

# “Falling Away”

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Some churches teach, either by implication or by direct statement, that once a person is “saved,” then he is, from that point forward, absolutely assured of salvation... and that there is virtually nothing he can do that will cause his salvation to be denied. Yet, what does God’s Word—the Holy Bible—say about that issue? If you are a Christian, then the answer to that question should be of *paramount* importance to you!

## Falling Away

When a person surrenders his life to God and is baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, he then receives the Holy Spirit. He is then having his one and only chance at salvation. He is being judged now, during this lifetime. “For the time *has come* for **judgment** to begin at the house of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what will *be* the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (I Peter 4:17).

Is it possible for a true Christian (one who has the Holy Spirit dwelling within him) to “fall away” and to *completely lose* the Holy Spirit... thereby losing out on salvation? Yes, it is! Notice Hebrews chapter 6: “For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become **partakers of the Holy Spirit**, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, **if they fall away**, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame” (Heb. 6: 4-6).

In the passage above, we are plainly told that if a Christian falls away, it is “**impossible**” to renew him again to repentance! Plainly, such a person has *lost out* on salvation. His irrevocable destiny is then the Lake of Fire!

Notice what Peter had to say: “For if, **after they have escaped** the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, **they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them**” (II Peter 2:20-21).

The Apostle Paul said, “For if we sin **willfully** after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there **no longer remains a sacrifice for sins**” (Heb.10:26).

Jesus Christ said, “Every branch in Me that does not bear **fruit** He [God] **takes away**; and every *branch* that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit... **If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch** and is withered; and they gather them and **throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned**” (John 15: 2,6).

Christ also said this: “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is **fit** for the kingdom of God”! (Luke 9:62).

Finally, Paul said, “... I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, **I myself should become disqualified**” (1 Cor. 9:27).

So, yes, it is certainly possible for one who has God’s Spirit dwelling within him to fall away and *completely lose* the Holy Spirit... and thus lose out on salvation, and end up being cast into the Lake of Fire.

## HOW Can a Christian “Fall Away”?

It is often said that the only thing which will cause a Christian to lose put on salvation, is if he commits the “**unpardonable sin.**” And, by that, it is generally meant that **if one “blasphemes the Holy Spirit” OR if a Christian degenerates into a life of “willful sinning”** (as mentioned above in Heb.10:26).

Prior to looking at the **definition** of “*willful* sinning,” let’s first ask the following question:  
**Is there ANY OTHER way for a Christian to “fall away”... to lose out on salvation, and end up in the Lake of Fire?**

Yes, there is! And the scriptures immediately below, plainly show that one can ultimately end up in the Lake of Fire as a result of **pronounced, long-term NEGLECT of using God’s Spirit!**

### 1. Matt. 25: 41-43, 46

“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the **everlasting fire** prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me’... And these will go away into **everlasting punishment**, but the righteous into eternal life.”

[Please note that the *popular* concept of “hell” is un-Biblical. Hell is NOT a place of torture! Rather, those who do end up in the Lake of Fire, will be *instantaneously* burned up... without torture, and will be as if they had never been. In the passage above, the phrase “everlasting fire” should actually be translated “age-lasting fire.” As for the term “ever-lasting punishment,” that is *different* from “everlasting punish-**ing**,” which *would* involve torture.]

## 2. Matt. 25: 23-30

“...Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ Then he who had received the one talent came and said... I was afraid, and went and **hid** your talent in the ground. Look, *there* you have *what is yours*.’ But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You **wicked** and **lazy** servant... So take the talent from him... And **cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**”

[The phrase “weeping and gnashing of teeth” is likewise used in Matt. 13:42 and in Matt. 13:50, both of which **are** speaking of the Lake of Fire. Also, notice the *similarity* in passage #2 (Matt. 25: 23-30) to passage #1 (Matt. 25: 41-43, 46), which definitely **is** speaking of the Lake of Fire. Furthermore, the **reason** this “unprofitable servant” is described as “wicked and lazy” is because he failed to use God’s Spirit... he failed to live God’s way... that is, **NEGLECT!**]

## 3. John 15: 2, 6

“Every branch in Me **that does not bear fruit** He **takes away**; and every *branch* that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit... If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and **throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned.**”

## 4. Matt. 7:19

“Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and **thrown into the fire.**”

## 5. Heb. 2: 3

“how shall we escape if we **neglect** so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*”?

