

PETER VERSUS CALVIN

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John Calvin (1509-1564) was one of the major leaders of the Protestant Reformation. His work was primarily conducted in Geneva, Switzerland, but his followers spread his ideas throughout Europe, and beyond. His doctrines continue to influence most Protestant denominations today. One of his key doctrines is what is known as “Perseverance of the Saints.” The Westminster Confession of Faith (1643) describes this point of Calvinism thusly: “They whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, *can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace: but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.*” Other denominations refer to this belief as “Eternal Security” or “Once Saved, Always Saved.” For example, Charles Stanley, Baptist preacher and former two-term president of the Southern Baptist Convention wrote in his book *Eternal Security: Can You Be Sure?*: “The Bible clearly teaches that God’s love for His people is of such magnitude that even those who walk away from the faith have not the slightest chance of slipping from His hand,” and, “Even if a believer for all practical purposes becomes an unbeliever, his salvation is not in jeopardy.” Unfortunately for those who believe this false doctrine, the Bible most certainly does *not* teach that a Christian can never be lost, no matter what he does. This should be evident from the total lack of scripture contained in the above statements by those who believe this error. Of course, *many* Bible passages directly *refute* this Calvinistic doctrine. A quick survey through the three chapters of the book of 2 Peter is sufficient to expose the falsehood of the doctrine of “once saved, always saved.”

Second Peter Chapter One

Second Peter is a book written to *Christians*, those who “have obtained like precious faith” (2 Pet 1:1). In chapter one, verses 10-11, the Lord says, “*Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*” If our calling and election are *already* sure, such that we can never become lost, then it is not only unnecessary but even impossible for “brethren” to make sure what is already sure. He also tells the “brethren” (i.e. Christians) that *if* we do these things we will never fall. That statement has no meaning whatsoever if it is impossible to ever fall. This is a conditional statement, and “not falling” is predicated upon “doing these things.” That means if we do *not* do “these things” then we *will* fall.

Second Peter Chapter Two

In chapter two, verses 20-22, the Lord says, “*For if after they have escaped*

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(continued)

the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” This is clearly speaking about Christians, those who are in a saved condition. These people *have escaped* the pollution of the world through Christ, and have *known* the way of righteousness. But they *can* become entangled in that pollution again and be overcome by it. They *can* turn from the holy commandment. Those who have never known the way of righteousness will be eternally lost (2 Thes 1:7-10; Luke 12:48).

Therefore, for someone to be *worse* off than that, they would have to not only be eternally lost too, but their eternal punishment in hell would have to be worse than the punishment in hell of those who never became Christians. Indeed, Luke 12:47-48 affirms that unfaithful Christians will be beaten with “many stripes” in hell while those who never become Christians will be beaten with comparatively “few stripes.” The passage of 2 Peter 2:20-22 has no meaning at all if the doctrine of “once saved, always saved” is true. In fact, this passage would have to be declared false, and thus the entire Bible by extension.

Second Peter Chapter Three

In chapter three, verses 15-17, the Lord says, “And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him has written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, *beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.*” Christians are told to “beware.” It is possible to be “led away” and to “fall.” The result of falling away is “destruction.” There is no possible way that the doctrine of “once saved, always saved” can be true in the light of the teachings of 2 Peter (see also 1 Chr 28:9; 2 Chr 15:2; Ezek 18:24-26; Luke 8:13-14; 9:61-62; 17:32; John 5:24; 15:1-6; Rom 8:12-13,24; 1 Cor 6:9-10; 16:22; 2 Cor 5:20-6:2; Gal 5:4; Php 2:12; 2 Tim 2:12; Heb 3:5-6,12-15; 4:1; 6:4-8; 10:26-31,37-39; Jas 5:12; 1 John 1:6-7).