

Romans 11:11-24

Can Christians lose their salvation?

- Christians have disagreed over the years as to whether or not a true believer could fall from grace so as to lose their position in Christ.
- The Bible has been cited in support of differing positions on this subject.
- This passage invites us to explore the subject in a fresh way.

2. Israel's rejection is not final. (11:11-36)

a. The purpose of Israel's rejection. (11:11)

“¹¹ I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation {has come} to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

- Paul describes Israel's failure as a “stumble” not a “fall”. The suggestion is that the condition is not permanent.
- We have here an example of God using evil for good just as He did at the cross. It was through the sin of Israel that the Gentiles are given access to the Kingdom. God's plan includes the failure of Israel to accomplish a greater good as with Joseph's captivity in Egypt, and Jesus' crucifixion.
- Paul suggests that God still has a plan for physical Israel (the Jewish nation).
- “The Gentiles are not saved merely for their own sake, but for the sake of God's election of Israel. How unshakable is the faithfulness of God to the nation he has chosen!” The blessing of the Gentiles is to make Israel jealous so as to repent.

b. The promise of Israel's return. (11:12-16)

¹² Now if their transgression be riches for the world and their failure be riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! ¹³ But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, ¹⁴ if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them. ¹⁵ For if their rejection be the reconciliation of the world, what will {their} acceptance be but life from the dead? ¹⁶ And if the first piece {of dough} be holy, the lump is also; and if the root be holy, the branches are too.

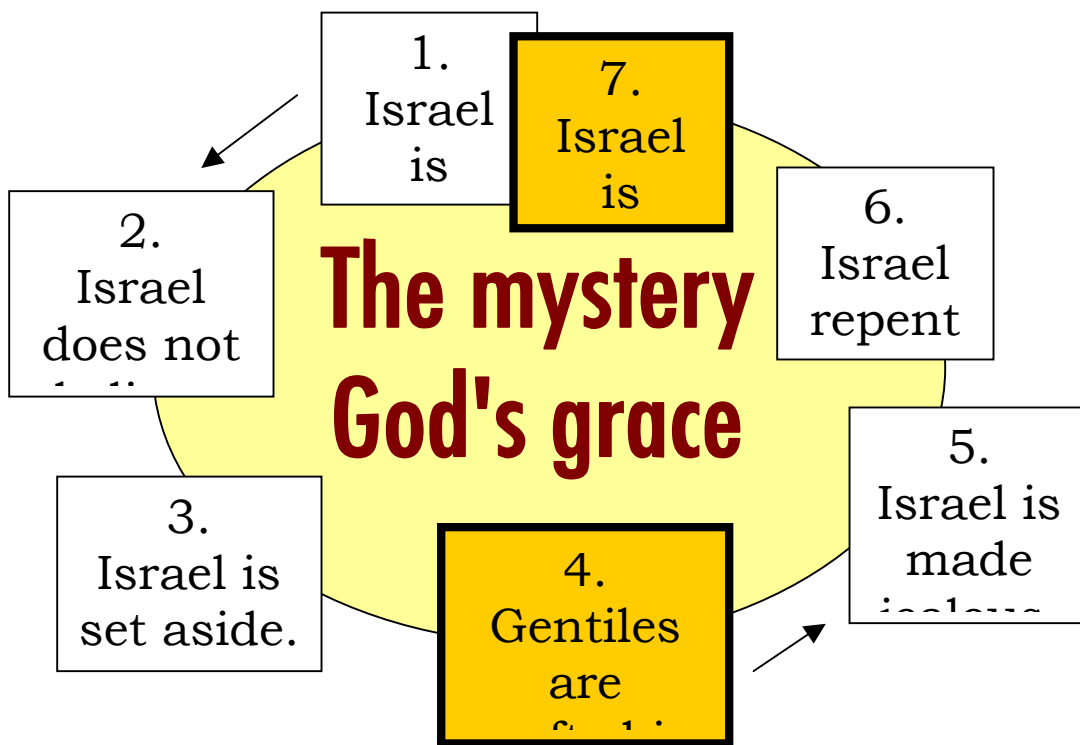
c. The place of Gentile blessing. (11:17-24)

¹⁷ But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, ¹⁸ **do not be arrogant** toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, {remember that} it is not you who supports the root, but the root {supports} you. ¹⁹ You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” 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, neither will He spare you. 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. 24 For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more shall these who are the natural {branches} be grafted into their own olive tree?"

- Paul recognizes that while the Gentiles should be thankful to God and grateful to the Jews, they can be proud and disrespectful as though they earned God's grace.
- We are not to forget that the grafting is by faith. If the faith is not present, the grafting does not take place. We, like other Gentiles, "stand by our faith" not only by God's promise.

A summary of Romans 11



- This passage gives us insight into the question of eternal security. (See Apttoteach.org, theology file #709 for more details)
1. There are two mistakes we can make in seeking eternal security.

Mistake #1

Making God's responsibility to "keep us" the only issue

We are here responsible for too little.

I must abide in faith.

Mistake #2

Making man's responsibility to "be holy" the issue.

We are here responsible for too much .

I can only abide in faith.

