

## **New Testament Repentance: Repentance in the Epistles and Revelation**

### **A series on Repentance: part 5 (R. Wilkin)**

#### **I. Introduction**

There is some disagreement among Bible scholars as to the intended readership of the NT books from Romans through Revelation. Two major schools of thought exist.

One school of thought suggests that the Epistles and Book of Revelation were addressed to *professing* Christians. (1) This group, they argue, contained both true and false professors. Hence they find many passages in Romans through Revelation, which they interpret as warning professing believers that they will go to hell if they fail to live consistent, godly lives.

A second school of thought is that the Epistles and Revelation are addressed to believers in Jesus Christ. According to this view all of the people *to whom the books were specifically addressed* were genuine believers.

Within this group some argue that there are passages, which warn believers (i.e., genuine believers) that they will end up going to hell if they fail to live consistent, godly lives. (2) This would be the Arminian understanding.

Others in this group argue that there are no passages, which warn believers, professing or otherwise, that they will go to hell if they fail to live consistent, godly lives. (3) This would be the Free Grace understanding.

How a person views the readership of these books greatly affects his or her understanding of the doctrine of repentance expressed within them.

This article will proceed with the understanding that the Epistles and Revelation are addressed to believers in Jesus Christ -not to a mixture of believers and unbelievers. While unbelievers surely have read these letters, the letters were addressed to actual believers in Jesus Christ, as the authors plainly indicated in their letters. (4)

We begin this study with a consideration of the condition of eternal salvation as found in the Epistles and Revelation.

#### **II. The Gospel in the Epistles and Revelation**

The Epistles and Revelation, while not evangelistic in purpose, affirm the truth of John 3:16: whoever believes in Jesus Christ, and Him alone, has eternal life. The following references give support to this point:

Romans 3:21-24: "But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

Romans 4:5: "But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness."

Galatians 2:16a: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ."

Galatians 3:6-7: "Just as Abraham 'believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham."

Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

1 John 5:1a: "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."

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1 John 5:10-13a: "He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life...."

I did not attempt to provide passages from First or Second Peter, James, or Hebrews, since to do so would require citing extended portions--and even then I would need to provide exegetical comments.

Needless to say, if the NT is consistent and does not contradict itself--if the Pauline and Johannine Epistles can be shown clearly to teach that the sole condition of salvation is faith in Christ alone--then the other books must agree.

It is clear from the passages cited above that anyone who believes in Jesus Christ has eternal life. It logically follows from this that if repentance is also said to be a condition (a point which some question (5)), then it must either be a synonym for faith or else an essential precursor to it.

Let us now turn to a consideration of passages in the Epistles and Revelation in which repentance is given as a condition of eternal salvation. In my estimation, there are very few. I have identified only three.

### III. Repentance as a Condition of Eternal Salvation

#### A. 1 Thessalonians 1:9

"You *turned* to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (emphasis supplied).

The normal NT word for *repent*, *metanoeo*, is not used here. Rather, the verb *epistrepho* is used. It means *to turn*. The Thessalonians *turned* to God from idols. The question is, was this turning necessary for eternal salvation or was Paul merely reporting what the Thessalonians had done?

Since an idolator cannot obtain eternal salvation without giving up his faith in idols and then placing his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, this passage almost certainly is speaking of what the Thessalonians did to gain eternal life.

According to Luke, some in Thessalonica were persuaded by Paul's preaching about the death and resurrection of Christ (Acts 17:1-4). The reference to being persuaded (*peitho*) about Christ is synonymous with coming to faith (*pisteuo*) in Him. The Thessalonians were saved when they turned from faith in idols to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some see this verse differently. They suggest that the Thessalonians were saved both because they turned to God from idols and also because they made a *commitment* to serve God. (6) MacArthur uses this verse to suggest that to be saved one must make "a purposeful decision to forsake all unrighteousness and pursue righteousness instead." (7)

Some use the infinitival clause at the end of our verse to support this view. Paul indicates that the Thessalonians turned *to* God from idols to "*serve the living and true God*."

This interpretation does not stand up under careful scrutiny.

