

# THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

## Encounter Jesus – The Son of the Living God

### *Spiritual Defection*

Most likely you have known people who have professed faith in Christ, who seemed to follow Him for some time, and then they ‘fall away’. We should not be surprised by those who ‘fall away’ from the faith. The truth is this has been occurring since the public ministry of Jesus.

Often, the cause of spiritual defection is moral failure. In other cases, the defection may be due to unresolved doubts or unanswered hard questions about the Bible. If you’ve been a Christian for any length of time, your faith has been challenged. Maybe you prayed for something that seemed to you to be God’s will and He did not give you the ‘yes’ answer you prayed for. Perhaps you trusted some promise in the Bible, but it didn’t work like you expected. Maybe you’ve had to suffer some illness. Perhaps a spouse or Christian friend has betrayed you. Maybe your children have rejected both faith in God and you. How do we handle these things? What is the antidote to spiritual defection?

**Persevering faith in God’s Word and in God’s Son  
is the antidote to spiritual defection.**

At the start of *John 6*, Jesus had in the vicinity of 20,000 gleeful followers after He fed them the loaves and fish. By the end of *John 6*, it was a nucleus of 12 who stood firmly with Him, and even one of them was a traitor! Unbelief became the greatest obstacle for the wider group of disciples not continuing to follow Jesus just like it still happens today.

Even the Twelve thought like the masses – that Jesus the Messiah had come to reign over Israel. They did not yet understand that in His first coming, Jesus was the suffering Servant. In His second coming, Jesus will be the conquering King. In His first coming, Jesus arrived in the most humble of circumstances. In His second coming, Jesus will arrive with the armies of heaven at His side.

During the first coming, the crowds wanted to make Jesus their king now! They longed for a political leader – a warrior against Rome for Israel. The allegiance of most faltered when they heard His message. He spoke to them figuratively concerning eating His flesh and drinking His blood. They heard His words and used them as an ‘excuse’ to turn back from following Jesus. They did not come to Jesus with teachable hearts. They were not looking for a spiritual leader. They wanted a physical leader. Since Jesus no longer served their purposes, they abandoned Him.

**Read *John 6:66 (ESV)* <sup>66</sup> *After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.***

People follow Christ for reasons that are NOT the right ones. These disciples had followed Jesus because of the bread and the miracles. People do the same thing today. A church meets THEIR NEEDS for a time and then when it does not they leave. We are not to judge another person’s salvation

experience even when their works do not reflect their salvation. **Luke 6:37 (ESV)** <sup>37</sup> *“Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven.”*

When a person turns back from following Jesus it is easy to judge and conclude that they have lost salvation. Some denominations support the belief that salvation can be lost. Baptists teach that a person cannot lose the salvation of God after genuinely inviting Jesus into our hearts. However, we may not be as quick to understand and explain through the scriptures how a person who genuinely has God in their heart can never lose salvation.

Some people for many reasons may ‘feel’ they have lost salvation because of something they did or did not do or because of the ‘hard questions’ they are struggling with. We need to keep in mind that our thoughts and feelings cannot always be trusted. And Satan enjoys tormenting some through feelings and thoughts. In order to combat Satan, we must continually fill our hearts with God’s Word.

Therefore, I want to answer the question **“Can a Christian lose salvation?”** not for the purpose of religious argument but for the purpose of providing biblical assurance that salvation is not something we ‘lose’ or something that God withdraws.

Let’s be clear. A *Christian* is not a person who has said a prayer or walked down an aisle or been raised in a Christian family and then ‘lives like the devil’. Church membership does not make a Christian and neither does holding a church leadership position. While all of these things can be a part of the Christian experience, they are not what makes a genuine Christian. A Christian is a person who has fully trusted in Jesus Christ as the only Savior and, therefore, possesses the Holy Spirit.

Let’s look at what the Bible says occurs at salvation.

