



Is it possible for individuals who have been born again to lose their salvation? Once people are adopted into God's family, won't they always be His children? These questions pertain to the very foundation of Christian theology, and it is important to consider them prayerfully.

First, consider how a person becomes part of God's family. The Bible says that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Yet, in mercy, God sent His only Son to live as a man. Jesus then gave Himself to die—a

sinless offering in our place. So, when we come to God, confessing and forsaking our sins, He forgives us for Jesus' sake, and we are adopted into God's family as His children. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:16,17).

After this adoption process, is it possible to lose that place as a child? Many say, "Once a child, always a child," meaning that it would be impossible to forfeit the relationship to God. However, that theory carries difficulties. All people were originally children of the devil, since all were born in sin. If it is possible to no longer be a child of Satan, then it stands to reason that we can also sever our relationship with God.

The Prophet Ezekiel addresses this issue when he says, "When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die" (Ezekiel 18:26). We can see that the Bible is clear in affirming the possibility of breaking the relationship with

God and eventually becoming eternally lost.

Is it possible to be restored as a child of God after turning away?

Consider the blessings that come with being a child of God: joy, peace, protection, the supply of necessities, wisdom, freedom from condemnation, and many others, along with the hope of eternal life. Why would anyone choose to give up these benefits and return to the bondage of sin? This

seldom happens in a moment, but rather it is most often preceded by a gradual slipping away from God. The Lord wants to have first place in people's lives, but how easily priorities shift and firstplace is given to family, job, cares of life, or the pursuit of pleasure. There is a natural tendency in man toward selfishness, and that must be crucified by close communication with and commitment to God.

When people begin to veer away from God, He is faithful to remind them of their need to stay close. However, if they choose to ignore those reminders, they will find themselves getting farther and farther away. Eventually they will realize that their first love for Christ is gone, and they are committing sin, which is grievous to God. The Apostle Peter said this was a worse situation than never having been born again. "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (2 Peter 2:20,21).

What a pitiful condition! Can there be any hope for such a person? Is it possible to be restored as a child of God after turning away? The Prophet Ezekiel says, "Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; if the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die" (Ezekiel 33:14,15). There is hope, and that hope lies in repentance.

King David is an excellent example of this. While he was still herding sheep, he was chosen by God to be the leader of the Children of Israel. For many years, David followed God and enjoyed His blessing and protection. God said he was a man after His own heart. One day, however, David looked too long at the temptation the devil put in his pathway. He determined to take an action he knew was wrong, and he proceeded to commit adultery and then to plot the murder of a man. How far he fell from the righteousness that had characterized his life! Yet, when his sin was pointed out by the prophet of God, he cried to God with anguish of heart. God saw the repentance, forgave David, and restored salvation to him.

Just so, the boundless mercy of God can reach a person who has miserably failed God and fallen into the vilest sin. The same mercy can reach the one who has become neglectful and overcome with the world, although his sins may not appear so grievous. All sin is deplorable to God. The Apostle John said, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man. sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). Just remember: it is imperative to quickly repent of any sin and to find the forgiveness that God wants to give.

While such mercy is a great hope to a person who has turned from God, it is important that we not presume upon that mercy. God purchased our redemption at great price, and we must not treat lightly the salvation He offers. If people continually reject God and His plan of salvation, God will cease calling after their hearts. They will find no place of repentance, because they have rejected His mercy too often. Let us cherish the mercy God extends to us and value the privilege we have to be His children. Let us follow His commandments and stay in close communication with Him. Then someday we will reach Heaven, where our souls will be eternally secure.