

CAN

A

CHRISTIAN

EVER

BE

LOST ?

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INDEX

Preface.....	II
1. How Willing Are You to Find Out?.....	1
2. Seeing the Problem.....	3
3. Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth.....	7
4. The Restricted Possibilities.....	11
5. In the Old Testament Frame.....	13
6. In the New Testament Frame.....	15
7. The Spirit of God	23
8. The Saviour	29
9. Relationship	43
10. Where Does This Lead?.....	55
11. Overview.....	63
12. Texts That Seem Against Eternal Security	67
Appendix.....	83

PREFACE

It is with a sense of sympathy for the ones who are wrestling with this question that I have felt urged to take up paper and pen and write a few thoughts down that may be a help to the one who reads them.

This question is not a light matter to people on either side of it. It is one that stirs the thoughts and hearts of many, for in some degree it unsettles us ... a condition that none of us like to be in. I personally struggled with this until through reading God's word, the Bible, on a consecutive and regular basis, I began to be familiar enough with its themes to see many a cloud disappear over verses of scripture that had seemed to give grounds for such unsettlement.

I wouldn't be surprised if every believer has, in reading the scriptures, run into verses that appear to be opposite their view on this matter of Eternal Security. What do we do when we find such verses? Is it right to just ignore them? Can we hope that they are meaningless fillers having no place in our consideration? What kind of "Bible believing" Christianity is that?! Do we just pick and choose what we want to believe or are we willing to let God be God and say what He will while we listen with the attention of a young Samuel who said, "Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth"?

Oh yes, for me there was a fear of what I might find. What if it cuts cross grain to what I've been taught? Worse yet, what if it turns out to be what I hope it isn't? Would I change? Am I right about this because of where I go to meet with other believers? Does that automatically make me right in such things? In the final analysis, it is God's Word, and God's Word alone, that we turn to. No association with other believers automatically makes our doctrines above question, for the apostle Paul said to the Thessalonians, "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good."

And so my feelings go out to those who are wrestling with this subject, because the need for reality with God makes one feel weak and vulnerable depending on Himself alone to show us His mind.

II Corinthians 2:12 “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God: THAT WE MIGHT KNOW the things which are freely given to us of God.”

That your feet, indeed, will stand solidly on God’s word is my request of God as I pen these lines.

1

HOW WILLING ARE YOU TO FIND OUT?

TIME:

The above question is not meant in any way other than it sounds. How willing are you to search out the answer? There are far too many people who, when it comes to a Biblical answer on a given subject, want it in one verse. It is not because they intend to memorize the verse or want a quick reference, but often it is a way of saying, “If this is going to take more than two minutes of my time, then I’m not interested.”

Any light treatment of the subject is just as lightly forgotten. It has been said that prejudice is a wonderful time-saver, you can make strong judgments without having to get the facts. If that is your case, this book may not be for you. However, if you have an honest desire to consider the matter in a little more depth than a few minutes’ conversation, then read on, and may God richly bless you.

As in everything that is taught you, “PROVE ALL THINGS; hold fast that which is good.” Don’t simply take my word; search the scriptures and see if these things are so.

YOURSELF:

How willing are you to let God change your mind if it needs changing? This is a different part of searching, for a determination not to see anything other than “what I think”, is not searching at all.

ASSOCIATIONS:

Thirdly, how willing am I to allow (if God must change my mind) that there are other good believers whom I hold in high regard that still may not see what God has placed in His word on the subject.

These are searching thoughts and not intended to scare the reader at all, but are rather brought out to make the reader aware that a half-hearted search is not a search, and a whole-hearted search can bring definite convictions which affect the believer’s life thereafter.

2

SEEING THE PROBLEM

Perhaps I am speaking to someone who up until now has never really given much thought as to whether a Christian can be lost or not. Perhaps you have been surrounded by those who are all of one mind on the matter, and such a question has never crossed your mind before.

Whether you have never addressed it before or whether you have indeed been faced with such a question before, it is a good spiritual exercise to learn and to know where you stand, and why you stand there. I remember speaking to some believers about this subject which had come up, when I was still a teenager. (The ones I spoke with actually weren't much older.) I remember well, though, a statement of a young woman that shocked me to the core. She said something to the effect that she believed a certain way on this question purely because that's what she wanted to believe. My mind reeled. What does what I want to believe have to do with spiritual things? Can I change God's Word to my own tastes? Does what He has said on the matter mean anything at all? Surely you can agree with me here that if the Word of God were left for us to pick and choose what we liked, and discard or ignore what we don't like depending on our personal tastes, we would in actuality be left with no standard except our own, and we would be handling the word of God deceitfully, only using it when it suits our purposes.

However, any reader of God's Word may have noticed verses on this subject that need more explanation than they presently have a knowledge of.

To view the problem first without much comment, let us look at some verses that fall into this category.

A) SEEMS TO SUGGEST LOSS OF SALVATION:

I Corinthians 15:2 “...by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.”

II Peter 2:20 “...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.”

Hebrews 10:29 “...of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace?”

Hebrews 6:4-8 “...for it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.”

Ezekiel 18:24 “But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.”

Psalms 51:11 “Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.”

B) SEEMS TO SUGGEST PERMANENT SALVATION

John 10:28 “...and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.”

John 6:37 “...All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

Hebrews 13:5 “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, ‘I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.’”

Romans 8:38 “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

John 6:39 “And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.”

With some thought on each of these verses cited, noting under which heading they are placed, it should be easy to see that there could be some confusion.

One thing that is certain is that both ideas cannot be true. Another certainty is that “God is not the author of confusion.” (I Corinthians 14:33)

With this in mind, we shall look at some solid principles of studying the Word of God in the next section, which may give much help in clearing up the apparent problem.

3

RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (II Timothy 2:15)

This exhortation that the apostle Paul found necessary to give to his son in the faith, Timothy, is one that should cause us all to see the need for knowing the contents of the Bible, not simply as a textbook, but rather a holy familiarity with its message and its revelation of the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Its word should saturate our souls, for Paul told the Colossians in chapter 3 verse 16 “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...” Yes, dear fellow believer, the exhortation is to:

(A) READ, READ, READ ... not as some duty, but that we may know what God has for us in His Word. Have we been satisfied to be spoon-fed by others, or do we seek some time alone with the author of this Book, to learn of Him on a regular, daily basis?

(B) Along with the need to read God’s Word is a need to come with a submissive spirit as we would desire to know what God would have us know. It is of very little value to study the scriptures to obtain a head knowledge so that we could impress others or to study them to prove some point that we already believe and now need some powder to shoot it out of our cannon with.

However, Hebrews 11:6 tells us “...He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” For those like Mary, who sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word, there is a blessing and a commendation from the Lord Himself. “One thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” (Luke 10:42)

We should, therefore, be diligent (study) to show ourselves approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Obviously, we cannot divide what we don’t even know.

(C) But what does it mean to “rightly divide” the word of truth? This, simply put, means to be able to give it out in its proper usage in scripture ... not out of context and not out of its time frame intended. Examples of context would be: (1) Verses nearby the verse in question

that carry forward the thought pattern as the subject is unfolded to us. Many, many difficulties would be cleared up immediately if verses would be read before and after the one in question. This stops the use of phraseology which is borrowed from our Bible but does not have anything to do with the subject it is used on as if it were some “proof text.” The cults are good at this. I remember being stopped in my tracks as a younger believer by something someone “showed me in the Bible.” Only later at home did I discover that the verses surrounding their “proof text” actually disproved their very “point.”

(2) Context is not limited to verses nearby. Sometimes, in order to get the whole picture of things, you need to read the chapters on either side, starting from where the subject was first brought into the passage and following it to its completion. (An example of such would be Romans 9, 10, 11.)

(3) No doubt you could see this one coming. Yes, the book itself should be considered as context. For some books such as Hebrews, if the context in which it was written is not kept in mind, it will cause some “difficult areas” to show up. However, in seeing its setting and purpose from the onset, it becomes one of the most loved books (if you can love one above another) of the New Testament.

(4) Context, context, context, and still more context. What context now? The context of which testament it is in. In other words, the time frame and development frame of God’s revelation of Himself to man. What do I mean by this? Without question, we no longer bring sacrificial lambs to a high priest to have its blood shed in our stead. Why don’t we? I can show you a verse or verses that were “commandments” of God to do so. Would that change anything if I could show you them? NO ... not at all! Why? Because while it was for a time frame up until Christ, it was put aside, being only a “shadow,” for now the “substance” is here, Christ Himself. In similar ways, we must look at each scripture as to whom it was written and in what period they lived.

I was rather amazed in my earlier years as I read where Jesus told the healed leper to “go and show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.” (Luke 5:14) I thought it rather strange that here was a man in the New Testament, at a time when Jesus was here, being told to offer

what MOSES had commanded. Could we prove from this that Jesus also allowed sacrifices for cleansing as if He were not the only way? NO WAY! That would be heresy of the worst kind, for the scripture is very clear that there is no longer need for offerings ... Christ's work is everything. One little verse sets the perspective straight and clear. Hebrews 9:17 says, "For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." So while the Lord Jesus was here, before His own (nation) "received him not," it was on Old Testament ground that He magnified the law and fulfilled it before bringing in the new covenant (testament) by His death. Obviously, there are many previews of that new testament in the four Gospels, but the leper cleansed was still dealing with the priest under law.

And so we can see it is necessary to not grab at single verses to prove some point, but rather to look at its context in an ever widening radius until we are assured that we know how the subject comes up in the particular passage and to where it leads.

(D) One final little thought that is worth coming back to is a little rule of thumb which I have noticed is often ignored. Basically, "Don't ignore the clear to hold to the fuzzy." I'm sure you got that ... it doesn't sound too theological, but I'll explain what I mean. I have met people who, when faced with one of those crystal, clearly-stated verses that need no comment, only reading, will put its truth far to the back of their mind because of a preoccupation with another scripture that really doesn't address it but could be interpreted to ... just maybe ... just maybe ... mean the opposite. For example, on the issue of eternal punishment, some will simply blink their eyes at the most clearly put scriptures which show "torment for ever and ever" and will lead you to one of the Old Testament verses where the issue at hand is not the hereafter but the present, to prove that death ends all. What do you do with clear statements? Keep them in the forefront! Don't let them get lost in the sorting process! Some verses are like jewels; they are not to be glibly discounted. They are given to us to clearly set forth truths. If you can't get around a clear truth without ignoring it, then you should accept it.

THE RESTRICTED POSSIBILITIES

The question as to whether a Christian can or cannot be lost again is not without some divisions even within sides. Namely, there are those who, on the side of saying a Christian can be lost, say that if that happened he could be saved “again” if there were repentance again. Theoretically, they agree to a saved, lost, saved, lost, saved, lost changeability of the individual’s standing before God.

There are others who, while they hold that a Christian can be lost, reserve this for an extreme sin of willful turning away, whereas the former group would include any departure or waywardness as grounds for being lost.

There are also, on the other side of the issue, Christians who state that no matter what happens following conversion, a Christian cannot be lost. Among those that state such, there are two more vaguely defined lines where some seem to allow any behavior in the believer’s life after he is saved. The other part is very emphatic that the life of a believer is a reflection of whether the person who calls himself a Christian really is, or is not, what he professes to be.

Most of us who read this book will find ourselves in one of these groups.

To the undecided and the very decided, I would like you to consider each possibility, and then compare it with the Word of God on the subject. It is not enough to be able to say, “I believe such and such because it suits my thinking.” Only when we can stand with God will we be safe from every wind of doctrine that blows, on this issue.

ELIMINATE ONE

It may be of no surprise to most that one of these four are easily eliminated from further consideration by one of those clear verses ... the kind which expresses truth so completely that it can’t be further ignored.

It may seem a curious way to handle this verse to some, for there is a very different meaning to it if one were on the side of Eternal

Security (more about that later). However, in all fairness, if one takes the position of no Eternal Security, then this verse in Hebrews 6:4-6 must be taken to mean this: “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”

Many who believe in NO Eternal Security use this verse to prove that one can fall away and be lost. If that is indeed the case, then the verse itself excludes our first example of saved, lost, saved, lost, etc. entirely, for “it is impossible... to renew them again unto repentance.” If then a Christian could be lost again, it is certain he could NOT BE SAVED AGAIN ... it could only be lost forever. The moment he “slipped” it would be all over. If this “slip” were simply the moment he sinned, there would be no one in Heaven, for “sinless perfection” is not found in the Bible regarding believers.

That really only leaves us with those who believe that it is a willful turning away from Christ, that can cause a Christian to be lost, and those who believe that nothing can separate them from Christ.

These two positions are the ones we shall look at in this book.

5

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT FRAME

Was there any hint of the eternal security issue in the Old Testament? Were there any clear statements on the subject? The answer is yes, indeed. In one of those verses that are crystal clear as to its context and meaning, we are told emphatically about it. Ezekiel 18:24 says, “But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, IN THEM SHALL HE DIE.”

Without any question, the subject here is “could a man turn away from God and still be held as righteous?” The answer is, obviously, no. God would not hold him in any other view than being wicked. All of his life that had gone before was worthless in the light of the fact he had forsaken God. However, there were certain sure covenants of the Old Testament. God’s promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were sure promises; that is, the NATION was assured of eternal prominence. But as in these verses we have just read, the individual could miss out entirely. Did Israel enter the promised land of Canaan? Yes. Was it every one of those that came out of Egypt? No. You can see that God still kept the surety of His promise to the nation as a whole, while rejecting those who rejected His word and ways.

