

Forfeiting an Inheritance

Welcome to Let the Bible Speak! All Christians are tasked with the responsibility of “testing the spirits whether they are of God, for many false prophets have gone into the world.” We provide Biblical information today to help YOU do your duty in testing the spirits.

The ultimate blessing of God’s people is being “heirs of the kingdom” of God. If you are a Christian, no matter your background, no matter how vile your past sins, no matter how far from God you have wandered, surely it was music to your ears to hear James 2:5, “Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?” Because of God’s willingness to adopt us as His children, the Spirit tells us in Romans 8:15-17 that we are “heirs of God” and “joint heirs with Christ.”

Anyone “seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33), can breathe a sigh of relief when he imagines Jesus saying to him as He prophesied in Matthew 25:34, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...”

That’s not all! Jesus tells us in John 10:27-28, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.”

We have the security of knowing when we come to Jesus that no individual can overpower us nor tear us away from Jesus against our will. We see in 1 John 4:4 that if we are determined to persevere, even the devil himself will be frustrated in his attacks against us “because He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world.”

The apostle Paul elaborates further in Romans 8:35-39, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ...Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Now that is blessed assurance! No external force—no matter how powerful—can sever our relationship with Christ.

While all believers relish these words, considerable controversy exists over whether or not one can forfeit his inheritance. Can anyone ELSE destroy one’s relationship with the Lord? Absolutely not!

The question is: does the individual have the ability, for whatever reason, to walk away from the Lord. And if he does, can he forfeit eternal life?

On the one hand, Charles Stanley says in his book *Eternal Security*, “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.” (74) Later, Stanley writes, “... believers who lose or abandon their faith will retain their salvation” (94). An endnote on chapter nine of Stanley’s book reads, “In his book *Absolutely Free*, Zane Hodgesargues convincingly that Satan can completely shipwreck a believer’s faith but that this in no way affects the believer’s security.”

In other words, if you have genuine faith at one point in your life, Hodges teaches you may later completely abandon the Lord and still spend eternity with Christ. You will not forfeit heaven, but only

forfeit the frills the faithful receive. *Is this really the message the Holy Spirit intended? We will let the Bible speak, **after our song...***

Can a child of God forfeit his inheritance? Consider Hebrews 12:14-17, "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which NO ONE will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone FALL SHORT of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food **sold his birthright**. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears."

The original story is recorded in Genesis 25:29, "Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he was weary. And Esau said to Jacob, 'Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary.' Therefore his name was called Edom. But Jacob said, 'Sell me your birthright as of this day.' And Esau said, 'Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?' Then Jacob said, 'Swear to me as of this day.' So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright." Esau despised his birthright; he forfeited his inheritance. Esau thought so little of his birthright that he was willing to trade something of great value for something as mundane as a bowl of soup.

In a similar way, is it possible today for someone to place the cravings of the flesh above serving God and in turning their back on God forfeit their spiritual inheritance? Yes!

Like Esau, Adam and Eve showed so little appreciation for the goodness of God and their garden paradise that they forfeited all of it for a bite of forbidden fruit. When the Devil first appears in Eden, you may remember from Genesis 3:1-6, that he seeks to convince Adam and Eve that there would be no consequences for disobedience. Notice the methodical five step plan Satan still uses to destroy man eternally.

*Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'" (Step one: instill doubt) And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, "You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die." Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will **not** surely die. (Step two: denial; by adding the word "not," the Devil gave Eve what she wanted - freedom to do what she desired without fearing punishment) 5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Step three: deception) So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate." (Step four: disobedience) Adam and Eve fell from grace (Genesis 3:11-24) and were cast out of the garden (Step five: spiritual death).*

So, can you see that the Devil's oldest lie is telling a child of God that she has unconditional security because God loves her - so that she can do whatever she wants with impunity. This is not to say the Christian must live in constant terror because God is looking for a way to send him to hell. Not at all! God has gone to far too much trouble to save you. The Spirit teaches in 2 Peter 3:9, "God is not willing that ANY should perish, but that all should come to repentance." The Bible makes it clear that

we CAN live in such a way that we need not worry about losing our relationship with Christ. After all, doesn't any friendship require effort on both parties?

Stanley speaks in his book, *Eternal Security*, of "... a Christian who at no point in his entire life bore any eternal fruit. And yet his salvation is never jeopardized." (121) Really?

Listen to 2 Peter 1:5-11, "But also for this very reason, giving ALL DILIGENCE, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For IF these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even MORE DILIGENT to make your call and election sure, for IF you do these things you will NEVER stumble..."

