

## SOTERIOLOGY (160)

A question naturally arises—“What if the disciple doesn’t develop a close relationship with Jesus Christ and doesn’t bear fruit?” The answer from verse 2 is that he will be removed from service and everything he did will be burned (15:6), and, just as Paul says, he will be saved but his rewards will all be lost (I Cor. 3:14-15). We also learn that one who does not bear fruit will “dry up” (15:6), which means there will be no spiritual vibrancy, no spiritual development, no deep understanding of God’s Word that will ever be experienced. There will be a spiritual deadness to the non fruit-bearing believer until he gets before Jesus Christ, at which time he will lose all rewards. A vine that is “pruned” (15:2) is a vine that is partially cut but not completely removed. The cut vine is still imbedded in the root.

Believers have been saved for the purpose of developing in their relationship with Jesus Christ so they may bear fruit. Those who aren’t bearing fruit will have spiritual lives that are dead and eventually all works will be burned and all rewards will be lost.

Can a person be saved and bear no fruit? Yes! Can a person be saved and bear no fruit and still have a dynamic spiritual life? No! Can a person who bears no fruit expect to be rewarded in heaven? No!

This passage has nothing to do with salvation, but with service. God expects His people to be fruit-bearers. If we do not sense God is working through us to bear any fruit, certain serious questions need to be asked:

- 1) Are we really developing in our personal relationship with Jesus Christ?
- 2) Are we seeking to obey the Word of God in situations of life?

3) II Peter 1:10-11 - These two verses are sometimes cited to suggest one may lose his salvation. However, upon a close examination of the words and the context, one will discover that this is not a valid interpretation.

It is very clear, even upon a very basic analysis of the verse, that the issue at stake is not about one losing his salvation, but one about God’s elect stumbling and not having an abundant entrance into the Kingdom.

In the opening verses of chapter 1, the Apostle Peter makes it very clear that he is writing to believers (1:1); those who have received faith (1:1), righteousness (1:1), life (1:3), and all the promises of God (1:4). Peter is certainly not questioning whether these people are saved; he is assuring them that they are saved.

In verses 5-7, Peter challenges these believers to develop godly qualities in character so they may bear godly fruit (1:8). Fruit-bearing believers become fruit-bearing believers by developing the godly qualities described in verses 5-7. The believer who does not develop these qualities is one who will not bear fruit and will not grow in the knowledge of the things of God.

Peter realized that some believers do not develop in these godly qualities. Some are totally focused on the temporal, not the eternal (1:9a).

## SOTERIOLOGY (161)

He makes it very clear that these believers are saved from their sins (1:9b), but they have, by their quality of lifestyle, apparently forgotten this reality.

The Apostle Peter, for his own life and the life of every believer, desired an abundant entrance into eternity (1:11). He did not want any temporal thing to prevent any believer from an abundant entrance into eternity. He did not want any temporal focus to trip up a believer from receiving full rewards.

When Peter challenges the believers to make their calling and choosing certain (1:10), he is challenging them in this context to live lives and develop qualities which will establish or confirm an abundance of wealth in eternity. Peter wanted every believer to develop such godly lives that they legally guarantee themselves an abundance of rewards.

The believer who refuses to develop in these God-honoring qualities does not have the assurance of his election, nor will he have abundance in eternity. He will be saved, but he will lose his rewards ( I Cor. 3:15). It is possible to enter heaven and receive an abundance of rewards or it is possible by the skin of one's teeth.

These verses have nothing to do with one losing his salvation—they have to do with losing eternal rewards. God desires that every family member finish life with an abundance of rewards. He desires that every believer inherit an abundance of eternal wealth and those who develop in the qualities described by Peter in verses 5-7 will have an abundant entrance into glory.

4) I John 3:10 - This verse is used to suggest that salvation is an issue of works; therefore, security is an issue of works.

In this verse, the context and verb tenses and proper theology are ignored by those who use the verse in this way.

Many of the verbs and participles of this context are present tense, indicating that the Apostle John was writing about action that was continual and habitual. Some present tense words in this context are: practices (3:3), abides and sins (3:6); practices (3:8); practices, abide, cannot (3:9); does and love (3:10).

The stress of John is that a believer or unbeliever can be determined by his or her continual, habitual pattern of life. If a person continually demonstrates obedience to God and His Word and a love for God and His people, it may accurately be concluded that this one is fully manifesting the true reality that he/she is a child of God.

This passage is not about a person once saved losing his salvation; it is one which may be used as a description of one truly saved. A truly saved person will, generally speaking, continually manifest that he/she is saved by a fellowship with God that will work itself out in several ways. Likewise, a truly unsaved person will continually have attitudes and actions which reflect that he/she is unsaved.

## SOTERIOLOGY (162)

True salvation will eventually be evidenced in the life by its fruit. Children of God and children of the devil manifest themselves over a period of time by their habitual pattern of life.

Those who attempt to “rightly divide” the context must clearly recognize the central point of the context. There were those in John’s day, as there is in our day, who were really not right with God, but were professing to be right with God (I John 2:19). John is giving guidelines for spotting fruit that proves one is truly right with God.

5) Hebrews 6:4-6 - Here is the passage this teacher has personally seen used the most in an attempt to defend the thesis that one may lose his salvation. This clearly becomes a matter of context. This particular passage has been viewed in at least four ways:

1. It refers to professing Jewish believers who are not saved.
2. It refers to a hypothetical impossibility to fall away or to crucify Christ a second time.
3. It refers to any believer who might lose his salvation.
4. It refers to a true believer who may lose his ability to grow.

It may be observed from the context with relative certainty that the text is dealing with a true believer:

- 1) He is exhorted to approach God’s throne with confidence (4:16).
- 2) He is supposed to be a teacher, mature in the things of God (5:12).
- 3) He is one who has been enlightened (6:4a).
- 4) He is one who has received the Holy Spirit (6:4b).
- 5) He is identified as being “beloved” (6:9).
- 6) He has accomplished things for the name of God (6:10).

From these contextual observations, we may safely and accurately conclude that this passage is talking about a true believer and that is one who has truly come to faith in Jesus Christ.

It may also be observed from the context with certainty that the subject at stake is one of a lack of growth, not a loss of salvation (5:12-14). The writer of Hebrews is rebuking the Jewish believers for their lack of maturity (5:12-14), and challenging them to get on with their growth (6:1-2).

Several key points follow this basic rebuke:

- 1) Growth can only occur by divine permission. 6:3
- 2) God may not permit growth to a believer who is continually struggling over the same basic elements of salvation. 6:4-6