Was there, then, no evidence of any individual surety of eternal things in the Old Testament? Let us look for a moment at King David. In the Psalms (51:11) David wrote, “Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.” He had been convicted by God through the prophet Nathan of having committed adultery with Bathsheba and arranging her husband’s death. His cry to God at this point in his life was not to cast him away. Indeed, David knew that God could have turned from him. Saul before him had the Spirit of God leave him alone ... David didn’t want that to happen to himself, and so he utters this plea.

However, look at the same King David as the last days of his life approach. II Samuel 23:5 says, “Although my house be not so with

God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and SURE: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.” This shows us very clearly that now, at this point in his life, David was resting entirely on the covenant that God had made with him. Notice that he says it is not so with his family. Indeed, it wasn’t, for the sword had not departed from his house. There had been tragedy, murder, and rebellion in his household; and David could not vouch for the walk of his own children with the God of their father. Yet he was, at this point, personally confident of the surety of his eternal hope.

How sure was his hope? It was so sure that when God Himself wished to show wayward Israel, during the time of Isaiah the prophet, the promise of their own blessing if they would return to Him, He says, “I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David” Isaiah 55:3. (The rest of the chapter of Isaiah 55 shows a time when, having come back truly to the Lord at the time of the end, Israel will enter into the eternal blessings of God.)

So then, in brief, we have generally no eternal security in the Old Testament outside of what were specific promises to individuals. We do, however, glean from this that, were it the mind of God to do so, He could make such a covenant that could not be changed, which would bring surety of its fulfillment to the one or ones with whom He made the covenant.

Having looked at the issue quickly in the Old Testament framework, let me point out, no doubt with surprise to some and no surprise to others, that among both schools of thought on the matter, they more or less agree that there was generally NO eternal security (once saved, always saved) for the people of the Old Testament.

Obviously, this was witnessed by the continued need for offerings. Hebrews 10:2 says about that fact, “For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once (once for all) purged should have had no more conscience of sins.”

The very nature of the old covenant demanded performance to a standard ... the very nature of man required cleansing upon cleansing upon cleansing of PAST sins. How could surety be found in such a scenario?

6 IN THE NEW TESTAMENT FRAME

Having narrowed things down a bit in the last few pages, let us take a good solid, serious look at what the New Testament has upon the subject.

First of all, I believe it would be wise to give a full account of the position taken by those who believe in eternal security and then to turn the scriptures that seem to deny eternal security upon that position to see if it will stand. One thing is for sure ... if what we hold is true, then we should not be afraid to see the scriptures held up alongside and compared.

Let us now turn and look at the position taken by those who claim there is eternal security for the believer; that is to say, once a soul has passed from death unto life there is no reversal and, therefore, come what may, heaven is sure.

THE CHANGE OF COVENANTS

To understand this position, one must first look at the difference between the Old Testament (covenant) and the New Testament (covenant).

It is obvious that the Old Testament had a grand purpose, for in it God revealed Himself to godly men down through the ages as the One and only all-powerful, all-sufficient, intensely holy Being, whose claim upon mankind by the right of creation demanded an honest assessment of sin on the part of the human and a repentance and turning away from evil before communion could be restored. This was signified by animal sacrifices, for sin was ever present in the lives of the people.

After God gave the law of the ten commandments, He gave also a provision in the use of animal sacrifices that showed the wages of sin to be death, showed that innocent blood must flow in substitution for the sinner, and showed how the Holiness of God could only be approached where sin had been so dealt with. Acceptance was only by such blood shed and brought before God. (Read the Great Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16.)

The LAW, however, had its faults. The children of Israel said, “All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient” (Exodus 24:7); but what sounded fine at first glance only showed the ignorance of the people as to their own capacity to sin and their ignorance as to God’s own holiness. The law and its ordinances never gave the worshiper the POWER to fulfill the law. Romans 4:5 tells us “...the law worketh wrath...” What happened then, under the first covenant (the Old Testament) a pure, holy standard was raised that showed the holiness of the God of heaven but exposed the sinfulness of fallen man on earth. No wonder sacrifice was needed!

If one were to stop and reflect on the many, many animals slain and the rivers of blood that flowed on Jewish altars, it would make sense that the old covenant was not the final purpose of God. Hebrews 10:1 says, “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto PERFECT. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.”

Why then was the law given? Galatians handles this question. In chapter 3:19 we read, “Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed (Christ) should come to whom the promise was made.”Chapter 3:24 says, “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.”

Hebrews 7:18 sheds more light on the subject with these words: “For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof; for the law made nothing PERFECT, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.”

From the preceding verses of scripture and many more on this subject outside of the scope of this book, it is evident to all who read that there was a definite change between the Old Testament and the New.

The interest we have at this point revolves around the word “PERFECT” which stands as a marked difference between the two. Under the old covenant we can see a continual need of more sacrifices which never ended the matter. Sin was not put away ... it was covered, awaiting the one and only Lamb of God to be sacrificed on Calvary “once for all.”

At this point, you may be wondering what this may have to do with the proof of eternal security. Don't all believers see this difference, and have not all rested in Christ, seeing a definite end to the old covenant and rejoicing in the new? The point is simply this, that though all true believers rest on the finished work of Christ alone for salvation, many do not fully appreciate ALL the work of Christ as the scriptures show it.

GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE

Let me ask you here ... how were you saved? Who did what? The author's mind goes back to a time when he claimed to be saved on this basis ... that he had "believed." In my mind, I felt that what had satisfied God was my "believing." I "believed" ... I mean, I didn't think the words were lies regarding Christ's death. Wasn't that what God wanted of me ... to "just believe"? The work of Christ was not before my heart at all, just a trust that I had "believed" rightly as was expected of me. In effect, it was a form of works that I had done, that I expected would satisfy God.

That couldn't be farther from the truth. How glad I was when, by the grace of God, I saw that God was satisfied with the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, where His blood was poured out amid agony of soul as He bore all my sin in His own body on the tree. All God's righteous claims against me for what I was (a sinner) and for what I did (sin) were fully satisfied in the death of Christ.

Where did I come in? I was simply a receiver of a gift ... "the gift of righteousness" (Romans 5:17). Oh yes, I had desired it, but so had God desired that I have it. I had sought it, fearing the consequences of being without it, but God had sought me and had already provided and made available to me salvation in the death of His Son. I would not have sought it if His gracious Spirit had not first moved upon my heart by the gospel. Who assured me that I was saved? None other than the Saviour Himself. In every facet, as I look back, I see GOD behind the scenes.

Yes, "salvation is of the Lord." No, we aren't puppets without a will; but, brother and sister, if the Lord had not willed to save sinners, we never could be saved. James 1:18 says this, "Of His own will begat He

us with the word of truth.” I Peter 1:23 says, “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.”

Who could deny that salvation is a birth? It is certainly not a turning over of a new leaf with good resolutions. Jesus told Nicodemus very plainly, “Ye must be born again.” Nicodemus countered with, “How can a man...?” He was wondering what MAN could do to make this happen. The Lord kindly showed him it was not of the flesh; it must be of the Spirit. John 1:13 says, “which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but OF GOD.”

Yes, we preach and believe in being born again. Do we, behind the “bringing to the birth,” see the hand of God? Testimony after testimony of believers tells of how God dealt with them before they ever got saved. Resoundingly, we can say, “GOD saved me.” God provided a Saviour, God led me by His Spirit to see my need of that Saviour, and then assured me by His own Word that Jesus died for me ... that this Saviour was mine.

But wait! Have we gone back far enough? Revelation 13:8 shows another facet; it speaks of “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

I Peter 1:18- 20 says, “...forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.”

Can you see that God had prior thoughts toward us in the vastness of Eternity before creation? Would He have designed salvation and ordained a saviour (His only begotten Son) if there were no prior knowledge of our condition to come? Calvary was no afterthought! God was not caught on the horns of a dilemma when Adam fell. He was prepared with a message of salvation that would foreshadow the coming of His Son.

“Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world.” Acts 15:18

“Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” (II Timothy 1:9)

Why should we trace it back so far? In the interest of the subject before us, it is necessary to see GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE in the matter, GOD'S hand in providing the Saviour, GOD'S Spirit in convicting the sinner, and GOD'S Word holding out the promise of eternal life to all who receive Him. ("He that hath the Son hath life." I John 5:12)

Where did any action of mine come in? Did I design salvation? No ... had I, I would, indeed, be lost. Did I convict myself of sin? No, I tried to believe that sin was much smaller than God's Word said it to be. Did I come to the Saviour? YES ... it was a response to His dear call of love. FAITH simply received GRACE (gift) by believing the PROMISE.

Was I saved by faith? Yes, through faith I received what I could never have originated or produced. Was I saved through grace? Yes, God's "gift of righteousness" was mine (Romans 5:17) by simply receiving it from the hand of the Saviour. What about the PROMISE part? It is simply the Word of God from the God who "cannot lie" which says, "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Many are willing to follow this far with a hearty "Amen!" and "Praise the Lord!" Surely our hearts should rejoice continually in such a salvation. We shall never be able to exhaust the riches of this subject. No wonder Paul wrote, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33)

Is this as far as we can go? No doubt it is as far as many see, though there is plenty more on the subject of God's Eternal Purpose. This next section is most helpful to our question of eternal security.

Let us ask ourselves another question. How far does God go in the scriptures in outlining His purposes? The answer, in short is, on into Eternity to come. Let us look at Romans 8:28-30 for a minute. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified."

What has this portion of God's Word been written for? It is obviously to encourage the Lord's own people to take their eyes off the failure of self, as seen in Romans chapter 7, and to see God's provision for us now in the person of the Holy Spirit. Also, He desires us to look beyond to the bright, eternal future of the believer and see that the believer is on the winning side.

To do this, God starts with the knowledge of us before we existed and finishes with the placing of us in glory as though we were already there! Romans 4:17 will help us understand something here. It says, "...God...calleth those things which be not as though they were." How is it that God can do this? We tend to put the eternal God into the confinements of time, as fits our human thinking; but in this we go astray. God is not bound by the limits of time. He sees the future with no sense of wondering what will develop but rather has it so planned that He tells us as "fact" that which waits yet to happen on our calendar. Look at the prophecies in Revelation ... nothing short of a blow-by-blow account as if it happened, when in schedule it has yet to be.

And so it is that God does not have to "wait and see" if any will be saved before He plans their future. In the verses we just read in Romans 8, God tells us of predestinating us to be conformed to the image of His Son. God's great purpose out of love to His Son and love to us is to make us like His Son ... to be fit company for Him eternally ... "joint heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17) having, as Colossians 1:12 says, "made us meet (fit) to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

As we read Romans 8:30, we see that "them He also glorified"! As far as God is concerned, God sees the finished product. No wonder the next verse says, "What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" Did the apostle not see in all this the divine hand of God that not only saves but makes secure His own purposes in keeping the believer as safe now as if he were already in heaven? Consider the verses that immediately follow these in the same chapter of Romans 8. Reading from verse 33, we have these words: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us?"

Did you follow the questions and answers in this text? Note that because God has justified us, none can lay any charge against us. Note that because Christ has died and risen and ascended to God's right hand and is an intercessor for us, none can condemn us.

It becomes evident that not only has God justified us but Christ presently intercedes for us at the right hand of God. This results in no charges being able to be laid against any of His own.

More will be developed on this later. In summary then, God's eternal purpose did not stop at salvation from a past record of sin but included all of our sin (all of my sin was future when Jesus died) to the point where He sees us as already safely landed home with Him, cleansed whiter than snow.

7 THE SPIRIT OF GOD

THE SEAL

Any careful reader of God's word discovers that the triune God is fully involved in our salvation. In the last section, the emphasis lies with the Father, although all are evident. God is not divided up into separate beings. He is ONE, even though three distinct persons are shown (i.e. Father, Son, Holy Spirit). In this section we shall look at what God tells us of His Holy Spirit, in relation to our question of eternal security.

When the Lord Jesus left earth for heaven, He left promises with His own that they would not be left alone. The Comforter that was promised to come was to "ABIDE with you FOREVER." JOHN 14:16 says plainly, "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

This promised Comforter was another of the same kind, one of the Godhead three ... Diety, indeed. The amazing part of this is that, though in Old Testament days the Spirit of God "came upon" various ones and mighty deeds were done, yet never had the promise of the PERMANENT residency of the Holy Spirit been made before. This was a new thing ... something which would identify all believers; for Romans 8:9 says in unmistakable terms, "...Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." In the Old Testament, David could pray, "take not thy Holy Spirit from me." Never do we see such a prayer under the new covenant. Why? Look at the promise we have just read together, John 14:16, "...with you for EVER." How long is forever? That is how long God has given us His Spirit. God has so entwined Himself with us that He has made His own being to be never divided from us again! Am I stretching the promise too far? Consider Ephesians 4:30, "...Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." God has not simply placed the Holy Spirit within as an eternal resident, but has placed Him as a SEAL

upon us, identifying us as His own personal possession, and the seal is UNTO THE DAY OF REDEMPTION. The use of the seal in Bible times was an official stamp or impression that gave warning of penalty, punishment, or even death, to any who would dare to put their hands to change the decree of the represented authority.

What God has done is placed, not a written seal but a living Seal, His own Spirit, to guard the soul that has come to Him for salvation. This Seal must remain until the day of redemption. The day of which this is speaking is the “redemption of our bodies” (as in Romans 8:23) ... that is, when we no longer will be here, surrounded by a sinful world or be tempted in any way, but rather shall be forever “with the Lord.” (I Thessalonians 4:17)

THE EARNEST

The Spirit is not only a divine resident forever, or a Seal unto the day of redemption, but is also an EARNEST OF OUR INHERITANCE. Consider Ephesians 1:13 ... “In who ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were SEALED with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the EARNEST OF OUR INHERITANCE, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.” II Corinthians 1:22 is similar ... “Who hath also SEALED us, and given the EARNEST OF THE SPIRIT in our hearts.”

