calling...and he was 100% correct...and he had never met me or known me before. No one else knew me either. I had experienced the operation of the gift of prophecy through this minister. I always enjoy seeing the Holy Spirit demonstrated in a real and living way...the way the Bible shows Him.

The minister and I got acquainted, and I got on his mailing list. After a period of time though, it was mentioned in his mailings that he was arrested by the Feds for molesting little boys. I was absolutely stunned. At first, I didn’t know what to believe...was he set up?...has someone lied on him like Joseph by Potiphar’s wife in the Bible (you know that does happen at times)?

I was stunned and began to weep and fell on my face on my

living room floor and cried out, “**God...WHAT is going on here?**”

Immediately as I prayed the Holy Spirit began to speak to me. The Lord said to my spirit by the Holy Spirit, “Forgive him, forgive him, forgive him.” And up in my head, I began to think, “Forgive him?...forgive him for what?” I knew immediately that he must have done it, that he was guilty.

The Lord suddenly began to speak to me a number of Scriptures and began His lengthy lesson that day on how believers... *even ministers*...can become lost.

I won't have time or space here to go into all the Scriptures the Lord gave me that shocking day, but many of them we have covered.

Well, the Lord went on to say, “Yes, he's guilty, and he's going to spend eternity in hell if he doesn't repent.” He was arrested and sent to the penitentiary. Really, the Lord was trying to tell me that day that this minister *isn't going to repent*, but that he would go to his grave in denial, and ultimately be lost forever, but he didn't have to. If he had just repented and asked the Lord to help him, his outcome would have been different.

Remember our teaching on Matthew 7:13-23? Now perhaps you'll understand it (and all the verses we covered) better.

No one relinquishes their free will when they come to Jesus. The New Birth leaves a person's free will and right to choose intact. Neither the New Birth nor the anointing of the Spirit for service will automatically keep a person from yielding to unforgiveness, selfishness, bitterness, revenge, sexual impulses, pride, greed, or *any* wrong spirit. It must be the person's desire to be and do right, and refuse whatever is wrong to God.

God forgives and is the most lovely Person we know, but He is not to be esteemed or treated lightly. His love is not to be interpreted as a condoning of sin...sin cost Him a lot and we're not

to regard as “unclean the Blood of the Covenant by which we were sanctified”.

Take this teaching very seriously please...the requirements laid out in Scripture for the believers and the unbelievers are eternal and God will not alter His judgment for any one of us. God will never honor **your** version of the Bible...only His.