Paul does not say that the Thessalonians made a commitment to serve God. Nor does he say that their serving God was a condition of salvation. What he does say is that they turned to God from idols *with the result that* or for *the purpose of* serving God. Whether we understand the infinitival clause as expressing purpose or result is

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inconsequential as far as the Gospel message is concerned. In either case their salvation was not contingent upon this action.

Note, too, that Paul does not say that all people who trust in Christ do so with the *result* that they serve God or for the *purpose* of serving God. He simply reports that this was true of the Thessalonians. This verse cannot even rightly be used to show that all believers will definitely begin the Christian life by serving God, although that is clearly God's desire.

#### B. Hebrews 6:1

"Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of *repentance* from dead works and of faith toward God" (emphasis supplied).

Here we meet again the normal NT word for *repentance*--*metanoia*. The people being addressed were Jewish believers (cf. 3:1; 10:10, 19-25; 12:1-2; 13:22). According to the passage we are now considering, they had already laid the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God.

The word repentance (*metanoia*) literally means a change of mind or perspective. (8) The readers had already come to change their perspective about human works. Formerly, before their salvation, they had thought that all good Jews would obtain kingdom entrance. They thought that good works were the ticket. Now, however, they understood well the error of such thinking. They now believed that the one and only ticket to the kingdom was faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Good works, they came to understand, are dead--that is, they produce death. The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life (Rom 6:23).

Repentance from dead works is the reverse side of faith in God and in His Messiah. In order to come to faith in Christ, one must first recognize the bankruptcy of one's own works. It is impossible to trust in Christ alone and cling to some confidence in one's own deeds.

#### C. 2 Peter 3:9

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to *repentance*" (emphasis supplied).

In this passage Peter is discussing the Lord's return to set up His kingdom. While some may scoff and suggest that He isn't coming ("Where is the promise of His coming?" 3:4), Peter is affirming that His return and kingdom are sure. No doubt about it.

Peter even gives a reason for the delay. God doesn't want anyone to perish. Rather, He wants all to come to repentance.

Zane Hodges suggests that *metanoia* here refers to turning from one's sinful ways with the result that one is in harmonious fellowship with God. (9) This view certainly maintains a Free Grace view of the Gospel. Although it is a possible view, I find it unlikely.

Peter is contrasting two things: perishing and repentance. Clearly the latter is a metonymy of the cause for the effect. That is, repentance is a figure for whatever it produces. If the effect is eternal life there is a quite natural antithetical parallelism with the idea of perishing. The opposite of perishing eternally is being saved eternally. If Hodges's view is correct, and it may be, then the effect is eternal rewards. But rewards are not the opposite of *perishing*.

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This same concept is found elsewhere in Scripture. In I Tim 2:4 we read that God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Clearly eternal salvation is in view there.

I suggest that repentance in 2 Pet 3:9 refers to a change of mind about the Person and work of Christ. Those who come to a proper perspective regarding the Gospel, those who come to faith in it, will not perish but have eternal life John 3:16. Since Peter was writing to a believing readership, he did not give an extended discussion on this point. His topic was the seeming delay of the Second Coming and the Kingdom. His point is that one reason the Lord hasn't returned yet is because He is giving additional time for more people to be saved.

#### **IV. Repentance as a Condition of Temporal Salvation**

There are a number of passages in the Epistles and Revelation which present repentance as a condition of *temporal* salvation. I have chosen six representative passages.

##### **A. 2 Corinthians 7:9-10**

"Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to *repentance*. For you were made sorry, in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces *repentance* leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death" (emphasis supplied).

This passage is taken by some to be referring to repentance as a condition of eternal salvation. (10) However, the context is clearly not dealing with eternal salvation. Those being addressed are believers, the Corinthian Christians (cf. 2 Cor 1:1, 24; 5:1-10; 6:14; 8:7; 13:11-14).

There is no mention of eternal life, the lake of fire, justification, condemnation, or terms, which normally (or exclusively in the case of the lake of fire) deal with eternal salvation.

The difficulty to which Paul refers is the failure of the church to deal with overt sin in its midst (2 Cor 7:11-12). He rebuked the church for this; the result was that they were stung by it (vv 8-9).

Paul was afraid that their indifference might lead to forfeiture of eternal rewards. He didn't want them to suffer such a loss (v 9).

