

and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit 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 have crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame.”

Those of whom Paul is speaking were not only enlightened, but were also “made partakers of the Holy Spirit.” One is made a partaker of the Holy Spirit only when he personally accepts Jesus as his savior and fully dedicates himself to the Lord. The Greek word here translated partakers is the same word that occurs in the Hebrews 3:14, which says, “For we are made *partakers* of Christ, *if* we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.” Clearly, Paul saying that those who are subject to the possibility of falling away are true Christians in the fullest sense of the word. They have been partaken of the Holy Spirit in the same sense that those who continue steadfast unto the end are partakers of Christ.

Because of this possibility of falling, the Apostle Peter urges “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for *if ye do these things*, ye shall never fall.” (2Pet 1:10). Whenever the word “if” occurs, it means there is a condition attached to the statement. It is only *if* ye do these things – the things previously stated in verses 5-7 – that ye shall never fall. If there were no possibility of failure, it would not be necessary to give diligence to make your calling and election sure.

Self Our Greatest Enemy

Nothing but self can cause us to fail. Paul says “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 creature*, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39). Notice, no *other* creature can separate us from the Lord. Only one creature can and that is ourselves.

Remember the opening text Hebrews 5:9. Christ “is the author of eternal salvation unto all them that *obey* him...”

“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”
Revelation 2:10

Can a Christian Fall From Grace?

Are Christians Saved for A Purpose?

“And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him. Hebrews 5:9

God's Elect

Apostle Peter addressed his first epistle to the “ELECT according to the foreknowledge of God...” (1Pet 1:2). The Apostle Paul wrote of the “...faith of God's ELECT...” (Titus 1:1). Jesus prophesied of a time of great tribulation which, if not shortened, would destroy all flesh and then added, “...but the ELECT'S sake those days shall be shortened.”

The same Greek work that is translated “elect” is translated “chosen” in 1Pet 2:9, “But ye are a CHOSEN generation, a royal priesthood...” and in Matthew 22:14, “For many are called, but few are CHOSEN.”

Who Are God's Elect?

Soon after beginning his ministry, Jesus selected twelve apostles. He sent them forth with the instructions to “...preach, saying the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 10:7). To those who believed the message, Jesus extended the invitation, “...If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” (Matthew 16:24). The Apostle Paul speaks of this invitation as “...the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,” (Philippians 3:14), and indicates there is a prize?

Remembering Peter's statement that the “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God...” are a “...chosen generation, a *royal priesthood*...” we read in Revelation 20:6, “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of his Christ, and shall *reign* with him a thousand years.” This is the prize and these are the elect.

For What Purpose Are They Chosen?

Peter's statement indicates they are chosen to be a *royal priesthood*. John in Revelation confirms this, saying, they shall be *kings* and *priests* who are to reign with Christ. For anyone to be a king and to reign, he must have subjects over which to reign. From Revelation 5:10 we learn that these subjects are to be on the earth – “And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

It should also be noticed from Revelation 20:6 that those who are to be priests and to reign with Christ are said to have part in the “first” resurrection. Whether we think of this resurrection as being first in order of time, or first in order of importance it clearly implies that there is *another* resurrection in God's plan. And this is just what we find the scriptures to teach. John 5:28-29 RSV records Jesus as saying “we hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgement.”

The Greek word translated judgement contains the thought of both a trial and decision. That the elect – Jesus and his faithful followers – will supervise this judgement is indicated in 1Corinthians 6:2 which says, “Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world?” The word *judge* as it is used in the scriptures means not only the making of a decision at the end of a trial, but also that, during the trial each one will be enlightened and come to a full understanding of what is required of him. The majority of mankind will not have had such enlightenment previously. They will then be judged according to their actions at that time as stated in Revelation 22:12, “And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give man according as his work *shall be*.” It will be then that the “...earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” (Isaiah 11:9). It is to bring about this condition in the earth that God has been choosing his *elect* to be associated with Jesus in His Kingdom.

How Are The Elect Predestinated?

Considering the great responsibility to be delegated to the elect, it is not surprising to find that they must first prove their faithfulness and measure up to very high standards. Roman 8:29 states, “For whom he did foreknow, he also did *predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son...*” What God predestinated was that all who would be of the elect would be of the same character and disposition as his son, Jesus. There is no doubt of time who these individuals will be is he chooses to exercise that power. But it

should be remembered that Jesus did not compel any to become his disciples. He invited them. Neither were any since that time compelled to become Christians. They accepted the invitation. But God *has* predetermined that none shall be of the elect who are “conformed to the image of his son.” (Rom 8:29).

God's Promises To the Elect – Sure But Conditional

“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises...” (2Pet 1:4). One of these promises is, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.” (Hebrews 13:5-6). That the Apostle Paul had complete confidence in this promise is evident by his words in Revelation 8:38-39, “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, not height, nor depth, nor any creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Truly, God's promises to the elect are sure of fulfilment.

Nevertheless, these promises are conditional. They are dependent on one's faithfulness and heart loyalty to Him. Man is a free moral agent. Just as God did not coerce anyone to become a Christian, likewise he does not coerce anyone to remain a Christian. This is why the apostles repeatedly exhorted them to faithfulness and loyalty. Consider a few examples:

Eph 6:13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, *and having done all, to stand*.

Phil 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*.

2 Peter 3:17 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*.

A Warning

In the last scripture quoted above, Peter warns against falling from one's own steadfastness. Such a warning would be meaningless if it were impossible for Christians to fall away. The apostle Paul in Hebrews 6:4-5 shows how serious such a falling away can be. He says, “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift