

Be Sure You Finish

by Bill Crews

It is not enough to **become** a Christian; one must then **be** a Christian – to the very end. It is not enough to **enter into** Christ; one must **abide** in Christ, yes, and even **die** in Christ (**Revelation 14:13**).

Who knows how many (I have encountered or learned of several in every city where I have lived) have become Christians, have been saved from their past sins, have entered the Lord's church, and then fallen away? Most of them fall away soon after being saved (see **Matthew 13:20-21**), but some of them endure almost all of the way and then fall away.

God knew this would occur; therefore, He warns against it (**Hebrews 3:1, 12; 4:1; Matthew 25:13; I Corinthians 10:12**), describes those who have become guilty of it (**2 Peter 2:20-22; Hebrews 6:4-6; Revelation 3:15-17**), tells how to prevent it (**2 Peter 1:5-7; 3:17; James 5:12; Revelation 3:5, 11**), and supplies the remedy for it (**Acts 8:13-24; Revelation 2:4-5; 3:18-19**). Each one of these proves that a child of God can fall away. Of course, it need not happen at all – a Christian can fall, but no Christian **has to** fall.

No greater tragedy, and none fraught with more serious consequences, can be named than for a Christian to *forsake* the right way (**2 Peter 2:15**), *become entangled again* in the defilements of the world (**2 Peter 2:20-22**), *make shipwreck* concerning the faith (**1 Timothy 1:19**), *become an enemy* of the cross of Christ (**Philippians 3:18-19**), *crucify afresh* the Son of God and put Him to an open shame (**Hebrews 6:6**), and *tum aside* after Satan (**1 Timothy 5:15**).

We are told to endure unto the end, and on this basis we are promised eternal salvation (**Matthew 10:22**). We are called upon to not be weary in well-doing and are promised that we shall reap if we faint not (**Galatians 6:9**). We are to be faithful, even if such should cost us our very lives, but we are promised "*the crown of life*" (**Revelation 2:10**). One lesson we are taught in the parable of the sower is this: It is not enough to hear the word of God and receive it (even with joy); we must also hold it fast and bring forth fruit with patience (steadfastness) (**Luke 8:11-15**).

In becoming Christians, we have enlisted in the army of Christ – we need to fight the good fight of the faith, to war the good warfare unto the end (**1 Timothy 6:12; 1:18**). We have begun a voyage or started on a journey – we need to pursue it to its final destination (**1 Peter 1:17; 2:11; Hebrews 11:10, 13-16; 13:14**). We have entered a race – we need to run it with patience (endurance), to press on toward the goal (**Hebrews 12:1; Philippians 3:13-14; 1 Corinthians 9:24-25**).

If we have become children of God, let us be certain that when the curtain of death brings to an end the final act in our drama of this life, we can say with Paul, "*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved His appearing*" (**2 Timothy 4:7-8**).

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