The Corinthians changed their minds (i.e., repented) and stopped tolerating the sin in their midst (vv 9-10). Evidently they removed the offending person from their fellowship until he changed his ways (v 11).

Verse 10 is a summary statement on the value of godly sorrow in the lives of believers. Sorrow, which is in accordance with God's will results in deliverance. Worldly sorrow, however, is grief unrelated to the will of God. Such sorrow results not in deliverance, but ultimately in death.

The fact that baseball legend Pete Rose, for example, is sorry for his gambling and tax evasion offenses is not necessarily a good sign. If he is only sorry because he was caught, banned from baseball, and sentenced to jail, and yet would do it all again if he thought he could get away with it. That is not helpful. Many are in prison today for the fourth or fifth time because, while they felt sorry upon getting caught and sentenced each time, they never had a fundamental change of heart and lifestyle.

If, however, Pete Rose is sorry that he gambled and cheated on his taxes because he now knows that it is wrong; and if he has taken steps never to do these things again (e.g., by seeking counseling for his gambling addiction), then his sorrow is a very positive thing. His sorrow will have led to a positive change in thinking and behavior.

The repentance of the world, then, is sorrow unaccompanied by a positive change in thinking and behavior. Judas

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experienced this. He was remorseful for betraying the Lord (Matt 27:3). Yet, rather than turning in faith to the Lord and crying out for His mercy, he committed another sin: he hanged himself.

As mentioned above, the salvation in view here is not eternal salvation. Since the context is dealing with believers and with a change of behavior as the condition for the deliverance, temporal salvation is in view. When believers experience godly sorrow, when they learn and turn from their sinful ways, they escape the many unpleasant correctives, which God would have sent into their lives if they had continued in that lifestyle.

The Free Grace view of the Gospel believes in "turn or burn" *temporally*, not turn or burn *eternally*.

#### B. 2 Corinthians 12:21

[For I fear] "lest when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and *have not repented* of the uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness which they have practiced" (emphasis supplied).

This passage is very similar to the one we just considered. Paul was afraid that many of the believers at Corinth were still indulging in sinful practices such as quarreling, backbiting, and immorality (2 Cor 12:20-21)--things about which he had previously rebuked and warned them (cf. 1 Cor 1:10-17; 5:1-6:20).

On the one hand some commentators suggest that Paul may have been wondering if unbelievers were in the church of Corinth. (11) They do not believe that a Christian is constitutionally *able* to fall into sin and fail (over any significant--but unspecified--length of time) to repent of it. On the other hand, however, many other commentators feel that Paul was not laying down conditions for eternal salvation. (12) They feel that he was simply challenging believers to godly living.

There is nothing in this verse to suggest that eternal salvation is in view--unless, of course one maintains a very strong view of the Reformed doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, something which is biblically unwarranted. Indeed, any unbiased reading of the other canonical book to the Corinthians shows clearly that genuine believers can fall into sin and fail to repent of it over an extended period of time (cf. 1 Cor 3:1-3; 6:1-20).

#### C. Hebrews 6:6

"If they fall away [it is impossible] to renew them again to *repentance*, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame" (emphasis supplied).

This much-discussed verse is talking about those who (1) "were once enlightened," (2) "have tasted the heavenly gift," (3) "have become partakers of the Holy Spirit," (4) "have tasted the good word of God," and (5) "[have tasted] the powers of the age to come" (Heb 6:4-5). I. Howard Marshall notes that, "the conclusion is irresistible that real Christians are meant." (13) A person would be hard pressed to come up with a more unambiguous reference to believers. (14) Regardless of what v 6 means, vv 4-5 are describing genuine believers.

The real question is what judgment believers who apostatize will receive. The author of the Book of Hebrews warns that a fiery judgment awaits such people (vv 7-8). While some understand this to be a reference to hell and the lake of fire, (15) there are powerful reasons to suggest otherwise.

First, believers are in view, and believers cannot be sent to hell.

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Second, the author does not say that the *ground itself* (representing the believer) is destroyed. Rather, the ground remains. What is destroyed by fire is the *worthless production* of the ground. This suggests temporal judgment.