What is an “earnest”? There has been very little change in the use of an “earnest” today compared to when the Bible was written. Today, earnest money is put down on a house that the buyer intends to buy. It is a pledge to carry out the deal so that the seller no longer need look for another buyer and the buyer no longer need fear that the home will be sold during the time interval to someone else. The difference in some of today’s deals is that there are contingencies (strings attached) such as earnest money that is contingent on the new buyer being able to obtain financing. In such a case, if the new buyer could not obtain financing, the earnest money would be returned. If, however, he simply changed his mind about buying, he would still “lose” his “earnest” money and the seller would be lawfully the possessor of it.

In Bible times, the contingency business didn’t exist. It was simple and straightforward. A pledge (or earnest) guaranteed the intentions of

the one pledging, and the pledge became the property of the one who did not receive that which had been promised as forthcoming.

Now consider the Holy Spirit of God as an EARNEST OF OUR INHERITANCE. God has promised eternal life to all that have received Him, for I John 5:12 says, “He that hath the Son hath life.” God could have easily taken us home to heaven the moment we were saved, but He didn’t. Instead, He sent an eternal resident (who is also a divine teacher) who is a SEAL that challenges all enemies to a position of “hands off” and is of Himself the EARNEST of what God has promised to us as sons and heirs. For God to break His promise is unthinkable, for it is “impossible for God to lie.” (Hebrews 6:18) Was God risking the loss of part of His very Being by making the Holy Spirit the EARNEST? IMPOSSIBLE! God did that to show more abundantly the unchangeableness of His own purpose in saving souls, and the sureness of the refuge found in His embrace. God does not intend to lose His EARNEST, nor does He intend to lose one of His own believers. If such a thing could ever be, God would cease to be God.

And so we see a confident apostle in II Corinthians 5:4-8 ... confident because of the “earnest,” that death only brings that which God has promised. Listen to his words: “For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always CONFIDENT, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are CONFIDENT, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”

Notice here is one who is confident, whether staying or going, that what God has “wrought us for” (MADE us for) will be brought out to completion. His confidence is not in what he worked out for God. It is, rather, the reverse. He saw that which God had given in advance, the EARNEST, and this made him confident.

There are passages in the New Testament that compare us to a bride and even show us to be the bride of Christ. Again, there is that promise, we see it in the engagement ring of our culture, something of

value to be kept in view of a wonderful day just ahead when both will be joined together in marriage. How much more are the affections of believers on the Lord Jesus Christ stirred toward a day not too distant by the “Earnest of our inheritance” who delights to bring thoughts of our Heavenly Bridegroom to our mind as we await the day.

THE INTERCESSOR

In the manifold workings of God there is another very important portion of the Spirit of God that has a bearing on eternal security. The Spirit Himself INTERCEDES FOR US. Romans 8:26, in this very subject which we have before us, says: “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself MAKETH INTERCESSION FOR US with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”

This is a most blessed truth, and one that affords much joy in considering. In Matthew 20:22 Jesus had to admonish His disciples, for, said He, “ye know not what ye ask.” How many times has that been our case ... many, many times ... maybe thousands of times. Why is it then that our prayers, that are, no doubt, not without ignorance and sin, ever get to be heard at all?

This precious truth shows us one of God’s links of communication and communion that He has established in each believer’s heart. A very poor analogy would be a telephone call across the continent. Without a telephone on your end, all your speech and thoughts would stay with you; but a telephone provides the electronic translation of your voice onto a wire going across the continent. (We’ll talk about the telephone on the other end later.) This is a poor example, for your mind is still communicated without arrangement for acceptability, and you could say foolish words that you cannot take back, for the telephone knows no difference. But with the blessed Spirit of God, there is One who not only is in direct touch with the eternal throne, but He prays for us ... intercedes for us ... even when that wasn’t what we thought to say. Even when our hearts are cold, there is One there who never grows cold ... when we may stoop to sin, there is one who intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Indeed, God has not left us “alone.” We are not left to ourselves to find our way home ... we have an ETERNAL RESIDENT, we are SEALED unto the day of redemption, we are confident because of the EARNEST, and we have ONE always in tune with heaven’s throne pleading from this side on our behalf.

8 THE SAVIOUR

All of the books of the Bible point to one person ... the Saviour. Many Old Testament ordinances showed that man's relationship to God necessitated a Saviour. The Old Testament sacrifices became a type or a parable of a coming Saviour, and many were the prophecies that foretold of this wondrous person who would come into the world that He might be a Saviour. At His birth He was to be called Jesus "... for He shall save His people from their sins."

The issue at hand was SIN. Man was far from God by nature and by practice, for the effect of Adam's sin was to ruin the whole human race. No longer was there fellowship and joyful communion between man and his Maker. Sin had wreaked havoc, and there was a price to be paid for it. From the beginning, God provided them with a "covering." Coats of skins gave mute evidence to the first sign of death. The innocent (animals) would provide a covering through their own death.

Thus, early in God's Word, we get the picture of the innocent taking the place of the guilty, that the guilty might be spared in GRACE.

However, under the old covenant, as we have mentioned before, the sacrifices which were made were only pointing toward "the LAMB OF GOD which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). They could never put away sin. This crucial difference is taken up in this next section, as we look rather extensively at the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews was written to Hebrews. These Jewish believers, and some mixed with them who were not believers, still met at the temple and were now hearing the call of God to come outside the camp and separate from that which no longer carried His Name. There is a very strong parallel drawn between the mixed multitude (believers and unbelievers) that left Egypt under Moses when God called them out and these Hebrews who had enough mixture of saved and unsaved among them that their discernment was poor ... poor enough to almost follow those that had at one time seemed real but now had gone back into Judaism. This issue of unreality we shall address later; but for now, suffice it to say that the book of Hebrews has two distinct uses of the

pronoun “we.” There is the “we” who have heard the word of God, which included all the Hebrews. There is also the “we” who believe, which refers to the saved ones.

It is upon the background of this vacillating testimony of Jewish believers that God chose to outline, step by step, the most precious truths of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and the work of salvation which is uniquely His. This book of Hebrews alone, if read with devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ, would strengthen the heart of every believer against every wind of doctrine that abounds and has a direct answer for the errors of the cults.

Show me a believer on the Lord Jesus who has lost his song, and I'll guarantee you that understanding the message of Hebrews will make his spirit soar.

You may tell me that Hebrews also presents the hardest arguments against eternal security found anywhere in the Bible. If you indeed believe this to be so, I'm glad you have read this far. Please consider the work of Christ in all its facets in this book of Hebrews with me. I believe many problems will disappear on their own; and those that still perplex, I hope to cover later.

God presents to us His SON in Hebrews 1:2. He is the heir of all things. He is also the creator. Verse 3 says, in effect, that the Son is the exact expression of God. We cannot help but bow in reverential wonder as to why such a One would ever leave the glories of heaven. The glory that was His was veiled in human flesh as “the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world” (I John 4:14). He became the “man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” of Isaiah 53:3, but His purpose was to go to the cross. There He became answerable for sin ... not His own. He could not sin, for He was God manifest in the flesh. He became the perfect sacrifice to purge our sins. Hebrews 1:3 states, “when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

The high priest of Old Testament times had no chair to sit down on among the furnishings of the tabernacle. This was no oversight, for God intended to convey the need for continual sacrificing of animals under the old covenant. What a contrast is this new covenant then. Here we have an immediate view of a work completed, never to be repeated ... the One who purged our sins now sitting down.

This is a preview of the book of Hebrews already for us in its first few verses.

As the subject unfolds of the superiority of Christ and His work, above anything the Jews had ever known, He reminds them of those that came out of Egypt not entering into the land of promise because of unbelief. The first verse of chapter 4 has given some people a question as to whether a soul could be lost again. It says, “Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” If this seems to be a problem, read verse 2 where he shows that they were unbelievers that had not received God’s promise by faith. In contrast, verse 3 says, “...we which have believed do enter into rest.” What rest is that? Verse 10 says, “For he that is entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His.” We believers rest as God rested, where God rested. In other words, because God is satisfied with the death of Christ as full payment for my sins, I can cease my struggling to obtain favor with God and rest in the finished work of Christ. This happens at the moment of salvation.

Why such a difference between the Old Testament and the New? In the Old Testament, we see a godly Israelite day after day, very much aware of sin and defilement all around him, bringing animal sacrifices whose blood was shed before his eyes while his own hands rested on its head. Year after year, on the Great Day of Atonement, there were sacrifices made that covered sin until the next year. Hebrews 9:6-9 states: “Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people: the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: Which was a figure (parable) for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service PERFECT, as pertaining to the conscience.”

The writer to the Hebrews points out to us that the approach to the Holiest, the place that represented the presence of God, was restricted while the tabernacle stood. Indeed, there was a veil between the “Holy Place” (where the priest could come daily) and the “Holiest” of

which this passage speaks. Only when the Lord Jesus cried, "IT IS FINISHED," from the cross, was this veil opened up, for it was torn in two (God having done it) from the top to the bottom.

Only once a year could the high priest go into the presence of God, and then he must have the evidence of accepted sacrifice with him. While indeed the high priest was accepted, and the sacrifice accepted for the people, it would be repeated again the next year, for it "could not make him that did the service PERFECT as pertaining to the conscience." God had never promised to any of them that they would be cleansed of all their sins of the past, present, and future. The sin of the past was indeed covered, but the inadequacy of it all was such that it had to be repeated each year. The conscience of the person could not REST, for there was a fear, a bondage of fear, that they might find themselves outside of God's forgiveness.

Hebrews 10:4 says: "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should TAKE AWAY SINS."

What a grand difference is the work of Christ for New Testament believers! His sacrifice was once for all, never to need repeating. Hebrews 9:11-14 shows it clearly: "But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but BY HIS OWN BLOOD He entered in once (once for all) into the holy place, having obtained ETERNAL redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the FLESH: how much MORE shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your CONSCIENCE from dead works to serve the living God?"

Notice the effect of a perfect sacrifice. It is once for all. The redemption thus bought for us is ETERNAL ... forever. The conscience which in the Old Testament was not able to rest, because it was not made perfect, now on New Testament ground is purged. To what effect? Instead of the bondage of dead works trying to attain favor, now it gives willing, joyful service from thankful, redeemed hearts.

The Old Testament ordinances and sacrifices and tabernacle are called "figures of the true" in Hebrews 9:24. "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the

true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”

Perhaps you have noticed that as we have looked at these portions we have seen Christ as both High Priest and the offering as well. Very often we find that what takes numerous actions and pictures to convey to us God’s thoughts and purpose from the Old Testament is fully and completely conveyed to us in Christ alone. This should be no surprise, for His work was what all other types and shadows pointed towards.

Many believers never see beyond the offering. In no way is the offering a small thing. It can in no way be minimized, for on its merit hang the souls of the saved and the promises and character of God. The reason I say that this is as far as some believers see, is the fact that we have a High Priest who entered heaven “to appear in the presence of God for us,” which is a great part of the confidence God intended the believer to have. Some seem to have no confidence in His PRESENT WORK. We have read in Hebrews 9:12 that “... He entered in once into the holy place...” I supplied the “once for all” in parentheses in that verse. The reason for it is this ... Christ is STILL in the presence of God for us. Yes, “He offered Himself without spot to God.” His precious blood answered all God’s claims, for Hebrews 9:22 states: “without the shedding of blood is no remission (forgiveness).”

Another verse, Hebrews 10:9-10, says, “Then said He, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God... by the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ ONCE FOR ALL.”

God has indeed been fully satisfied forever by the offering up of His Son, who came here to earth to do His will in going to the cross for us.

However, we noted, at the first of Hebrews, One sitting down, having obtained eternal redemption for us. We have seen already a High Priest who appears in the presence of God for us. Let us tie these together now with Hebrews 10:11-14.

“And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by ONE OFFERING he hath PERFECTED FOREVER them that are sanctified.” Does this leave any doubt as to the fullness and completeness of the work of Christ on Calvary? Who

does the saving? How good is it? Surely it is evident by this alone that HE has made us secure.

But as if to reassure us further than ever, God reminds us in verse 17, “their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission (forgiveness) of these is, there is no more offering for sin.” What this conveys to us is that “no further offering” is mute evidence of complete remission of sin. If there were more sin to come up and be dealt with later, this statement could not be. I mentioned earlier that all my sins were future when Jesus died. When I received salvation, was it only from my past sins? I John 1:7 states, “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” Such is the value of that blood that no sin I ever have or will commit will be outside of its comprehensive reach.

However, there is an element we have only touched on but need to look at closer.

THE PRESENT WORK OF CHRIST

We have seen that the high priest whom “we have” (Hebrews 8:1) appears in the presence of God for us. Does this statement refer only to the bringing into the Holy Place of His own blood which satisfied all God’s righteous claims against sin?

