

BAD FRUIT

THE RESULT OF
ONCE SAVED ALWAYS SAVED



Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. (Luke 6:44)

Jesus Spoke Clearly

He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: (Mark 4:2)

The debate of whether someone can fall from God's grace has raged for decades. To find the truth in this matter, let us examine the parable of the sower, where Jesus used the words "believes" and "falls away" to show that some individuals could lose their salvation. If He used those very words, then that should end any debate. But, sadly, not even the words of Jesus Himself can silence those who believe in once saved always saved.

Jesus definitely declares that some individuals have faith in Him but fall away. A hundred page commentary is not needed on this issue. Jesus expressed himself with absolute clarity. The additional words of men are only clouds that shut out the clear sunlight.

In this parable, Jesus used the ground to represent the different types of hearts in men. Jesus moved from those who have hard hearts to those who have soft hearts. Jesus first talked about people with totally hard hearts. In such cases, Satan can snatch the Word away so that they do not believe the truth. Since faith comes from hearing the Word, these individuals cannot believe because Satan can remove the Word from them immediately.

The farmer sows the word. Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. (Mark 4:14–15)

This applies to the vast majority of mankind. Their hearts remain so hard that they do not, and cannot, believe Jesus is the way to life. Preaching has little or no effect on them and, as such, they cannot be saved. As

recorded in Luke, they cannot "believe and be saved." It is clear in the parable of the sower that Jesus equates belief with salvation.

Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. (Luke 8:12)

I once spent a day sharing the gospel with a man who literally told me the very next day, "I can't remember anything we talked about. What did we talk about?"

Jesus then spoke of those who, and I quote, "believe for a while" but later "fall away." We know such people are actual believers because Jesus said that they "hear the word and at once receive it with joy." Paul confirms this in 1 Thessalonians 2:13 when he writes, "And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe." The "word of God" is doing its "work" in the person who believes on Jesus. Thus it is the work of God and not the works of man.

It is a saving faith because it is a belief in Jesus. They accept who Jesus is and what He came to do. We know this is true because they "received it with joy," the result of saving grace being poured into someone's life. We see this in the jailer who came to "believe" in God. He was "filled with joy" because of this belief.

The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family. (Acts 16:34)

You might think that Jesus should have the final word on the topic but, unfortunately, this is not the case. Instead, men resort to all kinds of textual trickery and deceptive and hollow philosophies in an effort to make Scripture fit their own mold and ease their troubled souls. For it certainly feels troubling to contemplate that three-fourths of those touched by God's Word miss out on salvation. This is, however, part of the offensive message of the cross, and we either choose to accept God on His terms or make Jesus into an idol of our own design.

Fallen Believers

Again, Luke recorded Jesus as saying they "believe." They are believers in every sense of the word. Their hearts "receive" the living Word and their lives declare they are full of joy. The seed begins to grow, giving evidence of new life. Such people try to obey Scripture, something the unbelieving world never attempts to do. But, as Jesus said, they have no root. They do not allow the grace of the new life to penetrate deeply (1 Thessalonians 1:5). So, as Mark wrote, when "trouble or persecution comes because of the word," they "fall away."

Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. (Mark 4:16–17)

God thought it worthwhile to have Luke repeat the words of Jesus, and so we will do the same. Again, we find that Jesus said clearly, "in the time of testing they fall away."

Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. (Luke 8:13)

Jesus taught that these believers have true faith, but they simply do not persevere in it. There can be no question, therefore, that Jesus referred to people with a true and saving belief in Himself.

In answer to the straightforward question, “Is it possible for people to believe then fall away?” Luke 8:13 contains Jesus’ defining answer. Yes, “in the time of testing they fall away.” How much clearer could He have been? But, alas, our sinful flesh does not want to accept this.

Thorny Christians

The next kind of person Jesus spoke of lasts longer than the previous kind, but not long enough to save them in the end. Such types of people fellowship with “thorns.” We would call them “worldly Christians.” They attend churches where the message of the cross is reduced to the story of the crucifixion. In other words, Jesus died for us 2000 years ago, and that is the extent of the gospel. The concept that a person must be crucified daily and always carry the death of Jesus in their lives has been lost (2 Corinthians 4:10). Instead of having the cross which crucifies them to the



world, “life’s worries, riches, and pleasures” choke them and they never mature. We can see this in church bulletins and Christian magazines advertising only fun and entertainment rather than reflecting the holiness worked by the cross. Or perhaps they have come to worship their ministry more than God and so never mature in the message of the cross.

The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. (Luke 8:14)

Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. (Mark 4:18–19)

Desires for the things of the world, the worries of living a nice comfortable Christian life, concerns about money, or just wanting to have a good time, keep these seeds from becoming mature or fruitful. They grow by taking in grace, mercy, and the Word, but they bear nothing of value for God. They merely enjoy the things of God for themselves, and so remain selfish at their very core. Like the five foolish virgins, even though they waited in faith for Jesus to return, they never got beyond a self-centered trust in God.

Cut Off Branches

Because such believers refuse to move on to maturity, God will cut them off. But, for now, note that Jesus declared that God cuts off every branch in him that does not bear fruit.

He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. (John 15:2)

Jesus did not say that these people will just lose some of their reward in heaven. He stated that they are completely cut off from the vine. And who is the vine? It is Jesus Christ Himself, as Jesus made clear in the previous verse. And God is the “gardener” who, as we will see, will not permit a man to return to Jesus once he or she falls away.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. (John 15:1)

These withering branches are “picked up, thrown into the fire, and burned.” Not just their works, or their fruit, or their rewards are burned, but the branches themselves. For Jesus explained that they are burned because they don’t have enough fruit or reward. The “branch” itself is dry and dead, because it has been cut off from life giving nutrients and graces.

I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. (John 15:5–6)

At first, these branches may not realize that they have been cut off from Christ.

They slowly wither over time. No branch withers instantly when it is cut off from a tree or vine. Even if the branch starts to wither while still attached, it fools itself by thinking there is no danger. For this reason, Jesus often warned that we will “not know at what time I will come.”

It takes time, and therefore many who have been cut off from Christ don’t realize it until many years later. In fact, many go to their death bed with little clue they have been cut off, because they still see some green in a very dry life. They play the fool to the end, never testing themselves to see if they are fully in Christ. They refused to work out their salvation daily with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12).

The bad fruit of once saved always saved is seen everywhere in the church today. It has caused more harm than any cult and modern day heresy. To explore how this bad fruit ruined the orchard of the Lord and for a better understanding on how Christians can fall away the following book and study guide is available.

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