

**How Could Names be Erased from the Book of Life in Rev. 3:5?:
We Must Cooperate with God's Grace by Faith
Karl Kemp, July 30, 2016**

Introductory Note: (I added this Introductory Note at the suggestion of a minister friend who read the article.) This article is my response to the question, the important question - "How could names be erased from the book of life in Rev. 3:5?" - that was asked in a class recently on the end times. Though the topics of once saved, always saved and whether God just gives us saving faith are relevant to this topic, I don't take the time in this rather short article to demonstrate that the Bible shows that born-again Christians can lose their salvation (though many sincere Christians disagree) and that God doesn't just give us saving faith (even though a few verses have been interpreted that way by some sincere Christians). I refer the reader to my papers "Once Saved, Always Saved?" and "Paper on Faith" that are on my internet site (Google to Karl Kemp Teaching).

I'll be rather brief here, but this super-important topic where WE DESPERATELY NEED THE BALANCED TRUTH OF WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES, is discussed in some detail in some of my papers, including those that include John 6:37-44; Ephesians chapter 1; Rom. 8:28-30; Romans chapters 9-11; my "Paper on Faith"; and my paper "Once Saved, Always Saved?" We need to understand that, although some verses strongly emphasize the role of God (I thank God for those verses; for one thing, we must emphasize God's role, walk by His grace/Spirit, and give Him all the glory), the Bible clearly shows that God leaves a very definite role for us. For one thing, we are not robots; we are rather high-level creations of God, created in His image. The fall affected this, but it did not totally change it (cf., e.g., Gen. 9:6). We must repent and submit to God and His Word and continue to walk in line with His Word by His grace through faith until the end of the race. He doesn't just give us saving faith to begin with, but He does draw, convict, etc. (see my "Paper on Faith"), and He doesn't make us continue in faith to the end. (See my paper, "Once Saved, Always Saved?")

Some verses speak of God's **choosing (electing)** some people (not all people) before the world was created ((**Eph. 1:3-4** (I'll quote **Eph. 1:4**, "Just as He **chose** us in Him [in Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him...."; the New Testament makes it very clear that we will not be "holy and blameless" if we do not appropriate and cooperate with God's saving, sanctifying grace by faith, in accordance with His Word, on a continuous basis); **2 Thess. 2:13**)). It is important for me to point out that it is also true, according to the Bible, that God sent His Son to die for all mankind and He has called all mankind to repent and submit to Him, His Son, and His gospel (cf. Acts 17:30-31; 26:20; 1 Tim. 2:3-6; 1 John 2:1-2).

In **Rom. 8:29** Paul speaks of those who God **foreknew** (not all people). He **foreknew them with favor** (cf., e.g., **Nah. 1:7, 8**; 1 Cor. 8:3). He **chose** the ones He **foreknew with favor**. He **put their names in the book of life before the world was created** (cf., e.g., **Rev. 13:8; 17:8**). Rom. 8:29 goes on to say that "He also **predestined** [us] *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren," and Eph. 1:5 goes on to say "He **predestined** us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself...." Then **Rom. 8:30** goes on to say that "those whom He **predestined** He also **called**. We will discuss the meaning of **predestine** in these verses in the following paragraphs. It is significant that the word **call** is essentially always used in the New Testament of God's **calling** the ones He has **chosen**, the **elect**, not all people (cf., e.g. Rom. 8:28; **1 Cor. 1:24, 27**; Heb. 9:15). We must respond to God's **call** with repentance and faith. **Eph. 1:13** is important in that it is one of a very large number of verses which show that believing (or, having faith) in God, His Son, and His Word/Gospel is something we do as we respond to His **call**, Word, grace, Spirit.

When we incorporate everything the Bible says (the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches) we see, as I mentioned, that God doesn't just give us saving faith and He doesn't make us continue in faith to the end (but He exhorts us to, and He certainly wants us to, continue to the end, and He makes His super-abundant grace available for us to continue to the end).

Predestine in the verses we looked at above mean that God **predetermined and laid down the path beforehand** that leads to the salvation of those He has **chosen**; that leads to our "adoption as sons" (Eph. 1:5; cf. Rom. 8:23 on our "adoption as sons"); that leads to our "[becoming] conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). It is extremely important for us to see though that when we take into consideration all that Paul (and other writers of the New Testament) taught on this topic, the idea is not included that God puts us on the **path** or keeps us on the **path** apart from our responding to and cooperating with His, Word, grace, Spirit by faith on a continuous basis.

