

Am I
Secure in Christ?

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About the cover

The cover is meant to highlight the fact that, when God saved Noah and his family on the ark, He did not place pegs on the outside of the ark and tell them to hang on for the duration of the flood. The Scriptures teach us that He shut them up securely in the ark. Thus, when God saves the sinner, He does not leave the sinner to his own efforts. The believer does not need to keep all his ducks in a row, hanging on until the end only then to find out whether or not he is saved. When we are saved, we are placed in Christ, secure from the greatest threat which could threaten our relationship with God: ourselves.

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Part 1:

Our Security as Demonstrated through the Scriptures.

This book is written to support the doctrine of eternal security and to explain some of those passages that seem to contradict that doctrine.

Let's start off by mentioning why this is important. Before a believer can profit from a doctrine in the Word of God, he must possess a certainty that the particular doctrine in question is really true. As long as a believer possesses any doubt as to whether the Scriptures teach a particular doctrine, that doctrine can have very little edifying impact upon him. The Holy Spirit will not bear witness to false or uncertain doctrine; and, even though with some teaching this may not be that significant, when it comes to the certainty of a believer's eternal destiny, possessing certainty concerning the doctrine of security is of the utmost importance. It is not enough to assent to the positive statements of Scripture supporting the doctrine of security; in order that this truth may be grasped with certainty, those passages which seem to contradict the doctrine of security must be clearly addressed as well.

It is vitally important for the believer to possess certainty concerning his positional relationship with the Lord. A positive reckoning upon the security of this relationship serves as the foundation for all spiritual growth. A Christian who is constantly fearful about this fundamental relationship to the Lord will be powerless to ever mature past infancy and will never bear the fruit of righteousness in his life.

It has been my experience that people who do not believe in security will eventually give up on their faith. The discouragement of repeated lapses in faithfulness, one too many personal moral failures, plus a lack of the joy and peace which normally accompanies a genuine conversion experience, discourages the average person into a state of unrecoverable apostasy. Truly, some of the most hardened atheists are people who started out their spiritual life with a counterfeit conversion experience based, to some degree, on personal reformation. When such a false experience fails to yield genuine fruit, the false professor concludes that there is nothing to “this religion thing.” Moreover, he may spend the rest of his life as an atheist, trying to deliver others from the bitter disappointment he once experienced. This is because he was introduced to a relationship with God which was destined for failure from the start: a relationship based upon personal performance instead of upon a secure relationship with God through the merits of Christ’s sacrifice for us.

The Apostle Paul understood how important it is for the believer to recognize the security he has in Christ. Notice how Paul, in every one of his epistles, starts with a positive affirmation of the security his hearers already possessed in Christ, regardless of their conduct; and then, from that assurance, he exhorts them to practical holiness. Every one of Paul's epistles starts out with such an affirmation, even his letter to the carnal Corinthians. Let's read the first nine verses of First Corinthians.

Paul, called [to be] an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes [our] brother, To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called [to be] saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, [that you may be] blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God [is] faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Notice, even to the carnal Corinthians, Paul reaffirms to them their belovedness to the Father in the first nine verses of his first epistle; and, throughout the epistle, he continues to affirm their relationship to the Father. Paul knew that, before a person could produce fruit, he needed to be firmly rooted and grounded in the love of God. The person who does not believe in security is not rooted and grounded in love. He is operating from a foundation of fear: a fear that, if he doesn't "endure 'til the end," he will not be saved. When such a person approaches the Word of God with such a fearful bias, he gets a threat of eternal condemnation out of every probationary passage of Scripture. A fearful heart produces fearful doctrine: doctrine that sees a threat of the fires of hell in every warning of Scripture. For the believer in grace, what is at stake is not heaven or hell; but, rather, rewards or nakedness, communion or chastisement, peace or anxiety.

Let me ask the reader this: Do you threaten to kill your children if they don't obey you? If one of your children disappoints your expectations, do you kick him out of the family? How much more perfect is the love of the Father for us; and yet we think He has less tolerance for the shortcomings of His children than we do for ours! Certainly, God does not take a lighthearted view towards sin in His children; but neither does He cast them out when they fail.

A man with an unstable, fearful heart will interpret Scripture to his own destruction. We can see this in II Peter 3:15-16:

and consider *that* the longsuffering of the Lord is salvation - as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you as also in all his epistles, speaking of them in these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures.

