

Take Heed Lest Ye Fall

By Doug Hamilton

Falling from the faith is a fact!

- James 5:19-20 My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back,²⁰ let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.
- Hebrews 6:4-6 For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit,⁵ and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,⁶ and *then* have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.
- 2 Peter 2:21-22 For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them.²² It has happened to them according to the true proverb, “A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT,” and, “A sow, after washing, *returns* to wallowing in the mire.”

A Few Interesting Statistics

- The current retention rate of young adults graduating from high school appears to be approximately 60%. –Flavel Yeakley 2008
- In a study of the BCC, it showed that 3,800 out of 7,200 people baptized left the faith (53% attrition). –Vincent and Yeakley (1985).
- “More than one-quarter of American adults (28%) will leave their faith that they were raised in...” -According to the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life
- Not even Jesus had a 100% retention rate among His own disciples. *John 6:70-71 Jesus answered them, “Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?”⁷¹ Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him.*

More than two decades ago, I was a new convert in a small congregation in the Midwest. In the first year of my Christianity, I was active in getting to know the members of my church family and looked up to many of them as leading figures of my life. It was stunning to see what could occur over a short period of time, for dozens of these Christians that appeared to be rock solid had fallen in their faith.

They might fall because of the lust.

- 1 Corinthians 5:1-2 It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father’s wife.² You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst.
- Paul was an iconic figure in the local church family. He was a doctor and was married to a beautiful wife. He was always willing to teach a class and his quiet demeanor was comforting. She was unable to have children and the longing that was generated in her heart drove her to be super-involved with the nursery. Both had grown up in the church, but only one is faithful today, for “faithful” Paul could not remain faithful to his own wife.
- 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor

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revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

- Loren was a family man working on his internship for neurology. He had grown up in the church and was married to a beautiful wife who had also grown up in the faith. Together they had three young children and were active in the church family. I really looked up to them because they looked like the perfect family within the church family. That all changed over the course of just a few years, for the husband became unfaithful in his marriage. It miserably ended in divorce and extreme hurt for the family.

They might fall because of a love for the world.

- 2 Timothy 4:10 "...for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica..."
- 1 Timothy 6:9 But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.
- Lisa was a stay at home mom that had a wonderful husband and daughter. She had grown up in the faith and was extremely active in the congregation. If there was an event of fellowship to be planned, she was there. We really liked this family and looked at her as a good role model. Then one day she decided to be involved in a multi-level marketing job. All those fellowships that she had at her home became sales meetings. She would invite them over for a meal and before serving it begin to draw the circles and arrows on the eraser board. This was really awkward, but she did manage to sign up a few. When she ran out of people to show the plan to in the church family, she started attending a large denominational group at the other end of town to increase the prospective base. Today she is not part of the church nor the MLM group.
- 1 John 2:15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

They might fall because of self-righteousness.

- Galatians 5:4 You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.
- Carol was a very faithful Christian and had become very close to our family. She was the type of person that would give you her own coat if it meant that she would stand in a blizzard. She studied regularly, prayed often and fellowshiped often. Something changed over the course of a few years, for she became judgmental of others that did not share her zeal. She eventually condemned many in the church family for being "over-materialistic" and not sincere about prayer. She actually condemned what others put in the offering dish based on her percentage. She was no longer a joy to know and was distanced from. She left the church family and is basically a loner because she tried to become self-justifying in her actions.
- Hebrews 4:1 Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.

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They might fall because of a lack of grounding.

- Luke 8:13 “Those on the rocky *soil are* those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no *firm* root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away.”
- Hebrews 2:1 For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away *from it*.
- Gene was the friendly man that always wanted to shake your hand after worship. This middle-aged man was a Christian for about fifteen years and had a beautiful family with a wife and two children. I viewed him as a “rock” in the faith, but that would change over the years. The one thing that I noticed he lacked was a strong biblical grounding. He would not challenge himself biblically and it showed in the long run. Gene had a past drug problem that had resurfaced. This man was genuine, but a second secret life had begun that eventually took him out of the church along with his beautiful family.
- 2 Peter 3:17-18 “...be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness,¹⁸ but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

They might fall because of personal bitterness.

- Hebrews 12:15 “See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled...”
- 1 John 2:9 The one who says he is in the Light and *yet* hates his brother is in the darkness until now.
- Randy was a man that served as a deacon in the church family. He was one of those people that always liked to help others. His wife was very much the same. They had two children and were active in the youth group. They were a stable vision in my life and I viewed them as “anchors” in a chaotic world. It turned out that Randy and his wife had a severe pride problem. When one of their kids got in a bit of trouble at the church building, some of the others went to them for clarity. This set off a torrent of hate that spread to the bulk of the church family. Within a matter of months, they left for another congregation in a nearby town, taking their prideful problems with them. He lost his family in the process.
- 1 Timothy 6:20-21 “...guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly *and* empty chatter *and* the opposing arguments of what is falsely called “knowledge”—²¹ which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith.

Conclusion: Only saved people can fall from salvation.

Look at the person to your left. Now look at the person to your right. Now look at the person in front of you. Now look at yourself. Statistics show that at least one of those people will leave the faith of their own choosing.

The Challenge

It is a sobering thought, but a reality. You might not have a lot that you can do to stop another person from leaving Christ, but you can make sure that one of them IS NOT YOU!