

The Early Church Fathers on Once Saved Not Always Saved

Martin Luther was a man who suffered from a condition known as Scrupulosity. Someone thus afflicted is haunted by guilt concerning moral or religious issues. He lived in constant fear that he would go to hell. He would go to confession as often as he could. At one point his confessor told him that God didn't have a problem with him. He, Martin Luther, had a problem with God. One day after reading Scripture he came to the conclusion that what one did didn't matter. If one would genuinely turn to Jesus he would be saved for all time. And nothing he did after that would cause him to lose his salvation. While this eased the suffering caused by his scrupulosity, it was a doctrine that contradicted Scripture and the writings of the Early Church.

The Didache

Watch for your life's sake. Let not your lamps be quenched, nor your loins unloosed; but be ready, for you know not the hour in which our Lord comes. Matthew 24:42 But often shall you come together, seeking the things which are befitting to your souls: for the whole time of your faith will not profit you, if you be not made perfect in the last time. For in the last days false prophets and corrupters shall be multiplied, and the sheep shall be turned into wolves, and love shall be turned into hate; Matthew 24:11-12 for when lawlessness increases, they shall hate and persecute and betray one another, Matthew 24:10 (16). **[AD 70]**.

Herrmas

"And as many of them," he added, "as have repented, shall have their dwelling in the tower. And those of them who have been slower in repenting shall dwell within the walls. And as many as do not repent at all, but abide in their deeds, shall utterly perish."... Yet they also, being naturally good, on hearing my commandments, purified themselves, and soon repented. Their dwelling, accordingly, was in the tower. But if any one relapse into strife, he will be east out of the tower, and will lose his life (*The Shepherd* 3:8:7 **[A.D. 155]**).

Justin Martyr

Eternal fire has been prepared for him [Satan] as he apostatized from God of his own free-will, and likewise for all who unrepentant continue in the apostasy, he now blasphemes, by means of such men, the Lord who brings judgment [upon him] as being already condemned, and imputes the guilt of his apostasy to his Maker, not to his own voluntary disposition (**[A.D. 156]** Quoted by Irenaeus in *Against Heresies* 5:26:2).

Irenaeus of Lyon

Christ shall not die again on behalf of those who now commit sin, for death shall no more have dominion over Him; but the Son shall come in the glory of the Father, requiring from His stewards and dispensers the money which He had entrusted to them, with usury; and from those to whom He had given most shall He demand most. We ought not, therefore, as that presbyter remarks, to be puffed up, nor be severe upon those of old time, but ought ourselves to fear, lest perchance, after [we have come to] the knowledge of Christ, if we do things displeasing to God, we obtain no further forgiveness of sins, but be shut out from His kingdom (*Against Heresies* 4:27:2 **[inter A.D. 180-190]**).

Tatian the Syrian

Now, in the beginning the spirit was a constant companion of the soul, but the spirit forsook it because it was not willing to follow. Yet, retaining as it were a spark of its power, though unable by reason of the separation to discern the perfect, while seeking for God it fashioned to itself in its wandering many gods, following the sophistries of the demons. But the Spirit of God is not with all, but, taking up its abode with those who live justly, and intimately combining with the soul, by prophecies it announced hidden things to other souls. And the souls that are obedient to wisdom have attracted to themselves the cognate spirit; but the disobedient, rejecting the minister of the

suffering God, have shown themselves to be fighters against God, rather than His worshippers (*Address to the Greeks* 13 [A.D. 175]).

Tertullian

But some think as if God were under a necessity of bestowing even on the unworthy, what He has engaged (to give); and they turn His liberality into slavery. But if it is of necessity that God grants us the symbol of death, then He does so unwillingly. But who permits a gift to be permanently retained which he has granted unwillingly? For do not many afterward fall out of (grace)? Is not this gift taken away from many? (*On Repentance* 6 [A.D. 204]).

Cyprian of Carthage

It is written, "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved," (Matthew 10:22) whatever has been before the end is a step by which we ascend to the summit of salvation, not a terminus wherein the full result of the ascent is already gained (*On the Unity of the Church* 21 [A.D. 251]).

Aphrahat

Therefore let us prepare our temples for the Spirit of Christ, and let us not grieve it that it may not depart from us. Remember the warning that the Apostle gives us: — Grieve not the Holy Spirit whereby you have been sealed unto the day of redemption. For from baptism do we receive the Spirit of Christ... And whatever man there is that receives the Spirit from the water (of baptism) and grieves it, it departs from him until he dies, and returns according to its nature to Christ, and accuses that man of having grieved it (*Demonstrations* 6:14 [A.D. 345]).

John Chrysostom

This temple is holier than that; for it glistened not with gold and silver, but with the grace of the Spirit, and in place of the ark and the cherubim, it had Christ, and His Father, and the Paraclete seated within. But now all is changed, and the temple is desolate, and bare of its former beauty and comeliness, unadorned with its divine and unspeakable adornments, destitute of all security and protection; it has neither door nor bolt, and is laid open to all manner of soul-destroying and shameful thoughts; and if the thought of arrogance or fornication, or avarice, or any more accursed than these, wish to enter in there is no one to hinder them; whereas formerly, even as the Heaven is inaccessible to all these, so also was the purity of your soul (*Exhortations to Theodore after His Fall* 1:1 [A.D. 378]).

Pacian of Barcelona

What remedy shall there be for the fornicator? Shall either he be able to appease the Lord who hath abandoned Him? Or he to preserve his own blood, who hath shed another's? Or he to restore the temple of God, who hath violated it by fornication? These, my brethren, are capital, these are mortal, crimes (*On Repentance* 9 [A.D. 385]).

Jerome

Hear what the Apostle John says: 1 John 5:16 "He who knows that his brother sins a sin not unto death, let him ask, and he shall give him life, even to him that sins not unto death. But he that has sinned unto death, who shall pray for him?" You observe that if we entreat for smaller offenses, we obtain pardon: if for greater ones, it is difficult to obtain our request: and that there is a great difference between sins (*Against Jovinianus* 2:30 [A.D. 393]).

Augustine of Hippo

Both those who have not heard the gospel, and those who, having heard it and been changed by it for the better, have not received perseverance, and those who, having heard the gospel, have refused to come to Christ, that is, to believe in Him, since He Himself says, "No man comes unto me, except it were given him of my Father," John 6:65 and those who by their tender age were unable to believe, but might be absolved from original sin by the sole laver of regeneration, and yet have not received this laver, and have perished in death: are not made to differ from that lump which it is plain is condemned, as all go from one into condemnation (*On Rebuke and Grace* 12 [A.D. 427]).