

**Teaching Series:** Saved for Eternity

**Title:** Session 5 – Many Will Fall Away

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## Chapter 2: Objections against Eternal Salvation

### Galatians 5:19–21 (The Practice of Fleshly Works)

#### **Galatians 5:19–21 (NKJV)**

- <sup>19</sup> *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,*
- <sup>20</sup> *idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,*
- <sup>21</sup> *envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that **those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God.***

Some preachers use this passage to threaten Christians that, if they habitually practice the works of the flesh described in the text, they can lose their salvation at any time without knowing. First, as we demonstrated in the previous section, inheriting the Kingdom is tantamount to being saved. Second, Paul doesn't say that those people who practice fleshly works will be disinherited from a state of heirs, but that they will not inherit anything in the first place. Third, he doesn't specify a clear timeline or a number of times after which those who practice the works of the flesh will lose their salvation.

Fourth, if we look carefully at the context (a few verses before and a few verses after our passage), we can quickly discover that the apostle Paul is portraying a stark contrast between the flesh and the Spirit and between the works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit: "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are **contrary** to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish" (Galatians 5:16–17). He merely puts them side by side for comparison and godly instruction to believers. After enumerating all the works of the flesh, he begins Verse 22 with the preposition "BUT," which commences the enumeration of the fruits of the Spirit. He concludes in Verse 24 that those who are Christ's (who are different from those who practice the works of the flesh and will not inherit the Kingdom) have already crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. So, he encourages believers to live according to the truth about their already changed nature. In fact, in Verse 25, he says this: if you are in the Spirit, live in Him, and belong to God, then also walk, and behave in the Spirit or according to Him. The theme is clearly the renewal of the minds of believers in Christ and not their loss of salvation.

## Ephesians 5:5–6 (The Sons of Disobedience Part 1)

### **Ephesians 5:5–6 (NKJV)**

- <sup>5</sup> *For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, **has any inheritance** in the Kingdom of Christ and God.*
- <sup>6</sup> *Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things **the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.***

This text, which is often used as an objection to eternal salvation, is very similar to two other scriptures from previous sections with a new addition: “the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.” The implication is that believers in Christ, who are sons of God and disobey Him by doing any of the shameful things enumerated, will come under the wrath of God after a certain point. However, what kind of disobedience is Paul talking about here? It’s disobedience of faith, not disobedience to the Law. He also says in Romans 1:5 that through Jesus, we received the grace and apostleship to bring about “the obedience of faith” among all nations. Sons of obedience are those who put their faith in Christ while the sons of disobedience are those without Christ.

Again, here the main argument to this objection is that the apostle Paul describes the behavior of those who will never inherit the Kingdom of God and are under His wrath with the purpose of teaching believers how not to live. He begins in Ephesians 4:17 by saying, “you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk,” and he continues with this contrast throughout Chapters 4 and 5. In Ephesians 5:1, Paul encourages believers in the church of Ephesus to become imitators of God, as beloved children, and in Verse 7 of the same chapter, he instructs them not to be partakers with the sons of disobedience. In Verse 8, Paul clarifies even more that they were once darkness, but now they are light in the Lord, so they should walk according to that light from inside of them. So, they are not those who will be disinherited if they persist long enough in sinful behaviors. The phrase “wrath of God” is meant to emphasize the gravity of sin. Although Jesus Christ has removed all sin and condemnation at the time of salvation, that doesn’t mean God became softer on sin and we can be relaxed about it. We should strive to differentiate ourselves from darkness and live according to the Kingdom standards we inherited.

## Colossians 3:5–11 (The Sons of Disobedience Part 2)

### **Colossians 3:5–11 (NKJV)**

- <sup>5</sup> *Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*
- <sup>6</sup> *Because of these things **the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,***
- <sup>7</sup> *in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.*
- <sup>8</sup> *But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.*
- <sup>9</sup> *Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,*

- <sup>10</sup> *and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,*
- <sup>11</sup> *where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.*

This passage is identical to Ephesians 5:5–6, which we already explained. Still, I wanted to include it separately for repetition and to cover all possible objections people might bring to the eternal salvation of the new creation. Based on the context of the passage, we can quickly notice again the contrast Paul clearly makes between the unsaved (the sons of disobedience) and the saved who might still do sinful things. That is precisely the reason for such a comparison because Christians usually still do sinful things in the process of mind renewal and sanctification. Verse 5 begins with the preposition “therefore,” which introduces the result of what has already happened. Because you died with Christ (Colossians 3:3) and were raised with Christ (Colossians 3:1), therefore put to death the earthly things like fornication, uncleanness, evil desires, etc. Verse 7 continues in the past tense: “in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.” Finally, Verse 8 says, BUT NOW, put aside all these things: anger, wrath, malice, etc.