Let us look again. Back in Hebrews 2:17-18 we are introduced to “a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, HE IS ABLE TO SUCCOUR them that are tempted.” This high priest had taken part of “flesh and blood” and, while reconciliation for the sins of the people is spoken of here, there is also a reference to His ability to succour (or come to the aid of) those that are tempted. Where does this occur? The prophecy of Isaiah 53, which is without doubt one of the most direct prophecies of the Saviour and His sufferings, says at the end of the chapter, “and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” The actual tense of the verb “made” is in the continuous sense. It could have easily been translated, “and continueth to make intercession for the transgressors.” Would this be a stretched point? Recall that when we read together in Romans 8:34, we saw that no one could condemn us because Christ

had died, risen, and was “at the right hand of God, who also maketh (continuous sense) intercession for us.” Shouldn’t that make me secure? The one who died for me, lives for me as well at the right hand of God, and is an intercessor for me. Consider Romans 5:10: “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His LIFE.”

To have a living intercessor who pleads my case before the throne of God, based on the merit of His reconciling blood, gives me great comfort. What if I sin?

In an earlier part of this book, we had an analogy of a telephone line across the continent where your mind needed to be communicated to another at a faraway location. We likened the intercession of the Spirit of God within you to the phone on your end, with this difference ... that, beyond what we would ask or think, He prays for us. Now we are at the other end of the line ... heaven itself. There at God’s right hand, with the marks of Calvary still upon Him, is one who “knows what is the mind of the Spirit” (Romans 8:27) and who pleads the merit of His precious blood on our behalf. We are accepted in HIM. What if he changed and no longer interceded? Hebrews 7:23, still comparing the superiority of the work of Christ over the Old Testament economy, says, “And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: but this man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able to SAVE THEM TO THE UTTERMOST that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” WOW! How clear do we need it? The eternal security of a believer comes from a Saviour who died for me and now lives to plead the merits of His work before the throne of God even when I have sinned as a believer. Notice the expression “SAVE THEM TO THE UTTERMOST.” What does this convey to us? Simply this ... that His provided salvation is so comprehensive that it takes us right on to the end ... to the uttermost. How? On what basis? ... “SEEING HE EVER LIVETH TO MAKE INTERCESSION FOR THEM.”

Now let us take an example of what happens when a believer sins. First of all, we read in I John 2:1, “These things write I unto you that ye sin not.” Sin, then, is not the expected norm in the life of a believer ... rather, we are instructed not to sin. Reading further

in I John 2:1 though, we find, “and if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” Here we can see that a believer may indeed sin, and so doing, would “grieve the Holy Spirit” as described in Ephesians 4:30. Yes, indeed, sin is just as much sin when it is in the life of a believer as when it is in the life of an unbeliever. What keeps the believer from losing his soul? It is obvious that “nothing that defileth shall enter” God’s presence. If one sin is enough to keep an unbeliever out of heaven (and it is), what of the sin of the believer? It is by no means winked at, and in a little later section of this book, we will look at it more in depth; but our concern with the eternally secure position of the believer causes us first to want to see what happens in heaven when a believer sins.

The believer who has enjoyed the full forgiveness of God and has rejoiced in a relationship with the Father, having been made pure by the blood of Christ, suddenly discovers much to his sorrow that he has sinned. Is he no longer saved? Any who believe this either have no concept of what sin is and how often it occurs, or they somehow think that, like a yo-yo, a person could be saved/lost/saved/lost/saved/lost, etc., depending on whether death caught them up or down. There is absolutely no basis for this in God’s Word.

What happens is that the Spirit of God indwelling us is grieved with our waywardness. There is intercession for us by Him in groanings which cannot be uttered. In heaven, the Advocate, or Lawyer (the Lord Jesus), pleads our case and shows the merit of His precious blood. Who can condemn us? Christ has died and is risen and is at the right hand of God making intercession for us. He shows the “paid in full by the blood of Christ” stamped across our record. His hands and feet are evidence of the payment; His person is evidence of the acceptance we have with God, for we are, as Ephesians 1:6 puts it, “ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED.” CASE IS CLOSED. Yes, His acceptance is my acceptance. He represents ME in heaven! He represented me and my sin when He took my punishment on the cross, and now He represents me before God.

No wonder Romans 8:1 states emphatically, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

For a believer to see himself “in Christ,” as the scripture puts it,

brings great joy to the heart. II Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

How new? We have indeed been cleansed. We are indeed made joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17). God is now more than our Creator ... He is our FATHER; and the Spirit of adoption (Romans 8:15) causes us to cry out, “Abba, Father,” the endearing, close term that the Lord Jesus Himself used in speaking with the Father. How new? Colossians 1:12 says, “...made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” Further than this, in Colossians 1:21-22 we see, “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you HOLY and UNBLAMEABLE and UNREPROVEABLE in his sight.”

Such a high sounding description! Can we attain to this? Colossians 2:10 says, “and ye are COMPLETE IN HIM.” Colossians 3:3-4 says, “...your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”

No, we don't attain to this ... this is something that is given us in Christ. Imagine ... complete in Him! What can you add to completeness? No wonder under the eternal purposes of God we saw a finished product. God's salvation, through the work of Christ on the cross and His present work in the glory, in God's sight is fully completed. Christ is our life. We are “accepted in the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:6).

‘Tis not for works which I have wrought,
‘Tis not for gifts that I have brought,
Nor yet for blessing I have sought,
That I have been “Accepted.”

‘Tis not for tears that I have shed,
‘Tis not for prayers that I have said,
Nor yet for slavish fears I dread,
That I have been “Accepted.”

'Tis not for these, however right,
That God has found intense delight,
Nor is it these that have made white
The robes of those "Accepted."

From these I turn my eyes to Him,
Who bore the judgment due to sin,
And by Christ's blood I enter in
And stand in His "Acceptance."

His precious blood was shed for me,
And in that precious blood I see
The righteous ground, the perfect plea,
For my complete "Acceptance."

And as I gaze, my joys abound,
For now on resurrection ground
I see the Lamb with glory crowned,
Who died for my "Acceptance."

And when within that circle sweet,
Where God's eternal smile I meet,
I'll praise Him for the work complete,
Through which I am "Accepted."

- - author unknown

It is most imperative, then, to realize that acceptance with God is not a conditional thing for the believer. I am accepted in Christ Jesus alone ... fully accepted. My "standing" before God, then, is as perfect as the blood of Christ. How do I know this to be true? Consider where God has us sitting now (Ephesians 2:4-7): "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us (made us alive) together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and MADE US SIT TOGETHER IN HEAVENLY PLACES IN CHRIST JESUS: that in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches

of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”

And so we can see that He has placed us together with Christ in heavenly places with a purpose to show us the exceeding riches of His grace forever.

Can you picture something disturbing that wondrous scene that God has planned and carefully laid out and made happen? If it were so that a believer could be lost again, what would have been the value of seating him with Christ, only to have him disappear a moment later with some sinful thought?

Some people more cautiously say that not just any sin could cause the loss of one's soul again, but only a specific rejection of Christ.

Consider this thought given in Hebrews 13:5: “He hath said, I WILL NEVER LEAVE THEE nor forsake thee.”

In the original language, I'm told, it has a double negative ... the kind of a statement that says a thing and then emphasizes it again. It could be read as follows: “He hath said, I will in no wise leave thee, nor in any wise forsake thee.” In this, God emphasizes to us the truth of HIS COMMITMENT TO US. We may only see our commitment to Him in the picture ... God wants us to see His.

Is this promise under all circumstances? “What if...” “What if...” “What if...” What does it say? NEVER. Yes, but couldn't I pull away from Him? ... From Him who indwells me “forever”? ... Who “ever lives to make intercession”? ... Who said “I will never leave you”?

Look at the last few verses of Romans chapter 8. Verses 35- 39 answer such questions.

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, for Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors THROUGH HIM THAT LOVED US. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, NOR THINGS PRESENT, NOR THINGS TO COME, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the LOVE OF GOD, which is IN Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Knowing what God has done for us and what the Lord Jesus is occupied with today at the right hand of God ... knowing the eternal purpose of God and the seal and earnest and intercession of the

Spirit ... let me put a double- barreled question to all who believe one can fall away or pull themselves away from salvation. WHEN DOES CHRIST STOP INTERCEDING for His own? When does GOD STOP LOVING HIS OWN? Do you realize how much a believer is loved? Yes, indeed, Calvary is the measure; but lest we should not get the picture clearly, the Lord Jesus, in prayer to His Father, said, “Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me” (John 17:23). That is the infinite love of the Father to the Son ... a love which is far beyond our capacity to comprehend. It is a love that is ETERNAL ... one that cannot be broken ... one that flows continuously ... the very character of God.

The Lord Jesus says the same as to His love for us in John 15:9. “As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you.” That is the measure ... the infinite love of the Father to the Son. That love enfolds each believer to the heart of God. He has brought us near ... so near that I John 1:3 says, “...truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.” Fellowship is common ground. Imagine the holy, perfect God of Heaven having common ground with us. No, He didn't lower Himself to do so. He raised us up to sit with Christ.

How is such holy fellowship maintained seeing as we sometimes sin? It is in this context of close fellowship with Himself that He reminds us (oh how blessed are these words) “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (I John 1:7). How could we rest in His presence if guilt of sin could follow us there? How could we ever want closeness if it were only to expose our guilt? Instead, there is a loving welcome, not because of what I am in myself, but because of what I am in Christ. My sins are “forgiven for HIS NAME'S SAKE” (I John 2:12). I have been “called unto the fellowship of His Son” (I Corinthians 1:9).

KEPT

Since we have seen that the Lord Jesus is the One in whom we are fully accepted before God, and not accepted based on ourselves, it comes as no surprise to find out who does the “keeping” of the believer. I Peter 1:5 tells us we are “kept by the power of God.” This is a grand truth, for we are not long on the way to heaven before we find out how little power we have on our own. It rather takes us by

surprise to find this out. Somehow, we felt “capable” rather than weak. What a lesson is learned when we honestly can say with the apostle Paul, “in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.” If God had left us to our own keeping, how quickly we would be gone from the blessedness of salvation.

Paul personally could say, “...I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day” (II Timothy 1:12). There was no fear of losing his salvation somewhere down the road ... just a confidence in the One who had saved him.

A believer who looks inward at his own self has every reason to be nervous. A believer who looks at Christ has every reason to be resting as to his soul’s eternal future. Why? “Faithful is He that calleth you, Who also will do it” (I Thessalonians 5:24). He is able ... He is faithful. Jude 1:1 says simply, “preserved in Jesus Christ,” and Jude 1:24 says, “Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy...”

Who is it here that is charged with keeping us from falling and presenting us faultless? It is the One who has taken the care of us upon Himself ... rather like a shepherd and an overseer. I Peter 2:25 puts it clearly: “For ye were as sheep going astray (before salvation); but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.” See the responsibility which is on Him? He takes it upon Himself. As Shepherd, His power is better than the Old Testament shepherd David, who delivered a lamb or sheep from the mouth of the lion and the bear. He does not “flee when the wolf cometh” as the hireling shepherd of whom He spoke. Rather, He is able to meet the foe “head on” and deliver us. As Shepherd, His care for our nurture and feeding is very evident, as is His choice of the pathway for us to walk. The Lord Jesus has a very personal care for us which cannot be compared with the best care given to animal flocks on earth.

As a Bishop, He is overseeing, taking responsible leadership of His people ... always watchful. HIS COMMITMENT TO US is unmistakable. For one to say that a soul, once saved, could be lost again is to question HIS ABILITIES as a Shepherd and as a Bishop.



RELATIONSHIP

PART 1: BORN OF GOD

In earlier pages we looked at the spiritual birth of the believer. John 3:3 says, "...except a man be BORN AGAIN, he cannot see the kingdom of God." All who have been "saved," as the word of God puts it, have been BORN AGAIN ... born into the family of God. This is a most wonderful truth that God places before our hearts ... that as once we were born to earthly parents and inherited their nature which followed fallen Adam, now we are Born Again into God's family with a new nature that cannot sin because it is of God. Yes, that new nature that became mine at salvation cannot sin. Look at I John 3:9: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for HIS SEED remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, BECAUSE he is born of God."

To the casual reader of the Bible, this seems very contradictory to the statement referred to earlier in I John 2:1, "and if any man sin..." It is not a contradiction in any sense. It is simply that we are looking here at that which God placed inside the believer. We are not looking (in this particular passage) at what remained in the believer from the past. How could anything that is given to us by God be anything less than without sin? God is holy, and so is the life that He imparts to believers. And so we read also in I John (which, by the way, is a book intended to identify the features of the real believer on the Lord Jesus Christ as opposed to a professor who "says" but has no signs of life) in chapter 5 and verse 18, "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

That new nature manifests itself in the life of the believer in the same way that a light is seen when it is dark all around. It can't help but be noticed, for it is living and real. Evidence of this new nature came with conversion. Our desires changed ... our priorities changed ... our purpose for living changed. We became new creatures in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 4:23 speaks of the "new man," and so does Colossians 3:10; but in each of these scriptures there is another factor ... one that takes

many believers by surprise shortly after being saved.

Simply put, we still have something within us left over from what we were before we were saved. Oh no, it is not our sins still upon us ... thank God for that! With grateful heart we can sing, “All my sins are gone, all because of Calvary.” What is still there is the fleshly attraction to worldly, selfish, and sinful things. This poses a problem. At any given moment, the believer has two opposites within him, wanting to run his life ... the Holy Spirit of God with the new nature, versus the “flesh” of the believer.

Let us look directly at Colossians 3:1-10: “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear then shall ye also appear with Him in glory. MORTIFY therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and coveteousness, which is idolatry: for which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: in the which ye also walked sometime, when ye lived in them. BUT NOW ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that YE HAVE PUT OFF THE OLD MAN with HIS DEEDS; and have PUT ON THE NEW MAN, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him.”

