

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS - 72554 EDITION

BI-MONTHLY PERIODICAL OF MAMMOTH SPRING CHURCH OF CHRIST

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2022

There Are Only Two Ways

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I suppose that most people who are familiar with the Bible are familiar with these words spoken by Jesus: “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matt. 7:13-14). There are a couple things we can take from this passage. (1) There is a choice to be made and (2) there are only two options. The English word *strait* means, “a place of limited spatial capacity; narrow or cramped.” The New Testament documents were originally written in the Greek language. The Greek word for *strait* is *stenosis*. Perhaps you’ve heard of spinal stenosis, which is the narrowing of the spinal column. This condition puts pressure on nerves and can cause a great deal of pain in your back. Maybe you’ve heard of aortic stenosis, which is when the heart’s aortic valve narrows and will block blood flow. There are a lot of medical ailments that are connected with some type of stenosis.

Jesus presented two options in this scenario - wide and narrow. That’s it! Notice what Jesus then did in the text. The text of Matthew 7 is just a portion of what we call “The Sermon on the Mount.” After He told His audience that there is an *either-or*, He warned the people of “false prophets” (Matt. 7:15). These

false prophets would be known by their produce (v. 16). That warning extends down through verse 20. The next thing Jesus did was to tell the multitude that it’s not about what you *say*, it’s about what you *do* (Matt. 7:21-23). In today’s language it would be something like, “Just because a person claims to be a Christian does not make it so. Are they doing what God says?” The apostle Paul tells us to understand what the will of the Lord is (Eph. 5:17). The only way we can differentiate between a false teacher and the will of God is to know the word of God. We can both *know* and *do* God’s will today!

“Think how foolish it would be to have God’s word and do nothing with it!”

In the conclusion of the sermon, He compared a wise man to a foolish man (Matt. 7:24-27). The wise man will both *hear* and *do* the words of Jesus (7:24). The fool will *hear* and *not do* (7:26). Again, as

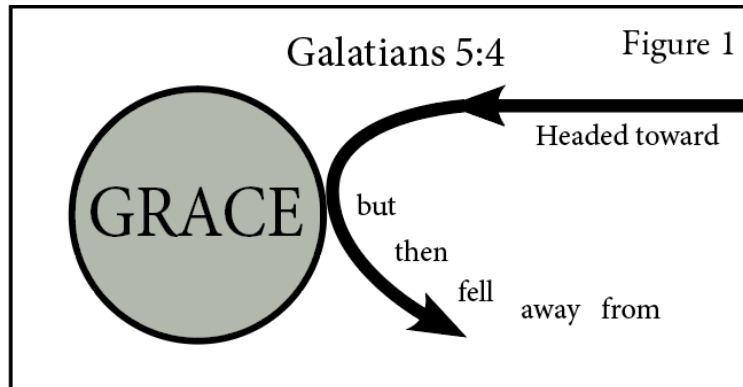
with the two ways that are available, there are only two possible options. The gospel of Luke recorded this same conversation and starts it like this: “And why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say” (Lk. 6:46)? Again, just because someone claims to be something, that does not make it so. Does the action match the claim? Remember, there are only two ways! We are either doing God’s will or we are not. If we do not know the word of God, how could we tell the difference? Think how foolish it would be to have God’s word and do nothing with it!

Do you have a Bible question you would like answered?

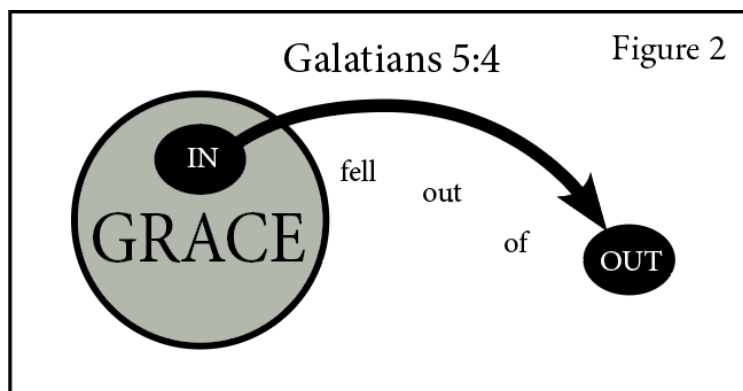


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One of the doctrines of Calvinism that has created a considerable stir through the years has been the notion of the “perseverance of the saints” - commonly referred to as “the impossibility of apostasy” or “once saved, always saved.” In his epistle to the churches of the Galatian province, Paul wrote a remark that calls that doctrine into question. The King James Version reads: “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are **fallen from grace**.” Most versions have a similar reading. The NKJV and NASB also have “fallen from grace.” Quite a few translations add the word “away” in their rendering—“**fallen away from grace**”—including the ASV, ESV, RSV, NRSV, NIV, CEB, CJB, ISV, MOUNCE, NET, TLV, WEB, WYC, and YLT. The word “away” may leave the impression that persons were heading toward the state of salvation but, prior to achieving that state and entering into it, they veered away from it (see Figure 1).