In Herbert W. Armstrong’s booklet *The Unpardonable Sin*, he quotes from John 15 (see #3 above), and then says this:

In other words, the fruit of God’s righteousness **MUST** be produced in the Christian life... This does not necessarily mean God will cut you off immediately, the first day or week or month you might let go by without producing active and positive fruit. There is, however, a limit somewhere along life’s way where, unless you are definitely **growing** spiritually, that God’s Spirit will no longer “dwell in you,” and if you let that time come, you shall, like a dead grape branch, be **ultimately cast into the final “gehenna fire.”**  
(Herbert W. Armstrong, *What do you mean—“The Unpardonable Sin”?* 1972, p.12)

Mr. Armstrong then continued on page 34:

**There are at least TWO ways in which a Spirit-begotten Christian may LOSE the gift of God’s Holy Spirit.**

1) By deliberate choice...

2) The converted Christian can lose the presence of God's Spirit by **CONTINUED NEGLECT**. Neglect of prayer, neglect of Bible study, neglect of spiritual fellowship with God's people.

## “Willful Sinning”

Let's now understand this issue of “willful sinning.” We now quote once again from Mr. Herbert Armstrong's same booklet. Under his subheading “WILLFUL Sinning,” he says this:

WHEN one receives the Holy Spirit by God's grace, this Spirit dwelling in him is tentative and conditional SALVATION. But IF one *again* changes his mind — changes his LIFE'S GOAL — takes his eyes completely off the Goal of God's Kingdom, and fixes them PURPOSELY on going back to THE WAY of worldliness and sin — IF he changes his WAY of life back to the CARNAL WAY of the world, leaving the ROAD he was traveling with CHRIST — THEN he has set his mind on determined, premeditated, deliberate WILLFUL SIN!

IF he decides he *no longer* WANTS to go GOD'S WAY, deliberately and intentionally *changes* his OVERALL ATTITUDE, and desires, and CHOOSES the world and its ways — deliberately chooses a life of rebellion, comes to have contempt and disregard for God's Law, then that man either has done or is in danger of doing despite to God's Holy Spirit which a merciful and loving God had GIVEN by grace!

SUCH A MAN is surely in grave DANGER of BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT!

*This* is not a mere stumbling while ON THE WAY — on GOD'S WAY — the WAY of His LAW fulfilled by His HOLY SPIRIT — the way to Eternal Life. This is not *an incident* of sin. A man may stumble over an INCIDENT of sin *again and again*, while WALKING the WAY of God, with God's Spirit still dwelling IN him. Always he will repent — because his ATTITUDE is, simply, that he DESIRES, more than anything in life, to SUCCEED along this WAY he has chosen — to OVERCOME, to GROW spiritually, to receive ETERNAL LIFE. He may find the road hard, difficult, beset with temptations and spiritual pitfalls. He will most certainly suffer persecution. But his overall WILLFUL purpose, ATTITUDE and life-GOAL is to be submissive to God, to RELY on God, to be OBEDIENT to God, to LIVE for God, and to enter the Kingdom of God.

What most people do not understand is the *difference* between an *incident* of a sin committed — even though there be REPEATED such incidents of stumbling, always repented of — and one's overall ATTITUDE, or desired, deliberate, willful, and fixed PURPOSE!

The one who changes that overall ATTITUDE from one of submissive yielding to God to one of hostile rebellion — the one who changes his life's GOAL from wanting God's RIGHTEOUSNESS, and ETERNAL LIFE, to wanting SELF-centeredness and willfully going the WORLD'S WAY, is in an altogether different category than the one whose GOAL is the Kingdom of God, but who stumbles in *an incident* of sin — or even many such incidents.

## Conclusion

As we have seen, it is definitely possible for a true Christian to completely lose the Holy Spirit, and thereby lose out on salvation! As the Apostle Paul said, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (I Cor. 10:12).

For additional information on this vital subject, see the article [“Is ‘Belief’ All That is Necessary for Salvation?”](#) (*especially see the part of that article **beginning** with the subheading “Two Natures”*).