

# Hartford Bible Students

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## *Once in Grace, Always in Grace – Does God’s Mercy Have a Limit?*

One of the great errors which has deceived many Christians, and lulled them into complacent sleep, is the teaching that those who once have come into God’s grace, or favor, as disciples of Christ, are there to stay and that there is absolutely no danger of their ever falling fully away from it. Many rest themselves very securely upon this fallacy, that if they have once become recipients of Divine grace, it means that they will be in this grace perpetually and that they have salvation unto eternal life in heaven, despite anything that they may do or leave undone after receiving this grace.

### **“Eternal Security”**

This deception has been popularized with the catchy slogan so often heard from various pulpits and among Christian people: “Once in grace, always in grace.” It seems strange that many Christians accept and hold to this cliché as though it were really the truth of God’s Word, when, in fact, there is nothing in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation that supports such an idea. Rather, the united testimony of Scripture, reason, and facts is to the contrary. The false idea “once in grace, always in grace” is an outgrowth of erroneous views of election and predestination. Like most errors, Satan’s “eternal security” deception is supported by misapplications of some Scriptures, one of which is:

*“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believe on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” John 5:24*

The above text is supposed by some to teach that

when we become Christian disciples, we get from God an atom of Himself, the seed of the new being; and this seed is presumed to be undiminshable and indestructible. It is claimed that although this *seed* may lie dormant for a while, or be hindered from development by a backsliding, sinful course of life, it will ultimately and surely develop into a true and noble spirit being, to have eternal life in heaven.

### **Stages of Development**

But just as there are stages in the development of a human being – begetting, quickening, and birth – so the Bible teaches every one of these steps in the complete development of a true Christian. These stages, beginning with the begetting of the Spirit (the first impulse of life) and ending with the birth of the Spirit (glorification to spirit nature), constitute the acts whereby a new order of beings is brought forth by God on the Divine plane, which is the highest plane of existence.

And there is also the possibility of misconception, miscarriage, stillbirth after Spirit begetting, just as sometimes occurs after natural begetting. The spirit-begotten life is life only in an incipient sense and is far from the Spirit-born life, which does not come until in the first resurrection. The Spirit-begetting was “unto a lively hope” (not yet an actuality – 1 Peter 1:3) which is only the first step, the incipient step, in the bringing forth of a new creature.

### **Remaining in God’s Grace -- Conditional**

Those who hold to this theory entirely lose sight of the true significance of many other Bible verses

which plainly state that all who would be permanent and everlasting beneficiaries of this grace of God must abide in Christ – that they must “Keep themselves in the love of God.” (Jude 21)

***“Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.” 2 Peter 3:17***

This is a warning to those who are rooted and grounded in knowledge and the love of God, to those who already had attained to “steadfastness.” While the Lord promises grace sufficient for every time of need, he never encourages any to relax in his promises. The exhortations are always to activity, alertness, and perseverance.

***“If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” Matthew 6:23***

Jesus was here speaking to his disciples – not the world in general. The light found in His consecrated followers is the Truth of God’s Word and its resultant Spirit and activities. The light of the holy Spirit of our begetting can become extinguished. (1Thess. 5:19) This occurs when the mind gives up the Truth of God’s Word. Error and sin can supplant truth and righteousness. “Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.” (Luke 11:35)

***“I keep under my body [suppressing its efforts to control], and bring it into subjection [to God’s will in all things]: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” 1 Cor. 9:27***

The Apostle Paul did not believe that just because he was a new creature in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17), was once in grace, he was sure to remain always in that grace. He realized that if he did not continue faithful in his consecration, he would fall from God’s favor and be rejected.

***“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” Revelation 2:10***

Here the crown is assured, not to all once in grace, but only to those who are faithful unto death. We hope this newsletter will assist our readers in fighting the good fight of faith and in resisting one of Satan’s most deceptive and dangerous errors. Satan’s design in this error is to cause Christians to relax in their warfare and to take it easy, thinking themselves perfectly safe, thus making them more susceptible to his subtle attacks. Let us all be on guard “that ye receive not the grace of God in vain” (2 Cor. 6:1). “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” (Heb. 4:1)

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