It is obvious to us that these are believers. They have (past tense) put off the “old man” and have put on the new man, yet they are being admonished to “mortify” (or put to death) these actions that were characteristic of how they once lived before they were saved. They are being encouraged to seek after things above and to set their affections there in contrast to those things which bring wrath from God upon the children of disobedience. Does this sound as if they are sinlessly perfect? By no stretch of the imagination. It is not insignificant that the first chapters of Ephesians, which take us into the heavenlies and show us our wonderful “position” and “standing” before God, as perfect in Christ and accepted in Him, are followed by chapters emphasizing how the believer should walk. Why? It is for this very reason, that even though we are cleansed by the blood of Christ and kept by His power

and are led of the Spirit of God, there is still something within me that could entice me to shame the name of the One who bought me ... not necessarily in rebellion ... much more subtle than that. It is the way I would go naturally, if I were not under the leading of the Spirit. All that it takes is for my own will to be more important at the moment than God's will.

This calls for watchfulness not just for a barrage from outside myself, but also from something from within that keeps wanting to open the gate to the enemy. It is not the new nature ... it is the old; consequently, there is a struggle between the flesh and the Spirit, which we must address by turning to Romans 7.

In this chapter (which should be read and reread along with Romans 8) it becomes very evident that there is a great struggle to do right as the Law is brought to bear again upon the believer. What the believer finds is, while the Law is good in itself, it only slays him, for he has no power in his flesh to carry it out. That dilemma was the same as it came to bear upon us while we were not saved. But now that I'm saved, what about God's law ... what about God's standard? Can I now please God in my own power and with my own abilities? Can I REFORM the flesh to become useful to God?

The answer is resoundingly, "NO ... not in myself." Romans 7:18-24 says: "For I know that in me (that is, IN MY FLESH) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, WHEN I WOULD DO GOOD, EVIL IS PRESENT WITH ME. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law IN MY MEMBERS, WARRING against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is IN MY MEMBERS. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."

We can be very thankful that Romans 8 follows this chapter, for it gives us the solution to the problem. However, before getting there, let's notice a few things we have read together. This is obviously a

believer, for he “delights in the law of God after the inward man” ... no unbeliever can do that. His will is for right things; but somewhere between the right desire and the outcome, things have taken a turn, and instead of victory there is a fall. He notices that it is just when he wants to do good, there is another law (not God’s law) warring, trying to capture and bring him back under the control of the fleshly members. That “body of death” he found to be connected to him could not be shaken loose though it was dead. It was foul to his spiritual senses, he hated it and longed to be free from it.

From that position, his eye is again turned to the workings of God in salvation, covering ground which we have already enjoyed together as to the fact of NO CONDEMNATION NOW, and then showing God’s solution to this “two natures” problem.

THE SOLUTION

In the following chapter of Romans, God presents to us His Spirit as the solution to the above mentioned problem. The way the Spirit is described should give us some help on the subject. In a brief summary, you will find Him called:

Verse 1....the Spirit

Verse 2....the Spirit of Life in Christ
Jesus

Verse 9....the Spirit of God ...the
Spirit of Christ

Verse 11...the Spirit of Him that
raised up Jesus from the
dead

Verse 15...Spirit of Adoption (sonship)

In our own strength, there is no way that the “righteousness of the law” could be fulfilled in us. Romans 7 indicates it always ends in failure when my own personal ability and power is leaned on. However, Romans chapter 8 shows us a believer, free from condemnation, being in Christ Jesus, walking after the Spirit.

He sees the sin question once and for all dealt with in Christ Jesus and God’s own assessment of sin in the flesh. He also learns a wondrous truth that “the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in

us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” Notice that it does not say that the law is fulfilled in us. It is the righteousness of the law that is fulfilled in us. Other passages of the New Testament show us that the believer is dead to the law, which leaves no room for law keeping. Yet this expression, “the righteousness of the law,” lets us see very clearly that there is the moral, upright element of the law that believers have in their own lives. We read in Galatians 5:22-23 these words: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”

Words such as these show us that a believer who manifests the work of the Spirit of God within them, as well as that “fruit”, fulfills and surpasses Old Testament law claims. No part of the law could even point an accusing finger at such a one manifesting the fruit of the Spirit.

The picture given us in Romans 8 is one of black or white. Either the person is saved, walking after the Spirit, OR is not saved and has not the Spirit of God. The issue of degree of spirituality does not enter this chapter. Verse 9 is a very critical verse. It explains the ground that he is describing for us. It says, “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.”

Two things are brought to our attention here. 1. His definition of “in the Spirit” is connected with the indwelling of the Spirit ... it is characteristic of one who has the Spirit living within.

2. It states clearly and precisely that no one is saved unless he has the indwelling Spirit of God; for if he “have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” That certainly knocks the idea that the Spirit of God is received some time after salvation; for if one hasn’t the Spirit, he doesn’t belong to Christ.

Paul, the writer of Romans, is showing us the fact of the Spirit of God within us so that he might bring forward the whole solution to the two natures problem. Having established that this is indeed true, he goes on to show just who that Spirit is and what He has done before. Paul states two things side by side that he has shown us previously. Verse 10 says, “.if Christ be in you (talking to believers, obviously) (1) the body is DEAD because of sin; but (2) the Spirit is LIFE because

of righteousness.” Now for the solution through the Spirit: Verse 11 says, “But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken (or make alive) your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.”

The picture is simply this ... a body that is dead and a life-giving Spirit. What is possible to happen in such a scenario? Yes, indeed, that mortal body can be used of God by that life-giving Spirit of God within ... made alive to serve the One who made it all possible. Some see only resurrection of the believer’s body, having physically died, in this verse, such as we see later in verse 23; but this has a different emphasis here and a different end in view. Verse 12, that follows, says: “Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.”

Why are we presently now not indebted to the flesh (in other words, “I just can’t help it, I’m made this way”) to live after the flesh? We are no longer left without a solution to the flesh nature problem. We now have the Spirit of God who gives life to that mortal body. How? We have already mentioned that we have a war going on inside ... the flesh against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. How then does the Spirit give control over what Paul described as being “when I would do good, evil is present with me”?

Verse 13 shows us how: “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do MORTIFY (put to death) THE DEEDS OF THE BODY, ye shall LIVE. For as many as are LED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD, they are the sons of God.”

What is it that characterizes a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ? He is led by the Spirit of God. He puts to death the “deeds” of the body. In other words, there is a willing response to the Spirit of God as He leads; and there is an enablement, by the Spirit of God, to recognize and put to death those deeds and those fleshly attractions that characterized us before we were saved. In so doing, our “mortal bodies” become usable vessels for service as the Lord sees fit to use them.

Does the struggle then cease between the flesh and the Spirit? No. We all wish it did, but it doesn’t. That is why a believer, through sad experience, learns to be watchful for those things that the flesh would trip us up with, and learns to be reliant on the help of the Spirit of God to overcome where the flesh would naturally fall. In this, we “groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of

our body” (Romans 8:23). Yes, God can and does use human bodies for His glory even now, as Paul stated in II Corinthians 4:11, “that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our MORTAL flesh.” But there is coming a day when the struggle within will be over ... we shall be changed, and this body will put on immortality, and death will be swallowed up in victory. Until that time, God’s provision for us is His indwelling Spirit.

Paul tells us in Galatians 5:25, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” Different than what is emphasized in Romans 8, where it shows “walking in the Spirit” as characteristic of a believer, we have an emphasis here to act in concert with what we are. Our walk as believers, then, should be one characterized by the Spirit of God and not after our own impulses.

PART 2: BORN OF GOD OR ILLEGITIMATE

There is another issue which should be viewed as we consider the eternal security issue. It is an issue of wheat and tares ... God’s children or illegitimate children.

Many people who hold the position that a believer could fall away and be lost point to actual cases they have known that once seemed shining examples of Christianity to them but now have turned around and have no use for God or His word. Isn’t this proof enough that a believer can be lost? However, looking at Matthew 13, verses 5 and 6, we read: “Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had NO ROOT, they withered away.”

Every mention of this parable in the other Gospels, as well as the explanation given by the Lord, emphasizes this .. that this person HAS NO ROOT! To you and me, as we could see the plant spring up, we would have every reason to expect it to continue its growth to maturity. It came up at a time when other good seed was planted and came up. It looked good from the ground up. What was it that proved it had NO ROOT? It wasn’t the “springing up with joy” part. Oh no, that seemed to be there. It wasn’t the green shoots and leaves ... that looked the picture of health. What was it? The sun ... that which

is necessary for plants to grow, which warms the ground and seems to draw the plants further and further up from the soil ... that same sun exposes what our eye cannot see, NO ROOT. It had no hidden source of moisture and nourishment ... only the superficial similarity to the other plants. The Lord Jesus makes comment on this type of hearer of His word in Matthew 13:21: “Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.”

What is that picture to convey to us? It is a picture of a hearer of God’s word who has no depth to his profession of salvation and “endures” for a while, looking all the while the same as those who have the root of the matter. What is the thing that exposes him? It is God’s Word. God’s Word causes believers to grow and mature and bring forth fruit to God. Even though it is said to us, “His commandments are not grievous,” this false professor can’t handle it. Because it is dry to him and there is no connection to the life therein, he simply comes to the place where he “can’t hack it any more.” He comforts himself with the idea that everyone else is as hypocritical as he is. He finally admits to himself that there are really within him no similar interests with other believers. Oh, he “tried” all right ... but when others took the Word of God to heart and, out of the obedience of love, restrained themselves from worldliness or the like, he didn’t see why they had to be so serious about it all. It actually came to a point where God’s Word asked too much, as far as he was concerned, and now he openly shows his colors as he turns away.

For one to try to live the Christian life without the Spirit of God within ... without that new life that understands the Word of God and loves it ... is to fail miserably, for it cannot be done continuously by an unbeliever. At best, it is only “for a while.” Generally, it is the works of the false professor that finally give him away. It is not always evident immediately, as is shown by Paul’s exhortation to Timothy to “lay hands suddenly on no man” ... meaning, don’t be quick to put responsibility into the hands of someone just newly come among you. The reason he gave was this: (I Timothy 5:24) “Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment, and some men they follow after...” Basically, what he gives to Timothy is a warning that time will prove the reality of the man, for some things can be hidden

from view, but not indefinitely.

In II Timothy 2:19, he says this: “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, THE LORD KNOWETH THEM THAT ARE HIS. And, LET EVERY ONE THAT NAMETH THE NAME OF CHRIST DEPART FROM INIQUITY.”

God has no trouble knowing who are His ... He knows them personally, He has bought them, and He loves them beyond measure. We, however, do have trouble knowing who are His. It is not given to us to be able to say to someone who professes salvation, “You are not saved” ... we may uproot the wheat with the tares (see Matthew 13:28-30). However, the evidence of life is fruit. The Lord Jesus said concerning false teachers, “by their fruits ye shall know them.” This principle is carried on through the rest of the scripture to enable believers to have enough discernment as to whether someone is saved or not, to be able to preserve them from associations and alliances that would damage the testimony of Christ to the world.

The second part of the seal says, “let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” God knows who are His, and we will know by the “departing from iniquity” which is characteristic of the true believer.

A FORM OF GODLINESS

How good can a false professor look? Very good! So good in some things that true believers could be shamed by comparison. What is it that looks so good? Paul, again in a letter to Timothy, tells us of someone who “...having A FORM OF GODLINESS, but denying the power thereof...” (II Timothy 3:5) must be turned away from. But they look good! They are “regular attenders”; they seem to be very much “involved” ... the form appears to be “godliness.” But the power is missing, the selfish interests lie not so hidden, and the motives become exposed somewhat to reveal not “love to Christ” but love of self.

Long after their works have proved them otherwise, false professors have still claimed that they are saved. Paul told Titus in Titus 1:16, “they profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.”

Could we, then, having read these few verses, say that all who claim to be Christians are really so? Does every one who says he’s saved

warrant our believing it to be so? Who did Jesus speak of when He told of a day coming when He will say to some, “I NEVER KNEW YOU” (Matthew 7: 23). He did not say, “I once knew you, but I don’t now” ... rather He says, “I NEVER knew you.” Reading that portion of scripture, we discover those had called Him “Lord, Lord,” had prophesied in His Name, had cast out devils in His Name, and had done many miracles in His Name! Surely, they couldn’t be false professors, could they? Yes, they were ... you and I would have been impressed with what they said and did; but the One who knew their heart said, “I NEVER KNEW YOU: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.”

In all this, we see two phases of the same person ... the good outward show, for a time (for some, that time has been many years), and then the works that come out in proof of an unregenerated heart.

In I John, the book that deals with black or white (in the family or not in the family), we read these eye-opening words: “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us” (I John 2:19). The apostle John was speaking of people who claimed at one time to be saved. They had gathered together with the people of God, and for a time had seemed a part of it all; but one day they left the whole business. The apostle clearly identifies that their leaving to go back to the world was the manifestation (the evidence) that they had never been of them ... not really one of them, though they had, indeed, been among them.

It is rather amazing that it went that far before it became clear enough to state it as being the case.

DISCIPLINE

Another mark, which is more personal in nature ... actually designed to encourage and assure the true believer, is the action of God as “Father” toward any that profess to be His. The true believer is corrected as a child is corrected and responds to that loving hand that must, at certain times, chastise. Hebrews 12:7-8 gives us this perspective: “If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? BUT, if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye

bastards, and not sons.”

God does the part of a Father to all of His sons, for “what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?” He, however, doesn’t chasten somebody else’s sons who are not in His family. But what if they say they are His children? Very strong language is used ... God says, “They are bastards, illegitimate ... I didn’t beget them, they are not Mine.”