Twice the Holy Spirit urges *diligence* among believers. Why be diligent? The phrase "diligence" means "to exert one's self" (Thayer). A false sense of security, however, leads not to diligence, but to complacency. The Bible says, though, "to be even MORE DILIGENT to make your call and election sure..." If your ticket is automatically punched the day you are saved, why would Peter write Christians and tell them to be "MORE DILIGENT to make (their) call and election sure..." When you put the text all together it makes perfect sense. Let's take a closer look!

Next, we have the little two-legged word "if." This word makes the statement conditional – "in the event that." Peter says, "IF these things are yours and abound (adding or increasing), [faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love] you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Being fruitful was conditioned on spiritual growth. Then, we find "if" again in 2 Peter 1:10, "...IF you do these things you will NEVER stumble ("fall" – KJV)." So, in the event that we abound or grow in the Christian virtues, we have a *guarantee* against falling. Jesus puts it this way in Revelation 2:10, "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."

The Holy Spirit teaches in 1 Corinthians 15:2 "... (B)y which (gospel) also you are saved, IF you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain." To deny the possibility of losing one's salvation, in light of scriptures like these, requires a rejection of the natural meaning of words. Integrity demands that we accept that the word "IF" indicates a conditional statement.

In Colossians 1:22-23, the apostle Paul presents yet another conditional statement: "In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouable in his sight: IF ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel...."

Considering the apostle Paul's exhortation: what if you do NOT continue in the faith? What if you OPT NOT to be grounded and settled? What if you ARE moved away from the hope of the gospel, what then?

Folks, being a Christian is not a game. God expects us to be soldiers (Ephesians 6), laborers (Matthew 20), and servants (John 18:36). He expects us to exert ourselves in a positive way in glorifying God and advancing the kingdom.

The Lord also expects His people to avoid evil. The scriptures emphasizes that doing otherwise will result in forfeiting their inheritance. The apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, "Do you not know that the unrighteous WILL NOT inherit the kingdom of God? (Keep in mind that he is writing to Christians at the church in Corinth) Do not be deceived. (Some were deceived even in the first century church!) Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners *will inherit the kingdom of God*. And such were some of you. (You used to live like this, but cannot any longer!) But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."

When we become Christians, we repent. Repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change of life. Let us not forget the reminder offered in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

Unfortunately, Stanley downplays the seriousness of ungodliness. He writes (*Eternal Security*, 193), "We will be judged according to our deeds, whether good or bad. Our rank in His future kingdom is being decided each and every day of our lives."

Our rank? Folks, these scriptures warn against forfeiting our ENTIRE inheritance. Consider Galatians 5:19-21, "Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like...those who practice such things **will not inherit** the kingdom of God." Nothing here about LESS inheritance. The Bible says NO inheritance!

The beloved disciple provides even more clarity in 1 John 3:10, "This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother."

The lead apostle weighs in, writing in 2 Peter 1:20-21, "*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.*"

Friends, the only way to escape the pollutions of the world is by being saved! How could it be worse than before one escaped the pollutions of the world? This must refer to losing their salvation.

2 Peter 1:21, "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. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: 'A dog returns to his own vomit,' and, 'a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.'"

Then there is the message of the Scriptures on the book of life. After the Israelites made a god of gold, the Bible says in Exodus 32:33, "And the LORD said to Moses, 'Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.'" The book of Revelation was written to Christians (Revelation 1:1). We read in Revelation 20:12, "And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.... 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."

Jesus later says on the last page of the Bible in Revelations 22:18-19, “And if ANY MAN shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, **God shall take away his part out of the book of life**, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

Jesus says further in Revelation 3:5, “*Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.*” Clearly, the majority at the Sardis church had turned their back on the Lord and forfeited their inheritance.

Certainly, the apostle Paul understood the seriousness of “walking in the light as He is in the light” (1 John 1:7). He wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:27, “But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”

In their commentary, Jamieson, Faussett and Brown say of the word here translated “disqualified,” “failing shamefully of the prize myself, after I have *called* others to the contest. *Rejected* by God, the Judge of the Christian race, notwithstanding my having, by my preaching, led others to be accepted...” This is a far cry from what Stanley is preaching.

Baptist scholar, A. T. Robertson, says on “disqualified” in his *Word Pictures of the New Testament*, “It means not standing the test.... Most writers take Paul to refer to the possibility of his rejection in his personal salvation at the end of the race.... It is a humbling thought for us all to see this wholesome fear instead of smug complacency in this greatest of all heralds of Christ.”

We rightfully take great comfort in Romans 8:35-39, where the apostle enumerates a list of what will NOT separate us from God. Nowhere in this list, though, will you find that SIN will not separate us from God. Only sin can. In the same epistle, Paul gives us a full view of the situation in Romans 11:22, “Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.”

We’ll tell you how to get a copy of this message, after our song...

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