Third, a good case can be made--but will not be made here due to space restrictions--that all of the other warning passages in Hebrews threaten genuine believers with temporal judgments and loss of eternal rewards--not with burning in the lake of fire. (16)

Fourth, there seems to be a deliberate allusion to Genesis 3 and the cursing of the ground. Part of the curse of the fall was that the ground would yield thorns and thistles. The author of Hebrews indicates that if a believer's life yields thorns and thistles he will receive a curse. Just as the judgment upon the ground was temporal, so is the judgment upon the believer who falls away.

Fifth and finally, other NT passages (e.g., 1 Cor 3:10-15; John 15:6) speak of the burning up of the unfruitful works of believers without any suggestion that they lose their salvation.

Therefore, even though the word *fiery* is used, the evidence suggests that temporal and not eternal judgment is in view.

The believer who falls away from the faith cannot humanly be renewed again to repentance--that is, to his recognition of his sinfulness and need of grace and forgiveness through Christ alone. If a Christian ever comes to the point where he stops trusting in Christ, no amount of reasoning with him can win him back. Temporal judgment is coming upon him from God. Only by a miracle of God can such a person be renewed to his former attitude and opinion. Of course, since eternal salvation is conditioned on faith in *Christ*, not on *eternal* faith, such a person would still be saved.

Nothing can separate a believer from the love of God in Christ (Rom 8:38-39).

Some object to this view because they believe that a true believer could never depart from the faith. (17) Such an objection, however, is both unbiblical and impractical.

Biblically speaking there is a number of other passages, which clearly show that believers are not immune to falling from the faith. Luke 8:13 refer to those "*who believe for a while*" and in time of temptation fall away. The preceding verse clearly indicates that those who believe are saved. Thus those who fall are believers. In Acts 20:30 Paul warned the Ephesian elders that false teachers would arise and would "draw away the disciples after themselves." First Timothy 1:19 refer to those who suffered shipwreck concerning the faith. One can only experience shipwreck if he was at one time on board. Second Timothy 2:18 refers to men who "strayed concerning the truth." Once again, one can only stray from somewhere he once was. Similarly, Peter warns his believing readers in 2 Pet 3:17 to "beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away by the error of the wicked."

Practically speaking, anyone who has spent any time in pastoral ministry has dealt with genuine believers who fell away from the faith. In my second year in seminary, I remember a fourth year student saying that he doubted the existence of God. He dropped out of seminary, left his pregnant wife, moved in with another woman, and took to alcohol. This was from a young man who as a college student had memorized two chapters of the Bible a week and who as a seminary student had majored in NT Greek.

Also in my second year in seminary, I recall talking with a fellow student who told me about one of his former

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professors from college. The man was an agnostic who was teaching philosophy. However, he had an obvious knowledge of the Bible. After class one day my friend went to witness to him. To start the conversation along spiritual lines he told his prof that he was going to seminary the following year. "Oh, is that right?" the prof said. "Where are you going?" When my friend told him Dallas Theological Seminary the prof smiled and said, "I'm a graduate of DTS."

Many today underestimate the persuasiveness of the arguments of liberal graduate schools such as the one, which turned a Dallas Seminary graduate into an agnostic. The minds of Christians can be turned. Believers can be duped. Lay people know this well. That is one reason why some lay people wouldn't even think of going to seminary. They are actually afraid that they might lose their faith at seminary!

I could multiply examples, but there is no need. Nothing in Hebrews 6:4-8 even remotely hints at eternal condemnation for believers who apostatize. Fire is a normal biblical metaphor for *temporal* judgment.

#### D. Hebrews 12:17

"For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for *repentance*, though he sought for it diligently with tears" (emphasis supplied).

This passage deals with familial blessings, not eternal life. Whether Esau was a believer or not is not in question here. (Although I feel the example fits the context better if Esau is an example of a profane believer.) Esau is an example of one who set his priorities on fleshly pleasures rather than on lasting spiritual values.

Esau came to the place where he realized his error and sought to reverse the consequences of his former decision to sell his birthright for a meal. However, some things are irreversible. His father, Isaac, could not be moved. He couldn't be made to budge in his thinking.

