

THE DOCTRINE OF "FALLING FROM GRACE"

A Bible presentation of the proposition that "falling from grace" is not only an indirect denial of the whole Christian faith, but also a basic false doctrine of salvation by works.

by Forrest L. Keener

It must seem strange at first to hear such a notion called a doctrine. We, who know of the freeness and completeness of God's grace, realize that it is more of a denial than it is a statement of doctrine. However, when we consider the fountainhead of religious opinion from which it springs, we can immediately see that **it is not only the denial of one faith, but the statement of another**. That faith is, of course, that a man's salvation at some point or points, depends **not upon God's grace but upon man's conduct**. Let us take a moment to deal with the errors of this doctrine and its propagators.

IT SUGGESTS SALVATION THROUGH THE LAW

Now, Paul says, ***"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin"*** (Rom. 3:20). Almost everyone who teaches 'falling from grace' will deny that he believes anything contrary to this verse of Scripture. However, if you question him as to how a man goes about 'falling from grace,' he will lead you to some violation of the Law of God every time. He, in fact, could not soberly do otherwise, for the Scripture most clearly defines sin for us. ***"...sin is the transgression of the law."*** (1 John 3:4) Please, do not misunderstand me. I highly respect the perfect righteousness of God's Law and am fully aware that Christ warns us against teaching anyone to disregard it. (Matt. 5:19) I am certainly not suggesting any such thing. I am simply saying that our obedience to God's Law should be motivated by love and never performed as a bargain to bring us into, or keep us within, the favor of God. It should be the out-flowing of a new inward nature. (Rom. 7:22)

OUR STANDING WITH GOD

Our standing with God is totally dependent upon the merits of Christ's death on Mt. Calvary, and is in no sense dependent upon our approach to the Law, Mt. Sinai. Hear Paul's statement of this truth: ***"For what the law could***

not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." (Rom. 8:14) This verse holds enough truth about free grace to hold the average Arminian at bay for fifteen years, if only he felt obliged to understand it before he rode his Satan-built horse on down the road of all directions.

First, the Scripture states that there is, therefore, (because of the inward man created of God who delights in the Law of God - Rom. 7:22) now no condemnation. The context shows us that Paul means no condemnation, past, present or future.

Secondly, verses one and two state that this freedom from condemnation is by being in Christ Jesus, (Rom. 8:1) and that such do not walk after the flesh, (endeavoring to please God by fleshly obedience to the Law) but that they walk after the Spirit. This cannot mean, as some so automatically assume, that they keep the Law as best they can in obedience to the Spirit, for verse two most emphatically states that the Spirit of life has made us free from the Law of sin and death. Now, being free from the Law certainly cannot mean to be obliged to walk according to it or to perish.

Thirdly, this passage states that the Law could not make us free from condemnation for it was weak through the flesh (depending upon the flesh for obedience and, therefore, being totally disobeyed, it must render condemnation, not life). The 'falling from grace' teacher, however, insists that man remains saved by some combination of standards, precepts or principles, which he in the human body (flesh) obeys. Paul, in Galatians 3:3, asks these mistaken teachers a very pertinent question. "Are you so foolish? having begun in the spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?" Whatever else 'falling from grace' teachers believe, they invariably believe that a man's salvation starts (in some measure) by the Spirit and is completed or preserved, (in some measure) by the flesh. It is indeed foolish, yea profane, to think that the flesh could start, perpetuate or finish such a supernatural transaction as life out of death.

WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE

We must conclude that 'falling from grace' is both doctrine and doubt. The Arminian doubts and denies either that God can or that He wills to save and keep man totally and absolutely by His own power. They believe that God

dispenses similar, if not equal grace, to all men and that final glorification in heaven depends, in its last analysis, upon what a man does with this grace. **If there is one millionth of one ounce of truth in such a notion as this,** Paul and also the Holy Spirit, would be not only authors but also masters of confusion to have written such verses as Ephesians 2:8-9. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. " Paul would have been constrained by inspiration to have said, 'By grace are you saved through your faith and through certain works ordained of God, and you shall one day be His glorified workmanship in Christ Jesus if you walk in them.' As confused and profane as this imaginary interpretation sounds, it is, in essence, exactly the interpretation that all who teach 'falling from grace' must and do put upon this Scripture if, indeed, they recognize it at all.

SALVATION IS OF THE LORD

The fact is that salvation is of the Lord. (Jonah 2:9) Jonah did not say mostly, or partly, or initially. Let us finalize the whole of the matter with the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. In John 6:37-39, the Lord states that to do the Father's will He must lose nothing which the Father has given Him, but should **raise it up at the last day. According to these verses anyone given to Jesus Christ for salvation must in no wise be cast out, but must be raised up at the last day** or Jesus has not fulfilled the Father's will. How is this done? By Jesus giving spiritual strength to the flesh as we cling to Him? No! According to John 17:2, it is because God has given Jesus Christ power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as God the Father has given Him.

CONSIDER JOHN 5:24

"He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath (now) everlasting (un-endable) life and shall not (in the future) come into condemnation, but is passed (a complete transaction) from death unto life." It is no problem at all to accept this without reservation if we realize that both the hearing and believing of John 5:24 are brought about within the framework of regeneration by the grace of God.

I am glad I am not holding on to God, for weak creature that I am, I would surely turn loose. Quite to the contrary, God is holding on to me. (Psalm

37:23-24) I can, therefore, know that my final glorification in heaven is spoken of in the Scripture as a transaction already completed by God (Rom. 8:30), and that **nothing** can befall me which will not be for my good, God's glory and within God's eternal purpose. (Rom. 8:28) Hallelujah!

What God required of me on Mt. Sinai, in the Law, He gave to me as a free gift on Mt. Calvary, in Christ. The teachers and believers of 'falling from grace' still trust the righteousness of the Law which says, "**... the man which doeth those things shall live...**" (Rom. 10:5) My heart rejoices in the righteousness which is by faith, not acts or works. "**For Christ is the end** (the fulfilling of all its requirements) **of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.**" (Rom. 10:4) In other words, He is all the righteousness the Law requires of me because I believe in Him as my all in all before God.

Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come; 'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, And grace will lead me home. Amen!