1. **A Christian is redeemed.** **1 Peter 1:18-19 (ESV)** <sup>18</sup> *knowing that you were ransomed (redeemed) from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold,* <sup>19</sup> *but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.* The word redeemed or ransomed refers to being purchased at a price. The price is the flesh and blood of the Son of God. We were purchased at the cost of Christ’s death. **For a Christian to lose salvation, God would have to cancel His purchase of the individual for whom He paid with the precious blood of Christ.**
2. **A Christian is justified.** **Romans 5:1 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup> *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Justification is the process by which sinful human beings are made acceptable to God This means those who receive Jesus as Savior are “declared righteous” by God. **For a Christian to lose salvation, those absolved of guilt would have to be tried again and found guilty. God would have to reverse the sentence handed down from the divine bench.**
3. **A Christian is promised eternal life.** **John 3:16 (ESV)** <sup>16</sup> *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.* Eternal life is the promise of spending forever in heaven with God. **For a Christian to lose salvation, the promise of**

**eternal life would have to be nullified since the Christian is promised to live forever beginning at the moment of salvation.**

4. A Christian is marked by God and sealed by the Spirit. *Ephesians 1:13-14 (ESV)* <sup>13</sup> *In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup> who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.* At the moment of faith, the new Christian is sealed with the Spirit – a guarantee of the heavenly inheritance. **For a Christian to lose salvation, God would have to withdraw the Spirit, cancel the deposit, break His promise, revoke the guarantee, keep the inheritance, forego the praise, and lessen His glory.**
5. Salvation is the gift of God. *Romans 6:23 (ESV)* <sup>23</sup> *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* God's gifts are "irrevocable." *Romans 11:29 (ESV)* <sup>29</sup> *For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.* Irrevocable means irreversible, unalterable, final.
6. Nothing can remove a Christian from God's hand. *John 10:28-29 (ESV)* <sup>28</sup> *I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.*
7. Nothing can separate a child of God from the Father's love. *Romans 8:38-39 (ESV)* <sup>38</sup> *For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.* God guarantees eternal life and maintains the salvation He has given us.

One of the biggest reasons that folks choose to believe that salvation can be lost is this: Not everyone who calls himself a "Christian" has actually been born again. The Bible declares that a true Christian won't live in a state of continual, unrepentant sin.

**Read 1 John 3:6 (ESV)** <sup>6</sup> *No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.*

The Bible also says that anyone who departs the faith is demonstrating that he was never truly a Christian.

**Read 1 John 2:19 (ESV)** <sup>19</sup> *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.*

If you are personally doubting your own salvation make sure that you have:

- **A—Admitted** that I am a sinner (*Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23*).
- **B—Believed** that Jesus is God's Son, that He died for me, and that His death can save my soul (*John 3:16, Romans 5:8-10*).

- **C—Confessed** that He is my Lord and Savior (*Romans 10:9-13*).

If you do this, God’s Word promises that you will be saved, your sins will be forgiven, and you will spend eternity in heaven.

Now, back to the brief conversation Jesus had with the Twelve after the ‘fair weather’ followers turned back.

**Read John 6:67-71 (ESV)** <sup>67</sup> So Jesus said to the Twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” <sup>68</sup> Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, <sup>69</sup> and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.” <sup>70</sup> Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.” <sup>71</sup> He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him.

Jesus asked His 12 disciples if they planned to desert Him too, it was Peter who spoke up for the group and declared their faith. “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life...” The human side of Jesus must have been disappointed when the large crowd dwindled down to a small group. But, just think what that small group eventually did! They managed to evangelize their known world through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Peter’s words are a reminder that none of us can speak for another. Peter ‘assumed’ that Judas was ‘one of them’ because of his outward appearance. Like with Judas, Jesus knows all our hearts. It is not our place to assume who is in or out of the kingdom. It is our place to plant the seeds of the gospel everywhere we can.

In Jesus’ parable of the soils in *Matthew 13*, (you can read that for yourself), we find that the seed of the Word of God falls upon a variety of soils. The Lord knew that much of the seed we sow will not grow to bear fruit. Jesus as a man understood the rejection of the people He came to save; however, rejection by the masses did not hinder His continuance in God’s plan for our redemption. Yes, even among Jesus’ closest disciples a traitor lurked. Never should we let the rejection of the Word by others stop our spreading of the gospel.

The chapter ends differently than it started. It started with crowds wanting Jesus as king. It closes with the Lord asking, *Do you want to go away as well?*” Note that there are three groups represented in our text: (1) There are those who were initially interested in Jesus and followed Him until He started teaching some things that they didn’t like. Then they defected. (2) There are those, represented by Judas, who seem fully committed to Jesus. Judas kept up such a good front that the other disciples did not suspect that he was the betrayer. But his life ended in tragic rejection of Christ. (3) There are those, like Peter, who submit with persevering faith even to the hard teachings, because they know who Jesus really is and they’re committed to follow Him.

Which group are you in? Your perseverance unto eternal life depends on being in that third group. Make sure that your faith is in God’s Word and in His Son!