2. Our security in Christ is not conditioned upon our fulfillment of the Law but it is conditioned upon our faith in Christ. If personal holiness is the basis of security, we need to ask:
 - a. How holy must we be?
 - b. For how long must we be holy?
3. We cannot claim to be a Christian if we are not openly confessing faith in Christ. It is a fact that many people who once professed faith in Christ, no longer hold that faith.
4. The Gospel of grace is conditioned on faith apart from works. This means that we do not obey in order to be saved by Christ nor do we obey in order to be secure in Christ.
5. Those who believe that unrepentant Christians lose their position in Christ or never had a position in Christ, often link true faith with faithfulness to the Law. They sight the Biblical passages that warn believers about disobedience. It should be noted that these passages could also be sited in arguing against salvation by grace period. (See Apttoteach.org, theology file #108 for an explanation of such passages)
6. While obedience to the moral law of God is very important and a natural and normal fruit of true faith, personal holiness is not always evident to others as the church at Corinth illustrates.
7. Three views of the relationship of faith and faithfulness contrasted.

<i>Roman Catholic</i>	<i>Reformed Protestant</i>	<i>Radical Protestant</i>
Faithfulness is the same as faith	Faithfulness is the marker of faith	Faithfulness is a fruit of faith
Unrepentant sinners lose their salvation.	Unrepentant sinners are not elect or have fallen away from grace.	Unrepentant sinners invite discipline but do not lose their position in Christ.

- **How do I know if I have true faith?**
 - a. **Do I trust my relationship with God to Christ or am I holding on to my own merit?**
 - b. **Has there been a change in my life direction?**

ILLUSTRATION: If I am issued a credit card I must (1) activate it and (2) put it to use by purchasing goods and services with it in good faith that it will be honored. If I fail to

activate it and fail to use it, it is of no value and one could question whether or not I really have it. The same is true of faith. I can claim to have faith but if it is never activated (baptism) or used (influencing the direction of my life), it could be argued that it is hardly a living effective faith. I know I have real faith when I use it.

- **Does not faith require repentance?** Repentance that leads to salvation and repentance that leads to holy living are distinct. (See Apttoteach.org, theology file #707 for more details)

Justification
Repentance from dead works (pride of self righteousness) to faith in Christ's righteousness.
Turning from self (generally) to Christ
Mk.1:15; Heb.6:1

Sanctification
Repentance from sinful habits to a walk that conforms to the glory of God.
Turning from specific sins to obedience.
II Cor.12:21

- **Who is responsible for abiding faith?**

God's preserving power (Decree)
Phil.2:12 "God is at work in you"
Jn.1:13 "who are born of God"
Rom.11:5 "according to God's choice"
II Thewss.2:13 "God has chosen you"

Our persevering power (Diligence)
Phil.2:13 "work our your salvation"
Jn.1:12 "as many as received Him"
Rom.11:20 "you stand by our faith"
II Thess.2:13 "through faith"

- **Does not Hebrews 6 support the possibility of losing salvation?**

"¹ Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ² of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. ³ And this we shall do, if God permits.

Don't go back and retrace your steps of initiation into the faith -

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,

- every time you sin -

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.

- because it is impossible to start over.

⁷ For ground that drinks the rain which often falls upon 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.

You must press on if you are to bear fruit -

⁹ But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way. ¹⁰ For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. ¹¹ And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹² that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

- just as I am convinced you will do.

Hebrews 6 and 10 can be addressed together because, in my estimation, they refer to the same basic issue — we cannot and need not be reconverted every time we sin.

The Old Covenant prescribed repeated sacrifices for sins (as sins were committed). Some Jewish believers may have asked, “Do we need to retrace our steps in converting to faith in Christ, every time we sin?” The writer of Hebrews instructs his readers that with the New Covenant of grace in Christ, the old covenant was terminated. The Old Covenant no longer is available as a means of handling guilt. “There no longer remains a sacrifice for sins” (10:26). If you go on willfully sinning and do not cling in faith to the finished work of the Christ of the New Covenant but try to make atonement via the relics of the Old Covenants repeated sacrifices, you are living in a fantasy world (see vs. 29). The old covenant provision has been terminated and replaced by the New Covenant provision — faith in Christ who is a “once for all time” sacrifice for sins. Without that faith, one is left to face the righteous judgment of God (vs. 29-31) with no hope.

Hebrews 6:4-9 addresses the issue with different language. Let me summarize or paraphrase the basic idea of the passage. If a person embraces all the benefits of the new covenant of grace (vs. 4-5) yet rejects the cornerstone of that covenant (Christ, vs. 6) by disobedience “falling away”, he or she need not and cannot go back and be baptized into the faith all over again. These Hebrew believers came out of a background in which every time they sinned they had to bring a new sacrifice. It was insulting to the Cross of Christ to demand that he be crucified over and over again. There is only one way to go and that is to continue on and grow to maturity. Verses 9-12 emphasize the author’s confidence and hope in going on.

One closing note on Hebrews 6:4-12. The term “impossible” in verse 6 creates a seemingly insurmountable obstacle to most traditional interpretations in that it precludes the possibility of a change of heart. This seems to defy all that we know of the Biblical portrayal of man and all that we observe about man from our experience. It is far more likely that the “impossible” has to do with the logic of the issue, not the will of the person. This is why I interpret the text in the way I have outlined above.