

## John 10:27-28 (John Ritchie) 138209

Can a Sheep of Christ Ever Perish?, Can a Sheep of Christ Ever Perish? (10:27-28)

John 10:27-28

Please read the quoted passages in your own Bible.

The Bible says in John 10:27-28, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand."

"But I believe it is sadly possible for a man to enjoy religion and after that fall, even finally."

"Solemnly true, my friend. Another passage of Scripture says, 'For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame'" (Heb. 6:4-6).

"But you do not believe men can fall away, and you even preach against it."

"I believe whatever the Scriptures say, and the passage I have quoted speaks of the possibility of men falling away."

"True, it does; and that is just what I think. A man may be saved, and even attain to a great height of Christian experience, and then fall away and be lost alter all."

"Stop, my friend! The passage I have quoted does not say saved. Now you are going further than the Scripture, and I cannot follow you."

"The word 'saved' is not there, it is true, but is it not implied? They 'tasted the good Word of God'."

"Yes; as you have it in the Lord's parable given in Matthew 13:5,20-21, where He speaks of a man with joy receiving the Word, not with sorrow of true repentance—it is a superficial work, and when tribulation arises he falls away."

"Well, I believe in a deep work of repentance, and that there must be saving faith!"

"Quite so, but in these three verses we are considering, there is nothing about saving faith."

"But they were made partakers of the Holy Spirit."

"Yes, but it does not say they were indwelt by the Holy Spirit, which is the distinguishing mark of the true believer. (See carefully 1 Cor. 6:19; Eph. 1:13; 4:30). They partook of the benefits of the Holy Spirit's presence here upon earth, they heard a pure gospel, were enlightened by it, and experienced the wonderful privileges of Christianity. Yet it is not said they were born again by the Word of God (as in John 3:5; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23), they merely tasted it. Nor is it said they were saved, nor that they were sealed with the Spirit. Mark that carefully."

"Then you mean to say that they were not saved?"

"I simply adhere to the Scriptures without importing anything into it. But if you look at the ninth verse, you will find, 'But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.' Does not this show clearly that there might be all the things listed in verses 4 and 5, without salvation?"

"But if they were not saved, what had they to fall away from?"

"That which you spoke of at the first—the enjoyment of religion, or, as I should rather put it—the enjoyment of the privileges of Christianity. Remember that this epistle was written to Hebrews or Jews who had been connected with an earthly religion, but had heard the gospel and embraced the profession of Christianity. Persecution arose (chap. 10), and there was a fear lest some had been mere professors who would, when pressed by tribulation, give up their profession and go back to the Jewish religion. Now, as you well know, the Jews had caused the Son of God to be crucified, but God reckoned that they had done it in ignorance, on this ground offering them mercy (Acts 3:17). But if those who had received the enlightenment of Christianity, gave it up and turned again to the people who had crucified Him, embracing again their Jewish religion which God had set aside, they crucified for themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame. No longer in ignorance, but with eyes wide open, they associated themselves with His murderers, and consequently, with the guilt of His murder. What mercy could there be for such?"

"But we are not Jews."

"Quite true; and this fact should be taken into account when considering this epistle, which was written to Hebrews."

"Has it then, no application now?"

"I would not say that it has none; at any time it is a most solemn thing to give up the profession of Christianity. I believe these verses show us how far a man may go in profession, and in the enjoyment of privilege, without having the slightest reality. Judas was an illustration of the same thing. He was a companion of Jesus and His disciples for more than three years; he was an apostle, a preacher, and we may believe, a worker of miracles (the term 'powers of the world to come,' Hebrews 6:5, is one used for miracles,) yet Peter says, 'Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place'."

"But was not Judas saved once?"

"If you turn to John 6:70, you will find the Lord describes him as 'a devil.' In John 13:10, He speaks of him as not clean, and in John 17:12, He names him the 'son of perdition,' the only one of His disciples who perished. Is it possible that he could have been saved? Solemnly true, therefore, it is that a man may profess Christianity, enjoy its privileges, even preach to others, yet himself be 'a castaway.' But I have not yet come across a single passage which affirms that a man may have everlasting life and yet perish."

"But there are many passages which seem to say that."

"I grant you there are many difficult passages; as Peter said, speaking of Paul's writings, 'in which are some things hard to be understood' (2 Peter 3:16). But will you allow me to give you a little advice about the reading of your Bible? Never take odd verses to build any theory upon. Always read them in the place where they stand. For instance, as we have seen, this passage in Hebrews 6, was written to Hebrews professing Christianity, and the ninth and tenth verses of the same chapter clearly show that there might be all these things apart from salvation, while the closing verses give the strongest assurance for the feeblest true believer. Again, many are troubled about what Peter says as to the dog and the sow (2 Peter 2:22). But read the whole chapter, and the very first verse tells you he is writing of false teachers. I do not dispute the fact that there are difficulties in Scripture, for God never intended it to be read apart from Himself as the Teacher, but if Christians would only read their Bibles carefully and prayerfully, many of their difficulties would vanish like snow in the sunshine. Be assured, too, that God can never contradict Himself. If you can find one plain passage which you can understand, never give it up, because of passages you cannot understand. The Son of God declares that His sheep shall never perish. Once-washed sows, unclean dogs, guilty goats, may all perish, but you cannot find one instance in Scripture where His sheep perish. The wolf may catch them and scatter them. Sadly he has done it, but he can never catch one of those sheep out of the double grasp of the Father and the Son."

"But then, apart from Scripture, I have known many of whom I could have said positively they were saved, yet they discontinued coming to the meetings, gradually slipped into the world, and some of them died miserable deaths."

"I do not dispute it."

"But how do you account for it?"

"We are always safe while adhering to Scripture, but judging individual cases is often difficult work. Our comfort is that the Lord says, 'I know My sheep,' not, you know them. As again the Scripture says, 'The Lord knoweth them that are His,' though you may not always be able to distinguish them. Then there are two ways open in accounting for what you speak of. On the one hand professors may perish; on the other hand God's own children may be very naughty, though He bids them be obedient children. In such case, be assured He will deal with them as disobedient ones, but never disown them."

"Then what am I to conclude you do preach?"

"We preach the Word (2 Tim. 4:2), as far as we have grasped its precious truth. That Word shows most clearly that a man's mere profession is utterly valueless. One who has made the loudest profession may fall eternally. Solemn undisputed fact! Judas was a saint before the eyes of men up to the last; before the eyes of the Son of God he was 'a devil.' But that same Word shows that wherever there is a poor sinner who trembles at the Word of God, and believes on the Son of God as his Saviour, he has now everlasting life and shall never perish. The Word of the Son of God is pledged for it."

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:14-16).

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me hath everlasting life" (John 6:47).

"If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:9-13).

Safe in Christ

Safe in Christ the weakest child  
Stands in all God's favor;  
All in Christ are reconciled  
Through that only Saviour.

Once their sins on every side  
Seemed to tower o'er them;  
Christ has stemmed the angry tide,  
Been through death before them.

On the resurrection side,  
Death's dark scene behind them;  
All their sins beneath the tide,  
None can ever find them.

Now by faith the justified know that God is for them; To the world they're crucified, Glory is before them.

Safe in Christ! Safe in Christ! He's their glory ever; None can pluck them from His hand, They shall perish never!

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