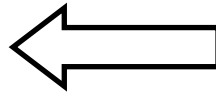
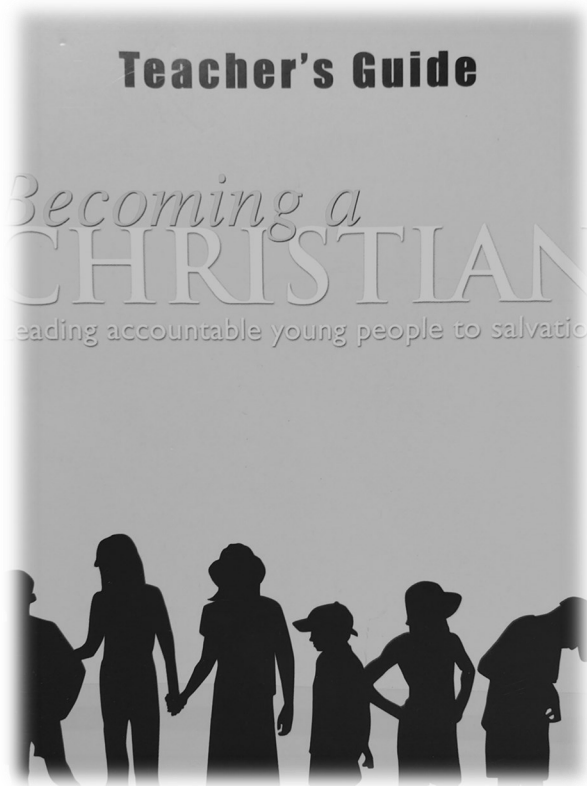


The Greek term translated “fallen” is from the verb *pipto* meaning “to fall.” In Galatians 5:4, the word has the preposition *ek* prefixed to it. This Greek preposition means primarily “out of.” *Ekipipto*, then, means literally “to fall out of.” One would need to be “in” a realm or sphere in order to “fall out of” it (see Figure 2). In the case of the Galatians, they had been converted to become Christians (Acts 18:23) and were counted as being **in** Christ’s church (Galatians 1:2-3).



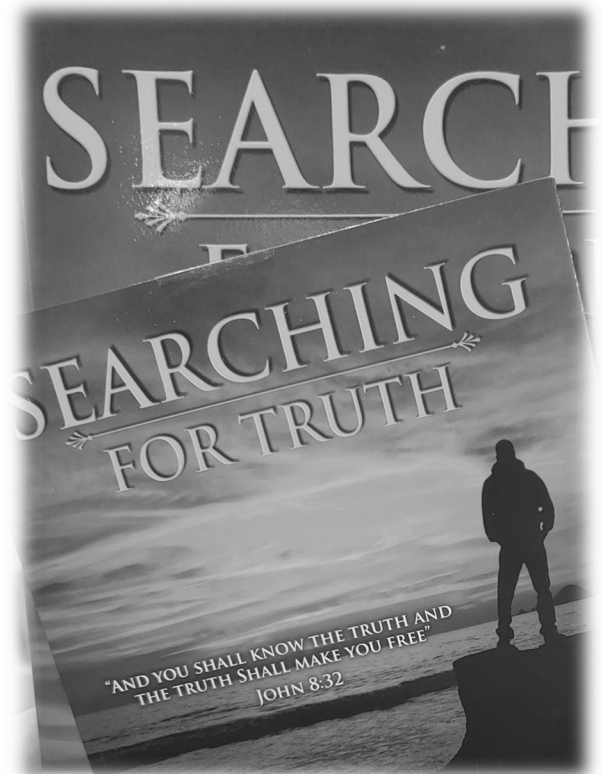
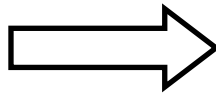
Baptist Greek grammarian A.T. Robertson explains the language: “Ye did fall **out of** grace,” “ye left the sphere of grace in Christ and took your stand in the sphere of law as your hope of salvation.” Mounce adds: “to fall from, forfeit, lose.” Meyer noted: “Ye *have forfeited* the relation of being *objects* of divine *grace*.” And Eadie explains: “Christ’s method of justification is wholly of grace, and those who rely on law and merit are in opposition to grace—are fallen **out of** it.” These observations are buttressed by the fact that in the same verse, Paul says to the Christians: “You have become **estranged** from Christ.” The word means to “dissever from.” In addition to “estranged,” other translations have “severed” (ASV/ESV/RSV), “alienated” (NIV), and “cut yourselves off from Christ” (NRSV). Therefore, it is possible at one time to be within the grace of Christ and thereby saved, and then to so conduct oneself as to be severed from, to fall out of, and forfeit that grace.

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- We use the Bible only (2 Pet. 1:3). We have no creed book, convention, or central headquarters.
- Our name is after the One who died to establish His church (Rom. 16:16).
- The church of Christ began in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3; Acts 2:1-4).
- Jesus promised to establish His church (Matt. 16:18).
- That church was purchased with Jesus' blood (Acts 20:28).
- The church is married to Christ (Rom. 7:4).
- It was established in the first century (Acts 2:41, 47).
- Jesus is the one and only Head of the One Body (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23).
- You can only be added to the church by God Himself (Acts 2:41, 47).

What about being saved?

- All people are saved by grace, though faith (Eph. 2:8-9).
- No one is saved by faith alone (Jas. 2:14-26).
- No one is saved by grace alone (Matt. 7:21).
- Jesus said that belief plus baptism will produce salvation (Mk. 16:16). That is a promise, not a command.
- The Bible teaches that repentance plus baptism produces remission of sins (Acts 2:37-38).
- Belief, confession, and baptism is seen in the account of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:37-38).
- The Corinthians heard, believed, and were baptized (Acts 18:8).
- Christ is "put on" in baptism (Gal. 3:26-27).
- The apostle Peter said that "baptism does save us" (1 Pet. 3:21).

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