So, Paul doesn’t say the Christians in the church of Colossae might become sons of disobedience through their sinful deeds and come under wrath, but that they should change their way of life now that they have inherited the Kingdom of God and are no longer under His wrath.

### Revelation 21:8 (The Punishment of the Second Death)

#### **Revelation 21:8 (NKJV)**

- <sup>8</sup> *But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars **shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.***

Some Christians in the body of Christ use this verse to advocate that believers who don’t live a holy enough life according to decent moral standards might end up in the lake of fire that is the second death. If you want to believe this interpretation, no one can stop you. However, if we are really interested in knowing the intention and truth of the verse in the context of the whole scripture, we can see it clearly. First, notice the apostle John doesn’t say those in Christ who behave cowardly, unbelievably, abominably, or murderously will suffer the second death. Instead, he names them according to their nature and identity, which is not in Christ. Moreover, he begins Verse 8 with the preposition “but,” clearly demarcating those who conquer and who will inherit the things of God in Verse 7 from the liars and the sexually immoral people who will go to the lake of fire. Furthermore, as I previously mentioned, the Bible never identifies the righteous people of God with those sinful designations described in Revelation 21:8.

## Matthew 24:3–14 (Many Will Fall Away)

### **Matthew 24:3–14 (NASB95)**

- <sup>3</sup> *As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”*
- <sup>4</sup> *And Jesus answered and said to them, “See to it that no one misleads you.*
- <sup>5</sup> *For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many.*
- <sup>6</sup> *You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end.*
- <sup>7</sup> *For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.*
- <sup>8</sup> *But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.*
- <sup>9</sup> *Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name.*
- <sup>10</sup> *At that time **many will fall away** and will betray one another and hate one another.*
- <sup>11</sup> *Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many.*
- <sup>12</sup> *Because lawlessness is increased, **most people’s love will grow cold.***
- <sup>13</sup> ***But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.***
- <sup>14</sup> *This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.”*

Here, Jesus talks about a difficult period of time for Christians in the future, characterized by deceit, wars, famines, earthquakes, betrayals, and increased lawlessness. Depending on your perspective on the end times, this challenging season may have already happened in 70 AD, just for Christian Jews, when Titus destroyed the Temple, or it may refer to the time close to the second coming of Jesus (the so-called rapture), or it may refer to the period of the Great Tribulation. However, the end times are not the subject of this book. The bottom line is that Jesus describes a strenuous time in which Christians will be on earth. Many Christians think this text refers to genuine believers living in those times who will lose their salvation because of the trials. They advocate for this interpretation because of the phrases “many will fall away” in Verse 10, “the love of many will grow cold” in Verse 12, and “he who endures to the end shall be saved” in Verse 13. They interpret the word “saved” from Verse 13 as referring to eternal salvation and reason that, since only those who endure to the end will be saved, then it must be that some will not endure to the end, and they will not be saved. However, the context of the whole passage is not eternal salvation; that is not in play here, but rather physical tribulations and persecutions on earth for Jesus’ name’s sake during those times.

The “falling away” from Verse 10, which is rendered more correctly in the NKJV Bible translation as “being offended,” refers to backsliding in faith for a while and not necessarily losing eternal salvation. We know that because the following verses describe in what way many will be offended or fall away: they will betray one another and hate one another, and their love will grow cold because of lawlessness. All

these actions show a lack of faith in Jesus and the Gospel for this present life and not a lack of faith in the Gospel for the future life. Why would believers betray other people? It would be out of fear of a threat or to gain some benefit during those difficult times. What does that show? Lack of faith in the provision of the Gospel for their physical needs, not lack of faith for the forgiveness of their sins. Why would love grow cold in some believers during those times? Because of the lawlessness all around them, everybody will become more selfish and look out only for themselves, times will be difficult, God will not seem to intervene on their behalf, and they will gradually lose the awareness of God's love and care for them, so they will begin losing their love for other people as well. That is kind of what is happening today in our world. That doesn't mean those believers are lost forever; it just means they are temporarily weaker in faith regarding the things of this life. Their love will not disappear completely; it will just grow cold for a while.

