

**6. Continuing to Grow to Spiritual Maturity.** The Christian is commanded to continually grow in the grace and knowledge of His Lord (2 Peter 3:18). Someone once said, the one who ceases to be better, ceases to be good. In truth, organisms that do not continue to grow, die. This is why the Scriptures state that in order to take on the divine nature, one has to continually add to their faith (2 Peter 1:2-11). Other passages stressing the same thing are:

**1 Peter 2:2** -- *Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.*

**Ephesians 4:11-13** -- *And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the fullness of Christ.*

## FALLING AWAY

Many also teach that once an individual is saved, then he cannot fall away. The psychological effect of this doctrine is horrific. If one is convinced that he has been sealed in God and is not subject to condemnation, even if he commits the most heinous crime, he no longer has a fear of God and is capable of doing anything.

Fortunately, the Bible does not teach this. The prospect of falling away keeps man in check, not only to persevere, but to walk in the light, and engage himself in good deeds. Man is plainly told that he can so sin as to fall from God's grace.

**2 Peter 2:20-22** -- *For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to fall away from the holy commandment ...*

**Galatians 5:4** -- *You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.*

**Hebrews 6:4-6** -- *For in the case of these who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them against to repentance.*

## ORIGINAL INTENT

**Genesis 1:26** -- *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness..."*

When God originally created man He made him very special, crowned him with glory and majesty, and as the original Hebrew has it, "Thou hast made him a little lower than God" (Psalm 8:5). But man chose not to remain thus. In Ecclesiastes 7:9 it is written, "God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices." So man began to sin, to go against God and His law, and to separate himself from God and His righteousness. Just before the judgment of the flood, Moses wrote:

**Genesis 6:5** -- *Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

Through the centuries, God worked with certain men and certain nations to get man back to the original intent of His design. This effort of God's finds its greatest work in the process of Christianity. The term "Christian" means to be Christ-like, and through various teachings and techniques, work and grace, faith and justification, with the sacrifice of His Son on the cross, God has in place a way of bringing man back.

**Romans 8:29** -- *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

**Ephesians 4:24** -- *And put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.*

## THE PROBLEM OF SIN

**Isaiah 59:1-2** -- *Behold, the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save; neither is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear.*

When God sent His Son to die for man's sins, the intent was to save man FROM his sins, not to save him IN his sins. To commit a crime against God and our fellow man damages and eventually kills any relation one may have with God or his neighbor. Just as behaving badly pushes people away, it also pushes God away, and therefore something more is needed on man's part than just believing in God.

In view of the seriousness of sin, it is surprising how many people do not believe that they themselves are sinners. One of the purposes of the Scriptures is to prove to man that he is worse off than he supposes.