And so we have the real and the unreal side by side, oftentimes with not always the clearest indicators, to the point that many Christians simply accept every profession of faith in Christ as real and would rather lean toward the idea of the Christian being lost again than believe that they had been so completely fooled. I have seen occasions where a false professor actually, through God’s mercy, gets saved. Their joy is unbounded; they discover all the reasons why others had peace and joy that they didn’t have before, and they are thrilled. As they look back, they see that they had actually fooled themselves; but now it is light instead of darkness. Who do you suppose is the first to disbelieve them? Should it shock you to find out it is the other Christians? The “front” was so good before that the believers never did see any great holes in it; and so, to some extent, it becomes somewhat of a rebuff to their own impression of how discerning they themselves are.

10

WHERE DOES THIS LEAD?

WON'T THIS LEAD TO CARELESS, SINFUL LIVING?

Of all the questions that can be brought up against eternal security, this one is the most central. Anyone who has read the Bible much has learned one thing concerning the author of it ... He is holy. That hasn't changed. I Peter 1:16 states it right out of the Old Testament, applying it directly to New Testament believers: "Be ye holy: for I am holy." It would be absolutely incompatible for a continual life of wilfulness and sin to be linked in fellowship with such a holy God. As we have seen earlier in this book, the believer on the Lord Jesus Christ is washed clean and kept clean by the workings of God. Some, then, see a possibility for the believer to say, "Thank you for the cleansing," to God and then live as they please, seeing it's all covered in salvation.

Wait a minute now ... there are at least THREE ROADBLOCKS to such behavior; and if one who professes the name of Christ can pass these roadblocks easily, you would see that the problem is not a case of attitude but a case of whether he is what he professes to be.

(1) The first of these roadblocks is the Word of God itself. Nowhere does it give license to sin to a believer. In fact, it says the contrary. In Romans 6:1-2 it is very plain: "...Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are DEAD TO SIN, live any longer therein?" So incompatible is a life of sin in a believer, that Paul takes the rest of Romans chapter 6 to tell us about it. He shows that our position is not one of restraining sin but rather one of being raised from the dead, having died to sin.

This life of the believer is resurrection life ... not a make-over of what we were, but a new creation in Christ Jesus. Verses 11-13 state: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto

sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”

The same theme is brought up in many places in our New Testament. Another, in I Peter 4:2-3, tells us, “That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries.”

Notice in both of these two there is the idea of leaving the old life style and practices behind and, now for the rest of our time here on earth, living for God and in His will.

Can a Christian ignore such words? Romans 6:15-18, asking almost the same question again, answers it on the basis of it being a real or false profession of salvation. “What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that YE WERE the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, YE BECAME the servants of righteousness.”

What the apostle here shows is that if a professing believer can yield himself as a servant to sin, then the evidence is out in the open ... the profession is not real. He thanks God that though that was true of them before salvation, they had obeyed the gospel doctrine, became free from sin, and became servants of righteousness. This, then, is a characteristic of a believer ... he is not what he once was ... now he serves righteousness.

We are not here dealing with occasional sin in the life of a believer for which he has regret and turns humbly to the Lord realizing his own folly. In this section we are dealing with a consistent going after the things of this life with no seeming constraints being felt from God's Word.

To the true believer who realizes his weakness and wandering in which he could actually be a bad testimony to the onlooking world, the Word of God gives us these words: “...Walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory” (I Thessalonians 2:12).

Colossians 1:10 puts it this way: “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

What does it mean to “walk worthy”? It simply means to live your life in a manner that is becoming of such a position that God has brought us into. Imagine if the next in line to the throne of England were found frequenting taverns, gambling, and using foul language. Would you not think it unbecoming of him in light of the position he is in line for? So it is with believers ... we are His own; we shall one day, by His grace, reign with Him. God asks us to act in a manner that does not shame His name but rather testifies to the reality of His grace.

Ephesians spends much time on the “walk” of a believer. Ephesians 4:1 says, “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called”;

“...walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind” (4:17)

“...walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us...” (5:2)

“For ye were sometimes darkness, but NOW are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.” (5:8)

“See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil.” (5:15-16)

It should be obvious in all this that the Word of God itself is a major road-block to a true believer on the Lord Jesus Christ taking his own way. He would have to continually ignore the Word of God. Knowing that a characteristic of a true believer is love for God’s Word, we can see no other alternative than what Paul has given us in questioning the reality of what has been professed where there is no “obedience of righteousness” and there is “serving sin.”

(2) There is another major roadblock to a true believer going his own way. As we have seen in an earlier chapter, we have an Eternal Resident within us. He is not passive either, for in John 14:26 we have this statement: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name HE SHALL TEACH YOU all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

Here we see that the Holy Spirit is also a Teacher ... an indwelling

Teacher, no less. What does He teach? John 16:13-14 says: “Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you.”

This shows us that the Holy Spirit is a Teacher who guides us into all truth by receiving what is of the Lord Jesus and showing it to us. This would include all the scriptures that bear upon a believer’s walk, and the end result must be to glorify the Lord Jesus. Even the knowledge of “things to come,” which is part of the teaching of the Holy Spirit, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ and should produce godliness in the life of a believer as he realizes the future of this world versus the future of the believer in Christ.

This Teacher, the Holy Spirit, LEADS us. This is a characteristic of a true believer, for Romans 8:14 says: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” This shows that there is a response to the Spirit of God by the believer. The believer senses the urging and direction by the Spirit as He takes the scriptures and enlightens them. Practical things are brought to bear upon us, and in many things we are brought up short and shown the correct path instead of the one we would choose for ourselves.

Some of the truths of scripture are hard on the flesh; but the gentle moving of the Spirit, using God’s Word, molds us quite differently from what we would have desired in our unregenerate days. Oh yes, we are not as pliable as we could be. Very often, like the Old Testament potter’s vessel, we are marred before we could be formed into what the potter desired, because of some resistance to molding in the clay. This resistance to the Spirit’s work in us is grieving to Him, and it hinders spiritual progress in the things of God. Little wonder Paul wrote in Ephesians 4: 30, “And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” At the same time the Spirit is grieved with our waywardness, we find that we lose our joy. The Spirit of God points out to our conscience what is wrong, and there seems to be no further joy until the situation is rectified. We are thus led back into the way, and joy is restored.

This working of the Spirit of God is a major roadblock to a professing Christian doing “whatever he wants,” unless he is NOT LED by the Spirit of God in the first place, meaning he is not a “son” ... not saved.

(3) There is another major roadblock that is found in our Bibles that will not allow a believer to pass on doing whatever he wants. That roadblock is none other than a heavenly Father with a disciplining hand. This aspect of having a Father that disciplines us is a truth not often mentioned. It is one of God's precious, intimate truths to the believer, for in this activity He goes out of His way to tell us that He loves us.

Hebrews 12:5-13 says it like this: "And ye have quite forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had Fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but HE FOR OUR PROFIT, that we might be partakers of His holiness.

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore, lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed."

Notice here that His chastening hand is because He loves us and because we are His children. His desire is that we should be in subjection to Him in His wishes for us so that we might be "partakers of His holiness." The purpose of it all is "for our profit." The results are not necessarily immediate, for the grievousness of having been chastened makes joy somewhat removed from the picture; but AFTERWARDS ... yes, the result may come slowly as we contemplate the reason for it ... "afterwards" it brings about fruit. It's not a "have to" but a "want to," for it is a "peaceable" fruit. Its result is "righteousness" (not for salvation, that was a gift) ... a righteousness of living. In other words, this righteousness is making "straight paths for your feet."

This is God adjusting our pathway when we begin to wander, so that

we are “exercized” or stirred up by God to do as He pleases and not as we please. He knows that our pathway will affect others ... someone limping from soreness or mishandling, and He desires to adjust our paths to not only help us but to protect the lame who are watching, from further damage.

If earthly parents have been known to be very diligent in this area of discipline, how much more our Heavenly Father. Thankfully, not all discipline is “a spiritual spanking,” though some, indeed, is. Some discipline is with the Word of God. Much as with earthly fathers, physical discipline can be avoided by taking heed to verbal discipline. It is only when warnings go unheeded that we can expect the physical to become necessary.

I have often thought of it all to be similar to driving a car. There are many minute corrections, barely felt, which keep the car on course. However, if the small corrections failed to effect a change, you could be assured of a much more drastic measure, which may include some crumpled fenders.

God is faithful as a Father in this regard and has committed Himself to our upbringing. He simply will not let us go our own way. HE is a major roadblock to a true believer doing “whatever he wants.” However, if that professor of salvation can, indeed, never be corrected by the Father, it is because God doesn’t correct outside of His own family ... this one is not His.

God would like us to examine ourselves as we find in I Corinthians 11:28-32 which says, “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation (judgment) to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.”

Self-judgment comes from comparing the Word of God, by the Spirit of God, with our own practices. In this context which we have just read together, believers were partaking of the bread and wine which symbolizes the body and blood of Christ and also expresses, in doing so, a “oneness” with the other believers. However, in practice they had been so calloused to the feelings of each other that the affluent ones

ate and drank before the poor and hungry, in a manner that shamed them that had nothing, just prior to partaking of the Lord's Supper. Where was the love and consideration they professed? God had to step in and cause weakness, sickness, and death among them to wake them up to reality. He chastened them because of no "self-judgment," which would not have allowed those conditions had it been operating.

And so we see here that chastening is real ... real to the point of death, as God sees fit. God will not allow us to be condemned with the world, for that condemnation is for unbelievers; therefore, we are chastened rather than left to go our own way. This may all sound harsh and out of character for God, but God answers us in Revelation 3:19: "As many as I LOVE, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent." This has been a great comfort in times of rebuke from the Lord, by whatever means He may use, that it is because He loves us that He will not let us go our own ways, doing whatever we want.

For a person to be able to bypass this roadblock as well as the other two, there is little question as to whether there is any reality there. In all cases there is no effect because there is NO LIFE.

11

OVERVIEW

I would like, at this point, to give a brief overview of the various points of the preceding chapters, so that there will be a collected picture without all the necessary proof, with the idea of being able to turn to this section to refresh our thoughts as to the many angles from which it is viewed in scripture. To take this section only would be to take statements without proof; therefore, when there is any question regarding what is said here, please refer to the preceding chapter where it is covered.

(1) First of all, eternal security is not found in the Old Testament apart from certain special promises given to individuals. The Law was a “shadow,” not the “very image,” and could not make the worshipers “perfect” (Hebrews 10:1). The law was added until Christ should come (Galatians 3: 19). The “new covenant” has “better promises.”

(2) God has an Eternal Purpose which He purposed in Himself before time began. The salvation of souls was definitely in that purpose; and the placing of those saved, as far as eternity to come is concerned, was also in His mind before we ever came on the scene ... even to the point of “glorifying” us (Romans 8:28-30). He views us as cleansed whiter than snow, safely landed at home with Himself; and that purpose cannot change.

(3) We are sealed unto the day of redemption by the Spirit of God (Ephesians 4: 30). He is an Eternal Resident who identifies us as belonging to God and is a direct challenge to any outside force of conquest. **HE WILL NOT LEAVE US.**

(4) We have the EARNEST ... the down-payment ... the guarantee of God fulfilling His promise and purpose, in the person of the Holy Spirit who is **GIVEN TO US** (II Corinthians 1:22). God would lose this earnest if He didn't fulfill His promises, which is obviously impossible.

(5) We have an INTERCESSOR on earth helping our infirmities (Romans 8:26) and pleading in thoughts and language which exactly fit the thoughts and will of God because we are not capable in ourselves to know even what we should pray for, ESPECIALLY IF WE ARE WAYWARD.

(6) The work of the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour in becoming the sacrifice that alone is acceptable to God on behalf of the sinner is a “once for all” act, never to be repeated again. Those who are cleansed by His Blood have been made “perfect as pertaining to the conscience” (Hebrews 9:6-14), because their conscience is purged.

We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all (Hebrews 10:10). “...By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified (Hebrews 10:14), for “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanseth us from all sin” (I John 1:7) ... past, present, and future. All my sins were “future” when Jesus died for them.

The Lord Jesus NOW appears in the presence of God for us, able to help the tempted (Hebrews 2:18) and also able to save to the very end on the grounds that “He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25). He pleads our cause in Heaven while the Spirit intercedes from earth. We are “accepted in the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:6) and “complete in Him” (Colossians 2:10) with “no condemnation” (Romans 8:1) ... made fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. We are already seated with Christ in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6); and His promise to us is, “I WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU NOR FORSAKE YOU” (Hebrews 13:5). “Nothing can separate us” (Romans 8:38) from His love, and “fellowship with God” is our happy portion.

He “keeps us from falling” (Jude 1: 24) and acts the part of Shepherd and Overseer of our souls (I Peter 2:25), protecting and feeding under His responsible eye. He is committed to us and will not fail.

The triune God is committed to bringing us through to Eternity through all of these provisions. To say a Christian could be lost again is to cast doubts on the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

(7) While it is certain that every believer has a new nature, it is just as certain that there is something from the old nature that creates a constant struggle within him ... the flesh against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. The flesh wars against me and tries to bring me into captivity to the law of sin in my members. The Spirit of God within me, that Eternal Resident, gives the desires and the power to overcome in each circumstance and leads and feeds that new nature which “cannot sin because it is born of God.” This struggle does not mean a person is lost again because he recognizes a principle of sin within. He is rather to consider it a dead thing and learn to cry out to the Lord for help when he recognizes it present.