So, too, the believer who sets his heart on earthly treasures will forfeit eternal treasures. No amount of tears at the Judgment Seat of Christ will reverse the matter. The time for spiritual action is now. A modern motto catches this point well:

Only one life, 'twill soon be past;  
Only what's done for Christ will last.

#### E. Revelation 2:5

"Remember therefore from where you have fallen; *repent* and do the first works, or else I will come *to you* quickly and remove your lampstand from its place--unless you *repent*" (emphasis supplied).

This is part of the first of the seven letters in Revelation 2-3. These were letters from the Lord to seven local churches in Asia Minor.

Clearly the Lord wanted the members of the church at Ephesus to repent--to change their attitudes regarding their works. "You have left your first love" (v 4b). "Repent and do the first works" (v 5b). Works of love no longer characterized the church at Ephesus.

The preceding (vv 2-3) and following (v 6) verses make it clear that this church was not totally displeasing to the Lord. He commended the Ephesian church for maintaining doctrinal purity in the face of false teachers in the Ephesian church. However, as Ladd points out, "Doctrinal purity and loyalty can never be a substitute for love."

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The question in the verse before us is the identification of the warning, which follows the Lord's command to repent. What did the Lord mean when He spoke of removing the church's lampstand if it did not repent?

The removal of the lampstand is clearly figurative language. Does it refer to eternal damnation? Surely not. Nothing in the context supports this. Rather, what is in view is *temporal* in nature. If the church did not repent, the Lord would remove the church's ability to bear witness for Him. That is, the church at Ephesus would die out, would cease to exist, if the current members did not change their ways. (19)

The eternal salvation of the believers at Ephesus is not in view. That salvation they obtained once and for all when they placed their faith in Christ (Eph 2:8-9). What was in view was their temporal well being. The very existence of their church was at stake.

If a local church backslides today, it too will be in jeopardy of extinction. While eternal salvation is secure forever, local assemblies are not.

#### **F. Revelation 9:20-21**

"But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did *not repent* of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor walk. And *they did not repent* of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts" (emphasis supplied).

These verses deal with the moral response of unbelievers during the Tribulation to the terrible events of the sixth trumpet judgment. Those who survived did not change their thinking about their sinful ways. That is, although the judgments were great and should have led people to abandon their transgressions, the people would not give up their sinful behavior.

These verses clearly imply that had a significant number of the surviving unbelievers repented of their wicked ways, the horrible judgments of the Tribulation might have been lessened. (20)

Temporal judgments are in view. Eternal damnation is not. The passage does not suggest that turning from sins will be a condition of eternal salvation in the Tribulation. (21)

#### **V. Conclusion**

There are only three passages in the Epistles, and none in the Book of Revelation, which condition eternal salvation upon repentance. In those three passages repentance refers to a change of mind about Christ and the Gospel. Thus repentance in those contexts is used as a synonym for faith.

There are a number of passages in the Epistles and Revelation which condition temporal salvation from God's discipline or judgment upon repentance. In those passages repentance refers to a change of mind about one's sinful behavior. People, both believers and unbelievers, must turn from their sins in order to escape the negative consequences which sin brings. The passing pleasures of sin (Heb 11:25) are far outweighed by the pain, which is its constant companion (Heb 12:3- 11; Jas 1:15).