Quick Confirming Look at Eph. 2:10. "For we are His [God the Father's] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works [[In other words, in the ideal case every true Christian would be God's **workmanship**, created through and in Christ Jesus (and by the Holy Spirit), manifesting a life full of "good works," in righteousness and holiness, with the victory over all sin. And when Christians don't manifest God's righteousness it robs God of glory, since we are, or at least we are **called** and **predestined** to be God's **workmanship**.]], which God **prepared beforehand** so that we would walk in them." God **prepared beforehand** (He **predetermined and laid down**

the path beforehand) that leads to a life full of good works, in righteousness and holiness, with the victory over all sin. However, it is all too obvious that to the extent we don't cooperate with God's call, Word, grace, Spirit, by faith, we will not be His **workmanship**. We must (we are required to) respond to and cooperate with God's grace and walk in the "good works, which God prepared beforehand." We need to rightly interpret God's Word.

The fact that God **chose** us, **put our names in the book of life**, and **called** us to salvation does not guarantee that we will submit to and continue in His saving grace. (I believe we can safely assume that essentially all of the elect will submit to God, His Son, and His gospel. However, based on what the New Testament says, we cannot assume that essentially all of the elect will continue in faith to the end of the race. See my "Once Saved, Always Saved?") ACCORDING TO GOD'S PLAN we always have to appropriate and cooperate with His grace. This must be understood when we read verses that make it sound like everything depends on God and Him alone. It doesn't, because He set things up in a way that we have to do, and continue to do, the things required of us, in accordance with His Word, by grace through faith. The Bible frequently says that God sanctifies us, but it just as clearly says that we must sanctify ourselves by His grace, which includes walking in line with God's Word and by His Spirit and resisting temptation on a continuous basis. The fact that we must cooperate with God's grace by faith doesn't change the fact that we are saved one-hundred percent by His grace and He must receive all the glory for our salvation.

With what I have said above it should be clear that our names can be erased from the book of life if we turn our backs on God and stop living for Him in His truth and righteousness by faith. Believers can become unbelievers. **Revelation 3:5** makes it clear that our names can be erased from the book of life. And there are many passages in the New Testament that clearly show that born-again believers can lose their salvation. (See my paper "Once Saved, Always Saved?") Of course this isn't God's will ((the fact that He had foreknown them with favor, chosen them, and put their names in the book of life [and loved them (cf. Rev. 3:19, which deals with Christians in Laodicea who were on the verge of losing their salvation if they didn't repent)] show that it isn't God's will)), but sin, unbelief, backsliding, and rebellion aren't God's will either. If the idea was that God saw us in heaven in His foreknowledge and then wrote our names in the book of life, then our names could not be erased, but that isn't the idea: Our names being in the book of life means that God **foreknew us with favor, chose** us, and **put our names in the Lamb's book of life**. It doesn't mean that we cannot lose our salvation. My first year or two as a Christian, before I had studied the Bible on this topic, I wrongly believed that it does mean that.

It is clear that Rev. 3:1-6 is dealing with those who had become born-again Christians. Rev. 3:2 shows that they still have some spiritual life, which they were on the verge of losing (that spiritual life came when they became born-again Christians). The Lord Jesus said that they were more dead than alive based on how they were living, on their works; how they live flows from what is in their hearts. Faith is of the heart. In Rev. 3:3 He called them to repent. There is NO substitute for repenting when repentance is required, and repenting is something that Christians must do as they respond to and cooperate with God's grace. In Rev. 3:4 Jesus said that "[they had] a few people in Sardis who [had] not soiled their garments." Those few were not in any danger; they were very solid in their salvation. The others had soiled the garments that came along with their becoming true, born-again Christians, but the Lord Jesus was still calling them to wake up and repent with top priority. Furthermore, the fact that their names had been and still were in the book is another confirmation that they had become born-again Christians. If their names were erased from the book of life they would no longer be headed for heaven.

Of course we should intercede for Christians who are backsliden (living in sin). God is calling all backsliden Christians to repent. It is dangerous to put off repenting, and all the more so when God is dealing with those Christians, as He was in Rev. 3:1-6 for example. For one thing, the heart is hardened by living in sin. We need to understand that the devil has often told backsliden Christians that God hates them and they cannot repent, but that is a lie. The fact that a backsliden Christian has a desire to repent confirms that they can repent, that God is calling them to repent.

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Summary: We are saved by grace through faith, but God doesn't just give us saving faith and He doesn't make us continue in faith to the end. We must cooperate with His grace through faith, in accordance with His Word, on a continuous basis.

Keywords: Rev. 3:5,book of life,erase names from book of life,predestinate,God calls,God chooses/elects,God's grace,repentance,God foreknows with favor,Rom. 8:28-30,Eph. 2:10,God's workmanship