(8) There are also real and unreal professions of salvation. Their fruits are evidence of life or unreality even though some are evident right away and some take much longer to expose themselves. We can expect to see some “turn away,” according to the parable of the sower in the picture of the reception of the word. This does not prove the “lost again” theory but rather proves that not all who say, “Lord, Lord,” shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. The Lord knows them that are His.

(9) Finally, God has put major roadblocks in the way, so that a Christian cannot, then, just do whatever he wishes. These roadblocks are: the Word of God which is plainly against such behaviour, the Spirit of God who is a “Teacher” and “Leader” who will not allow such activity, and a disciplining Father who will definitely not allow one of His sons to act that way. Anyone who finds these to be no roadblocks at all is unquestionably not in God’s family in the first place.

TEXTS THAT SEEM AGAINST ETERNAL SECURITY

12

-- A CLOSER LOOK --

I sincerely hope that the reader will test out the context of the previous chapters' quoted texts, spending time reading God's Word without jumping to quick conclusions, whether for or against what has been opened up.

In the same way, I would like to look carefully and consistently at texts which are often brought up against eternal security, so that the readers may themselves judge if I have blindly ignored, purposely ignored, or rather have looked at each clearly.

We have already noted in a previous chapter that the Old Testament, by and large, had no eternal security found in it due to the nature of their standing before God, which required continual sacrifices. Seeing then that both sides can basically agree on the Old Testament having no eternal security, we will only concern ourselves with New Testament texts in this section.

Matthew 24:13: "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Some take from this, that the believer is one who "hangs on"; and if he does until the end, he will be saved. Does this hold water? Let's apply a few principles of easy understanding that were mentioned at the beginning of the book. What is the time frame? It is definitely not in the Old Testament; however, read the chapter from verse one. As you get through verse three, you will discover that this is a reference to a future time ... the end of the world (or age). This directly corresponds to the tribulation period "fifth seal," where there will be many martyrs. During the tribulation period (the seven years after the Church is caught away), there will be a renewed working of God with Israel as a nation. This will involve, among other things, a direct opposition to the mark of the beast by the Jewish believers and their proselytes, which will cause many to lose their lives. This will test the reality of their profession, for only the real believers of that time will steadfastly choose death rather than worship a false messiah. This

scripture, then, is outside of our time frame which stretches between the Day of Pentecost and the catching up of the Church.

I Corinthians 15:2: “By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.” Again, there are those that take this to mean that a Christian could believe, only to be ultimately lost at a later date. CONTEXT! Reading the whole chapter should acquaint the reader with the problem Paul was setting straight. There were those who were preaching that the dead rise not again. Paul had to remind them that this was a central truth of the Gospel message. Without a living Savior, they had “believed in vain.” Verse 17 answers this directly: “and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.”

Colossians 1:23: “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, which ye have heard and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister.” This “if ye continue in the faith” clause is simply a way of saying, “if you are real.” As we have seen earlier in this book and as the early disciples learned by experience, not every one that “received the Gospel” remained firm. Unreality will eventually show itself in a form opposite to being “grounded and settled,” which is in itself characteristic of true believers.

I Timothy 1:19-20: “Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning the faith have made shipwreck: of whom is Hymanaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.” What is shipwreck if it isn’t loss of salvation? To answer this, we shall find, continued in the same verses, the key to it all. The word “learn” here means “to be taught by discipline.” What had happened here was that these two believers were not careful to keep a good conscience before God nor did they operate in faith. Obviously, God had by His Word and Spirit spoken to them, but their willfulness even railed against those who would bring His message to them. Now the disciplining hand of the Father comes into play; and with the apostolic authority given him, Paul puts them out of the local company of believers into the realm of the adversary (Satan),

until they have learned by discipline not to blaspheme (or revile/rail). The object of all Church discipline in the scriptures is restoration of the believer once he has repented of his wrong deeds. God does not let the believer get away with just anything. Church discipline such as this can also be used to turn us around.

Hebrews 3:6: “But Christ as a Son over His own house; whose house are we, IF we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” Here again is a test of profession ... the real DO continue ... the false fall out by the way. However, as we begin on so many texts from Hebrews, it would do us good to see why there are so many “test-of-profession” verses in this book. If you have carefully read the book of Acts, you will notice that in the beginning times, after the Lord Jesus Christ had gone back to Heaven and after the advent of the Holy Spirit, the Church at Jerusalem was publicly in the temple outer courts, teaching and preaching. There were many that gathered with them and seemed to be a part of that wonderful work. However, there came a time when, for persecution’s sake, they couldn’t go to the temple; and there began to be evidenced that some were going back to Judaism. As long as there was little persecution, they could handle it; but when persecution was on, coupled with the apparent necessity to leave all of the glorious temple and worship of their fathers, the unreal among them just couldn’t pay the price ... they went back.

It is paralleled with the “mixed multitude” that came with Moses out of Egypt during the time of the Exodus. It was only when trouble began that the unbelievers wanted to return. Hebrews calls this a “root of bitterness.” The problem with the false-hearted returning was it left the true-hearted believers dazed and uncertain even to the point of following, thinking they were following real believers. Hebrews 12:15 says that the “root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.” Yes, true believers can be defiled and their walk affected when they do not discern the difference between real believers and false professors who would desire to lure them back with them to worldly things. Such believers will eventually get turned around, but it will be a sad experience.

Hebrews 4:1: “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His Rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” Can a Christian come short of entering into His Rest? If this brings to your mind someone not quite making it into heaven, then we should look again. I mentioned earlier that there is a strong parallel drawn in this book of Hebrews between the mixed multitude (comprised of Israel and those going along for the ride) which left Egypt and what was presently occurring when Hebrews was written. It was the unbelievers back in Moses’ time that caused such grief; for “promise” means nothing to unbelief, and it profits nothing even though it is the good Word of God. The next verse, Hebrews 4:2, says, “...the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.” That is how they came short of entering in ... they would not believe the “promise.”

The gospel is a promise to us today. It is a promise of rest ... not sometime in the future, but a rest that starts right now. Verse 3 is very clear on this, for it says, “for we which have believed DO enter into rest...” To come short of this can only be by not believing the Gospel promise. Verse 10 says plainly, “for he that is entered into His Rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His.” We rest AS God rested, WHERE God rested. God has found the offering of Christ to be a “savor of rest,” and so do we who have believed ... we rest in Him, ceasing from our own works and relying on His work on the cross to alone satisfy God.

The Jewish believers, who were being called “outside the camp” (Hebrews 13:13) of Judaism with all its visible ceremony, were here being made to realize that among those who professed to be followers there would be some who would “fall short” because of unbelief and would turn back to the old, just as in Moses’ time the unbelievers wanted to turn back to Egypt.

Hebrews 6:4-6: “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.” This verse at

a casual reading seems to have wording in it that simply must be the case of a believer “falling away.” How else could we speak of one who was “made partaker of the Holy Ghost”? Surely, if none of the other passages were believers, this is. But let us look again and see, in the context of the book and the verses around it, if there is anything to change our mind.

The next two verses should be looked at with some understanding of their purpose in the text, because they have one of those little connecting words, “for,” at the beginning, which makes the verses become an analogy answering to the previous verses we have read together.

“For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth HERBS meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth THORNS and BRIERS is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.” (Hebrews 6:7-8)

In this analogy, we find two kinds of earth which receive the same blessing of rain upon it from God. But what a different fruit comes from each soil. One brings forth useful HERBS fit for the men who take care of the field; the other produces THORNS and BRIERS and is rejected, being fit for destruction. This, then, is the overview of these verses: The soil producing HERBS is the believer, who receives God’s blessings; and the soil producing THORNS and BRIERS is a false professor in company with real believers who partakes of the same benefits by sheer closeness of association. Yet to understand why such language is used, we have to look again at the parallel of New Testament Jewish believers mixed with unreal professors, compared to Old Testament Israel coming out of Egypt with a “mixed multitude.”

We could say concerning those that came along for the ride out of Egypt that they had “tasted” the reality of it all, for they were in the company of those who were real ... they ate the manna, drank the water from the rock, and had even come through the Red Sea with the Israelites. There should have been a response of faith to the blessings of God upon them, but there wasn’t. At every difficulty, they complained and wanted to be back in Egypt. I Corinthians 10:3-4 says, “And did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that Spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.” Yet we know from the account of

it and the New Testament references to it that there were definitely unbelievers among them. Did they go hungry each day while the real believers ate the manna? Did they die of thirst while the real believers drank their fill? No. There are blessings on unbelievers, because of association, which are in no wise an indication of the recipients having life, much like our own children ... we enjoy the blessing of God upon us, and so do they, even if they are not yet His. His faithfulness to us affects them, hopefully to the point that their “taste” of the reality of a living God will cause them to seek Him for salvation.

But what of those people to whom this was written? They who had made a profession of faith in Christ had, without question, seen and known the reality of salvation in the number of believers they associated with. They had seen clearly that Jesus was the Messiah, indeed; and the power of the Spirit of God was very evident among the believers. They knew all there was to know and even recognized it to be true, but they would not allow the Saviour of whom it spoke to be Lord of their heart and life. Once persecution for His Name became a part of things, they turned away. In effect, they said, “Let Him be crucified.”

Knowledge of God’s plan does not constitute salvation ... it must be received to be of benefit; and the Saviour who made it all possible becomes LORD of the life of the believer.

The people in this passage are called apostates. They see the truth clearly, and they may even have benefitted by association with real believers; but they turn away, knowingly rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ. This is not simply a false professor who says, “I’m a Christian,” not even knowing what a Christian is. This person God has “enlightened” ... He has shown this one the work of Christ; and for whatever reason ... too much cost to personal ambitions or whatever ... this person deliberately turns away. Realize here that to leave the temple and to associate with the despised group of believers, who were increasingly becoming targets of violence, required, of necessity, a very clear-cut choice on the part of any who professed His name in that time.

However, to show that the writer to the Hebrews was not pointing to real believers while he outlines this, he says very distinctly to them in Hebrews 6:9, “But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and THINGS THAT ACCOMPANY SALVATION, though we thus speak.”

Hebrews 10:26-29: “For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?”

It is evident that this person spoken of has willfully despised not the Old Testament law but the very Son of God. By his turning away, he has, in effect, trampled the Lord Jesus and His blood under his feet. Why the reference to the despisers of Moses’ law? The parallel to the Old Testament exodus and journey to Canaan has already been noted. However, in the same way that the New Testament is much greater than the Old, so is also the seriousness of turning away from the Saviour and His blood compared with despising Moses’ law.

But this verse says, “the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified.” How can that statement be true unless he was originally a true believer? For you and me today, to try to fit this on anyone we know, it could not make sense any other way than saying it had to be a believer that it was talking about. Here is one place where the context must definitely include the book and its title, “Hebrews.” It was written to Hebrews indeed ... people with a background of the promises and covenant of God. They were a people who had been set apart for God in that covenant; and the term “blood of the covenant” was a very recognizable term to them. The term “sanctified” means set apart (normally, set apart for God). The covenant that God made with them was a covenant sealed with blood. Hebrews 9:20 quoted the Old Testament in saying, “This is the blood of the testament (covenant) which God hath enjoined unto you.” What was the blood representative of? Was it simply that God was satisfied with animal blood ... that His promises of future things would be based on animal blood?

Israel obviously thought so. What they did not know then, we are privileged to know since Calvary ... that all the blood of animals from sacrifices under the law all pointed to the great anti-type, the

One who would fulfill all the “shadows” of the Old Testament. His blood would cleanse from all sin, even those under the first covenant (Hebrews 9:15). In a place of high privilege, these Jews had been set apart. However, when Jesus walked among men, He showed that their relationship to Abraham did not guarantee salvation. In actuality it was the pedigreed priests and rulers that crucified the Lord who had themselves been a part of a sanctified nation through the blood of the covenant and the Old Testament promises ... yet they obviously were not saved. What had happened? Peter says, “through ignorance ye did it”; and, indeed, it was so, for Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

But what of those in our verses under study? These “apostates” saw clearly that the Lord Jesus was the fulfilling of Judaism and its promises from God, but they did not want to part from the old because of political or personal-gain reasons. They, therefore, turned away, back to the “shadows”; but they were forgetting that the “blood of the covenant,” wherewith Israel had been set apart, spoke of the blood of Christ on which they now were trampling. The Spirit of Grace had called them, and they had been enlightened to see all the aspects; but knowledge in itself doesn’t save. (“Knowledge” here means full knowledge.) At this point, they turned back. Verse 38 reads, “Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” Faith receives the Saviour and crowns Him Lord ... that is salvation (Romans 10:9); but unbelief draws back and misses salvation.

Again, to reassure us that he is not talking about true believers, the writer to the Hebrews says in verse 39, “But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that BELIEVE to the saving of the soul.” This is an obvious contrast between those who believe and those who draw back in unbelief.

Hebrews 12:15-17: “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.”

To “fail” of the grace of God here means to “fall short.” Seeing Esau sold his birthright (and this exhortation seems to tell us to watch out for this), doesn’t this mean that a Christian could sell his birthright? First of all, the “root of bitterness” was a reference to unbelievers who could stand and hear all the blessings and cursings of the Old Testament and within their own heart fully intend to go after other gods of the nations round about, indulging in all their attendant wickedness. These were to bring sad troubles to Israel’s history because of the defiling effect they had on the true believers. For that reason, these Hebrews many generations later are warned that apostates in their midst will sadly affect them unless they look diligently, for it is easier to walk into a snare with a seeming friend than with a known foe.