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1. See, for example, John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 22-23; James Montgomery Boice, *Christ's Call to Discipleship* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 110-12, 166-67; Walter Chantry, *Today's Gospel: Authentic or Synthetic* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner or Truth Trust, 1970) 67-77.
2. See, for example, Ray B. White, *"Eternal Security" Insecure or The Heresy of "Once In Grace Always in Grace."* (Zarephath, NJ: Pillar of Fire, 1939); C. J. McElligott, *The Crown of Life: A Study of Perseverance* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1963); Robert Shank, *Life in the Son*, 2nd ed. (Springfield, MO: Westcott Publishers, 1960, 1961) Guy Duty, *If Ye Continue* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship: 1966); 1. Howard Marshall, *Kept By The Power of God: A Study of Perseverance And Falling Away* (London: Epworth Press, 1969).
3. See for example, Charles C Ryrie, *So Great Salvation* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1989), 47-49, 59-66, 135-44; Zane C. Hodges, *Absolutely Free! A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation* (Grand Rapids and Dallas: Zondervan Publishing House and Redencion Viva, 1989), 47-88; Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3 Soteriology (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), 347-93.
4. See for example, Rom 1:7; I Cor 1:2; 6:19-20; 2 Cor 1:1; 5:1-21; Gal 1:9; Eph 1:1; 2:8-9; Phil 1:1; Col 1:2; I Thess 1:2-4; 2 Thess 2:13-14; I Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:5; Titus 14; Phlmn 4-7; Heb 6:4-5; Jas 1:16-18; 1 Pet 1:2; 2 Pet 1:1; I John 2:25; 5:9-13; 2 John 1; 3 John 1-3; Rev 1:5; 2:1-3:22.
5. See Hodges, *Absolutely Free!*, 143-63.
6. See, for example, MacArthur, *The Gospel*, 162-63; James E. Rosscup, "The Relation of Repentance to Salvation and the Christian Life, Unpublished paper presented at the 1989 Annual Evangelical Theological society meetings held in San Diego, California, 47-49.
7. MacArthur, *The Gospel*, 163.
8. For documentation see a previous article by this writer: New Testament Repentance Lexical Considerations, *JOTGES 2* (Autumn 1989): 13-21.
9. See Hodges, *Absolutely Free!*, 226.
10. See, for example, Harold J. Ockenga, *The Comfort of God: Preaching in Second Corinthians* (New York Fleming H. Revell, co., 1944), 203-206; Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh T. & T. Clark, 1915), 221-22. N.B. Plummer appears to see eternal salvation in view but is not so clear as to make this conclusion inescapable.
11. See, for example, Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), 470-73; C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1973), 331-32; Ockenga, *Second Corinthians*, 278.
12. See, for example, Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (N.p.: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1859, reprint, Grand Rapids Baker Book House, 1980), 297-98; R. V. G. Tasker, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, Tyndale NT Series (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing co., 1963), 185; H. A. Ironside, *Addresses on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1939), 276-79; David Lowery, -2 Corinthians in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, NT edition, ed. by John Walvoord and Roy Zuck (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1983), 513-16, 584.
13. Marshall, *Kept by the Power*, 138.
14. Some time ago while doing research on this passage I found a note to this effect by a commentator. I have been unable, however, to relocate the reference to give him credit. *Mea culpa*.
15. See, for example, F. F. Bruce *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), 122-25 (esp. 125n); Homer A. Kent, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 115; Marcus Dods, "The Epistle to the Hebrews," *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1961), edited by W. Robertson Nicoll, 4:300; Robert Milligan, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1977), 225.

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Kent takes the view that the falling away is only hypothetical, but that if it occurred, eternal condemnation would result.

Milligan argues that regeneration and eternal life are forfeited if one apostatizes. However, he also argues that eternal security is true. He accomplishes this by suggesting that eternal security only applies to the elect. He believes that the non-elect sometimes are regenerated, only to lose their salvation later when they fall away. Thus the elect are eternally secure and the non-elect are not.

16. See, for example, Zane C. Hodges, "Hebrews in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, NT edition, 780-812.

17. E.g., Kent, *Hebrews*, 111-14; William R. Newell, *Hebrews Verse by Verse*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1947), 196-202; Thomas Hewitt, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960), 110-11.

18. George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), 39.

19. Cf. Ladd, *Revelation*, 39-40; John F. Walvoord, "Revelation" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, NT edition, 934; R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, Vol. I (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), 52; G. R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation* (Greenwood SC: The Attic Press, 1974), 75.

20. Cf. Ladd, *Revelation*, 138; Joseph A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 221, Isbon T. Beckwith *The Apocalypse of John* (reprint edition, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 569, Henry Barclay Swete, *Commentary on Revelation* (reprint edition, Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1977), 126.

21. Indeed, many of the people in question will already be beyond hope of eternal salvation at this point since anyone who takes the mark of the beast will be sealed in a state of unbelief (Rev 14:9-11). It is thus evident that during the Tribulation there will be a special work of the Holy Spirit forbidding believers from taking the mark--since to do so would mean loss of salvation. Either God will not allow believers to give in to such a temptation by giving them a special measure of grace, or He will simply take the life of any believer who would, if left alone, take the mark.