The Greek word used in Verse 10 for "falling away" or "being offended" is *skandalizo*, which means **to stumble**. Jesus uses same Greek word in Matthew 26:31–33 when He tells His disciples ALL of them will fall away because of Him on the night of His betrayal. Let's read that passage:

**Matthew 26:31–33 (NASB95)**

<sup>31</sup> *Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, 'I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK SHALL BE SCATTERED.'*

<sup>32</sup> *But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee."*

<sup>33</sup> *But Peter said to Him, "Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away."*

Again, the NKJV Bible translation renders the falling away more correctly as "being made to stumble." It reads like this:

**Matthew 26:31–33 (NKJV)**

<sup>31</sup> *Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'*

<sup>32</sup> *But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee."*

<sup>33</sup> *Peter answered and said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble."*

When Jesus told His disciples they would all fall away that night because of Him, He was not talking about them losing their salvation but rather about them stumbling temporarily in their trust in Jesus. They were not even saved yet at that point; they didn't have a salvation to lose because Jesus had not yet died for them and had not yet been resurrected. Moreover, we know that later, most of the disciples, except Judas Iscariot, were saved and even martyred for the Gospel. Also, think about Peter for a moment. Even though he told Jesus he would never fall away and never stumble, he fell away when he betrayed Him three times,

but that was a temporary backsliding. He prayed after that, and he was restored to faith. Falling away never means falling away from salvation irrevocably.

Now let's go back to Matthew 24:13. It says, "the one who endures to the end, he will be saved." As I said earlier, the context of that whole passage is not eternal salvation but tribulation and persecution for the name of Jesus. When this persecution strikes, Christians have two options. One of them is to keep a low profile by not being so vocal about their faith or even lying about it. The other option is to stand firm no matter what happens, all the way to the end. The word "saved" here doesn't refer to being saved from hell but being saved from persecution in the sense of being spared and preserved in the middle of it. In Matthew 5, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells people to rejoice when persecution comes. It's noble and right to accept and endure persecution for Jesus and even death for the sake of His name. However, if Christians decide they want to be preserved from persecution, they can be saved from it by faith.

Throughout the Old Testament, God always intervened to save His people from persecution when they stood firm in faith and defended His reputation. God defended them. God likes to win. Think about the three young men in the fiery furnace, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They didn't bow their knee to other gods even with the price of their lives, but God intervened and preserved them. Not only that, but, as a result, God was glorified throughout the kingdom. Think about Daniel in the lion's den. He chose to serve God and pray to Him like he used to while knowing about the king's decree, who commanded worship only to himself. He knew evil people were standing by to kill him for his faith. He was ready to die for his God. However, God saved Daniel from the lions, and, as a result, He was honored and glorified in all that kingdom. What about Queen Esther and Mordecai? All the Jews in that time were scheduled to be killed for their faith. However, two people stood firm in faith, and, as a result, all their people were saved from death and God was glorified.

In the same way, in the end times, those Christians who stand firm in faith no matter what will be saved and preserved through persecution. They will prove the word of God in their lives. God will save their lives, they will be provided for even through difficult times, and that will be a powerful testimony to other people. As a result, the people will glorify God.

### Mark 13:13 (Endurance to the End)

#### **Mark 13:13 (NKJV)**

<sup>13</sup> *And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But **he who endures to the end shall be saved.***

In the Bible, there are more parallel passages related to this one (Matthew 10:22, Matthew 24:13, and Luke 21:16–19), which all have the same context and meaning. The latter is especially relevant because it gives more light on the nature of endurance and salvation:

**Luke 21:16–19 (NASB95)**

<sup>16</sup> *“But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death,*

<sup>17</sup> *and you will be hated by all because of My name.*

<sup>18</sup> ***Yet not a hair of your head will perish.***

<sup>19</sup> ***By your endurance you will gain your lives.”***

These passages are often used to argue that only those who continue in faith and good works to the end of their lives will receive salvation or prove that they were genuinely saved in the first place. However, these verses cannot be adequately understood apart from the context. It's clear they speak about the state of things during a difficult period in time, probably right before Jesus Christ returns. The way the word “end” is used in any of these parallel passages makes it evident that the end of one's life is not in view here. Beginning with the disciples' question about the “end of the age” in Mark 13:4, Matthew 24:3, and Luke 21:7, Jesus gives information about it, mentioning it in Mark 13:7 and Matthew 24:6, 14. It's clear Jesus refers to the time before the end of the age. Though some may be killed, those who survive and endure these perils until the end, will be delivered (“saved”) from their enemies, who are the nations that hate them. This is simply an occasion where the word “saved” refers to deliverance from danger, not deliverance from hell. Hell is not even mentioned in any of the passages and would be out of place. The text in Luke 21:19 proves this fact in an even more relevant way by specifying clearly the preservation of the physical body during those times in phrases like “not a hair of your head will perish” and “by your endurance you will gain your lives.”

The endurance spoken of in Mark 13:13 refers to persisting in faith through that period of severe suffering and persecutions. Those who stand firm and live to the end will see a glorious “salvation.”