Esau is used as an example, for he had taken what was his by right of birth, and not caring for its future value, sold it to his brother who had no right of birth to it. This is exactly what the unbelieving Jews were doing ... they had sold their blessings away which had come to them by birth through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The promise of the coming Christ was sold for a paltry alliance with the Roman government when they said, “we have no king but Caesar.” Who got the blessing? The Gentiles ... the nations who had no birthright at all ... now have the blessing of God in salvation, if they will receive and believe the Saviour of sinners.

Nationally, Israel sold their birthright when they said, “we have no king but Caesar.” But our verse is talking about individuals selling their birthright. In the same way that Israel nationally sold their birthright, so also individual Jewish professors, who claimed to be possessors of what these promises to their forefathers had spoken about, were now selling that birthright by turning back not saved. No doubt they had not sold it yet while they companied with the true believers ... while they hesitated on the threshold of Eternal Life; but wilfully turning away, instead of welcoming the Lord Jesus Christ into their life, became the selling point. The “morsel of meat” may have been no more than some family unity at home, or perhaps some recognition in the synagogue.

Hebrews 12:25: “See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more

shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from Heaven.”

Who is the “we” that is found in this verse? If it is a Christian, then it must follow that a Christian can be lost by turning away. However, in concert with the whole epistle of Hebrews, we can see the use of “we” in two distinct ways. There is the “we” Hebrews who heard the message, and there is the “we” Hebrews who believed the message.

Our verse here falls into the first general group of Hebrews who have heard the Gospel ... not as their forefathers in the parallel example in the wilderness as shown in verse 26. God’s voice was then heard from the mountain: “Whose voice then shook the earth...” God has, rather, spoken to them directly from Heaven in His Son as says also chapter 1 verse 2. The seriousness of them turning away from the Son of God is infinitely more than for those of their forefathers who turned away in the time of Moses. This verse, placed not far from the end of the book of Hebrews, is a reiteration of the same question found not far into the book of Hebrews in chapter 2: “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation...spoken by the Lord...”

The overall call of the book of Hebrews is to shake up those who had the heritage of being God’s chosen people nationally, in a two pronged way. Those who vacillated on the threshold of Eternal Life were warned not to turn away. Those who were real were encouraged not to lose confidence in God’s things, though it looked like the loss of earthly glory for Israel. These are encouraged rather to be like the men and women here on record who by faith believed the promises; as Hebrews 11:13-16 puts it, “...having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city.”

This idea of COMING OUT from their former countries is echoed in Hebrews 13:13 where the idea is redoubled, in that, in Israel’s wilderness history at the time of Moses, there came a time when the Tabernacle, where the presence of God was witnessed, was put up

“outside the camp.” God would not stay among them, for they had turned to worship a golden calf. Exodus 33:7 says, “And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it WITHOUT THE CAMP, afar off from the camp, and called it ‘the Tabernacle of the congregation.’ And it came to pass, that every one which sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp.”

The book of Hebrews now brings in this last picture of that Old Testament parallel to assure any who might wonder about leaving Judaism. They would be leaving the physical glory for the spiritual, leaving the music for inner song, leaving the temple for fellowship with despised “twos and threes gathered in His Name,” into houses or wherever persecution might drive them, even leaving Jerusalem itself. The writer assures them that their “going forth” is UNTO HIM; it is OUTSIDE THE CAMP, and it will be bearing HIS REPROACH. Here are the verses that we have mentioned: Hebrews 13: 13-14, “Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.”

Yes, the Gospel call to the Jew was not only a receiving of the Saviour of sinners, but it was a call to leave everything in the dead Judaistic system from which, if they would indeed leave, they would suffer persecution. Many heard, some believed, and some wavered on the brink and turned back, having seen the cost and counted it to be too great.

II Peter 1:10-11: “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Some have taken this passage of scripture to indicate that a Christian could fall (they mean fall from salvation) and miss entering heaven. Here again, it is necessary to read the chapter context and also the context of the book itself. Peter writes the book to show a preview of reward and, side by side, covers the subject of false teachers. One might wonder what these two subjects have to do with each other. Peter ties them together at the end of this epistle with this single verse: “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your

own steadfastness” (II Peter 3:17).

While salvation brings all believers into God’s presence on one level, based upon the finished work of Christ, not all believers will enjoy the same positioning and reward in the everlasting kingdom. This reward is handed out at the Judgment Seat of Christ, which is for believers. It is based upon faithfulness to God’s Word, and the stewardship which has been given each one will be examined and rewarded as each has been faithful, where and with what God had placed him here on earth. How we have treated our brother will be examined ... all the things that the Spirit of God could work in us to “conform us to the image of Christ” will be looked at in depth ... how we valued His Name and His honor ... our worship ... our building into an assembly of believers “gold, silver, and precious stones” will all be scrutinized, “and the fire shall try every man’s work of what SORT (not SIZE) it is.” (I Corinthians 3:12-13)

This subject could well take up a book of its own. It has numerous references throughout the New Testament and should spur believers on to live for the pleasure of God while we wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is what is taken up in the verses immediately preceding the verse in question. Peter stirs up our hearts to allow all of these Christian virtues to “be in you and abound” (II Peter 1:8). He says if we had these things abounding in us, we would be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. To lose sight of this is nearsightedness, not looking ahead with eternal values.

Now, our verse ... “give diligence to make your calling and election sure.” What does this mean? If you have ever looked at the subject of election in the Bible, you will have discovered that the purposes of God for us, in eternity to come, are always brought into the picture. In other words, God has a plan and purpose for which He has chosen us. If we believers will give diligence to His working in our lives, then the reason for which He called us, and the reward that He has chosen for us, will be sure. The entrance into the everlasting kingdom would be a reflection of the pleasure of God in the life of the believer, and it is under the category of reward.

Without a diligence in the things of God, a Christian with a self-satisfied attitude stagnates, and there is little spiritual growth compared

to what could be. Are they saved? Oh, yes ... saved by the blood of the Lamb, but “saved; yet so as by fire,” as I Corinthians 3:14-15 states: “If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: BUT he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” What we see here is a believer whose life was basically wasted as far as Eternity is concerned. Saved, indeed ... but rewardable fruit of his life is not found. The fire of God’s discernment, which will test everything, found nothing to reward except that the person had received the Saviour.

Life, then, for the believer is serious business ... not “long-faced” serious, but a life that must be given account of to the One who redeemed us as to what was for Him. What is for Him, He will reward; what is not for Him will be a complete loss. Now the exhortation of Peter is, “give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.” To “fall” in this context is to miss out on eternal reward by “falling from your own steadfastness,” possibly through false teachers, who in this epistle are shown to say that Christ’s promise of coming again will not be fulfilled. It takes a good solid view of His coming again to keep us steadfast as we wait.

II Peter 2:20-22: “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. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, ‘The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.’”

It would be good for the readers to read all of II Peter 2, for the subject remains the same throughout. It is a subject of FALSE TEACHERS privately bringing in damnable heresies (verse 1). Peter shows their motive to be covetousness, being after gain for themselves. He goes on to show how God can separate between the godly and the ungodly and how He has already punished wickedness on the earth in the past. God will yet punish these false teachers who “walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness” (verse 10).

The tactics of these false teachers are to allure through the lusts of the flesh (verse 18), and they are like Old Testament Balaam, whose end was among the enemies of God's people Israel even though he had spoken such words as, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" Are these teachers saved? They are the "servants of corruption" (verse 19), not the Lord's servants. They are everything God is against. How did they or their followers slip in among believers in the first place?

They were washed ... not "inside" by the blood of Christ, but "outside" like a sow (pig). The nature wasn't changed. It is very significant here that Peter, a Jew, chose to speak of a "dog" and a "sow." They represented unclean animals to Israel under the Old Testament. No matter how washed the sow was, it was still a sow, unchanged in nature. The dog, being in nature still a dog, returns to its vomit. Why such a picture here? This is to emphasize to us that the people of whom this passage speaks never had an inner change ... it was all outward.

Did they know the way of righteousness? Yes, they "fully knew" it, but personal gain motivated them. All that is stated here could have been said of Judas Iscariot, who betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ. They were away from the pollutions of the world by being among the believers, but the pollution of their hearts could not be hid.

Jude 1:5: "I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not."

Here again is something that could be construed as "saved and lost again." Using the context of the rest of the book, which in this case is only the one chapter, we can see a continuity of thoughts expressed against insiders who are not saved but have managed to slip past the scrutiny of the believers. Verse 4 says that they "crept in unawares"; they didn't belong there.

As with our verse in question, Jude shows all through the chapter that these "believe not." Again, the comparison to Balaam in verse 11 shows that "reward" (personal gain) was what they were after. Verse 12 says, "...they feast with you..." and verse 15 gives the phrase "ungodly among them" as a comparison. Verse 19 seems to sum it up clearly: "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, HAVING NOT

THE SPIRIT.” Romans 8:9 tells us that “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” Very obviously, then, coupled with the fervor with which Jude speaks as he tells us to earnestly contend for the faith, it becomes evident that these are unbelievers all along.

Revelation 2:4-5: “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.”

There are well-meaning people who, pointing to these two verses, will tell you that God could remove your candlestick ... meaning you will no longer be saved. Is this, indeed, the teaching of this passage? How do we find out? If we go back to where the subject of candlesticks begins in verse 20 of the previous chapter, we read this phrase at the end of it: “...the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.” Do we anywhere find the same wording used for an individual in the rest of this passage which starts here and goes through to the end of chapter 3? Not once can it be taken to mean the individual. It is always a “church.”

What, then, do we get from this passage of scripture? Simply and soberly this ... it is possible for a company of believers to have all the outward qualities that we would think are first-rate Christianity and have something vital missing. Oh yes, they knew how to labor and they had discernment and they had patient endurance under evil circumstances without fainting. They hated doctrinal evil and wrong practices among them. We could use more like them today, in that respect, yet they were in danger of losing the candlestick for one major reason. Love to Christ was growing cold. All the “t’s were crossed and i’s were dotted” ... all the zeal was evident ... but what about worship? What about nearness to the One who called us into the fellowship of His Son? Their candlestick of testimony to the world was in danger of being removed. Oh, it would have continued on like a social group, no doubt ... maybe like Samson of the Old Testament not realizing that their power was gone.

Does that touch home? It should stir us up not to be satisfied with “form” alone but with a real, personal appreciation of the Person

of Christ, which would be reflected in a corporate testimony as the believers gather in His Name. So we can see that it is not the individual believer who loses his “candlestick,” but rather it is the church at “.....,” in this case, Ephesus.

Revelation 22:19: “And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

Is it possible that one whose name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life could have his name removed? Please carefully notice the wording here. God is not careless with the way He words things in the scriptures. Many examples of this can be cited throughout the whole Bible. This part is no exception. Please notice that we do NOT read here that God will remove someone’s name from the Book of Life. Instead, it reads that God will take away his part out of the Book of Life.

Is there any difference? The God who “will have (desires to have) all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (I Timothy 2:4) has room in all His plans and purposes for every man that has ever walked the face of the earth. There is no limited availability ... there is no closing up when heaven is full beyond capacity. There is no sense in which God does not have readily available a part in His eternal plan for each individual. Does this mean all will be saved? Obviously, from the scriptures that tell of ones who perished in their sins without Christ, we can say that not everyone will be saved. The Lord Jesus said, “Few there be that find it.” It becomes the responsibility of the hearer of the Gospel to receive what God has for them or lose their soul.

This scripture shows us clearly that those who take and pervert the word of God by adding to it or taking from it (in effect, becoming false teachers) close the door on all such eternal hopes; for God, who has the power and right to do so, takes away His outstretched hand of grace and seals their doom. Their part (that which could have been theirs) is thus taken away.

Philip C. Howard

APPENDIX

Having covered the preceding ground, I would like to leave the reader with a few short thoughts. What is it that the Lord Jesus offers to us when He presents to us the Gospel? It would be worth some contemplation on wording such as “SAVED,” “BORN AGAIN,” “ETERNAL,” and “EVERLASTING.” Can “SAVED” mean anything short of safe? Can “BORN AGAIN” mean anything less than a birth into God’s family? Can “ETERNAL” or “EVERLASTING” be construed to mean temporary or uncertain?

In closing, I would leave with the reader a few more commonly-known verses to ponder, which have not been dealt with to any degree in the preceding pages.

JOHN 3:15: “That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have Eternal Life.”

JOHN 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have Everlasting Life.”

JOHN 3:36: “He that believeth on the Son hath Everlasting Life...”

JOHN 5:24: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath Everlasting Life, and SHALL NOT COME INTO CONDEMNATION but is passed from death unto Life.”

JOHN 6:37: “All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and HIM THAT COMETH TO ME I WILL IN NO WISE CAST OUT.”

JOHN 6:47: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me hath Everlasting Life.”

JOHN 10:27-28: “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them Eternal Life; and THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH, neither shall ANY man pluck them out of My hand.”

ROMANS 5:17: “For if by one man’s offence (Adam) death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness SHALL REIGN in life by One, Jesus Christ.”

ROMANS 6:23: “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is Eternal Life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

II TIMOTHY 1:12: “...for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that HE IS ABLE TO KEEP that which I have committed unto Him against that day.”

TITUS 1:2: “In hope of ETERNAL Life, which God, that cannot lie, PROMISED before the world began.”

I JOHN 1:7: “...the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from ALL sin.”

“Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” GALATIANS 3:3

“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”

I CORINTHIANS 15:19

“Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast...”

HEBREWS 6:19

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