Notice the phrase "which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction." The word "unstable" used here refers to a person who is not firmly rooted in grace. Such a person approaches the Scriptures with a fearful conscience, jumping to the conclusion that every probationary passage in Scripture threatens the reader with a forfeiture of an eternal home in Heaven.

Let's now consider in greater depth the doctrine of the eternal security of the believer.

The real problem with not believing in security is that such a person has not yet understood God's gracious offer.

God's gracious offer of an eternally right relationship with Himself is based upon the satisfactory payment which Christ has

offered to the Father for each and every person on the face of the earth. The Lord Jesus, on the cross, settled the sin debt between you and God the Father. He released (redeemed) your sins as being the obstacle to God the Father, making you the Father's own in Christ. God's offer of salvation is a promise of an eternal inheritance, free for the believing.

Hebrews 9:12-15 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

Notice, in verse 15, "that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance." The key to this phrase is in understanding the definition of the word "receive." In the original language of the New Testament, this word for "receive," λαμβάνω means "to take hold of". This verb is in the active voice, as contrasted to the passive voice. In the active voice, the

subject of the sentence *commits* the action of the verb. In the passive voice, the subject of the sentence *receives* the action of the verb. When this rule of grammar is applied to the context in question, believing the gospel is embracing the fact that the finished work of Christ, when appropriated for oneself, produces an eternally right relationship with God. In other words, the Gospel invitation is an invitation to enter into an eternally right relationship with God, on the merits of the finished work of Christ. So, according to this context, to reject the doctrine of eternal security is not to have understood the offer of salvation.

The person who does not believe in security has not yet come to grips with his own depravity.

By depravity, we mean the universal inability of man to produce in his person the righteousness of God. Man, in his natural state, does not have the ability to produce in his person a righteousness comparable to God's integrity which could, for any amount of time, serve as a basis for communion with God.

Here is a passage which demonstrates this doctrine of depravity.

Romans 3:10-20 As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands;

There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one. Their throat *is* an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit; The poison of asps *is* under their lips; Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet *are* swift to shed blood; Destruction and misery *are* in their ways; And the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

Notice the last two verses of the above context, especially the phrase "that all the world may become guilty before God." The lesson God wants us to take away from the above context is that, before a person can believe the gospel, there must be an abandonment of hope in personal righteousness as that which can commend a person to God. Once that has occurred, then God, through the message of the cross, reveals that He, Himself has provided righteousness as a gift, simply for the believing. A person who denies the doctrine of eternal security has not yet abandoned hope in his own righteousness as the basis of his relationship with God because, deep down in his soul, he is still hoping that his own integrity will ultimately commend himself to God. A person who does not believe in eternal security is not

resting the eternal destiny of his soul upon what Christ has done about his sin; he is, rather, resting the eternal destiny of his soul on what he is going to do for the rest of his life. This “righteousness” is based upon works and will result in eternal alienation from God.

According to the above context, the prerequisite to saving faith is experientially coming to the conclusion that, no matter how careful you might try to be, you are still falling short of the character of God in your daily conduct. (Romans 3:23) Coming to grips with your own sinfulness (depravity) brings you to a place of total dependence upon the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ as that which merits your eternal standing before God.

There are all sorts of gospel invitations out there: all sorts of methods by which people think they can be saved. In fact, many who name the name of Christ are trying to gain a standing before God on the basis of their own integrity. These invitations reveal that the person employing them has not yet come to grips with the fact that he is a sinner.

Consider, for example, the gospel of total surrender. Or, consider the gospel which invites people to make Christ the Lord of their lives, or the gospel which gives one’s heart to Christ. These plans of salvation, which are often articulated in evangelistic circles, communicate that, at the core of a genuine conversion experience, is a willingness of the individual to surrender to the Lordship of Christ; or, put another way, a willingness of the individual to do his best to follow Christ.

While these may be laudable motives, they are false gospel invitations coming from the heart of an individual who has not yet abandoned hope in his own integrity to eternally commend himself to God.

Never mind that the Scriptures never articulate such gospel formulas. The larger problem confronting the individual who attempts to embrace these salvation formulas is that it reveals the fact that such a person has yet to come to grips with the fact that he is a sinner undone before God; an individual who, in his flesh, does not have the capacity to produce within his person the righteousness of God. A person who is trying to be saved by promising God from this day forward that he is going to do the best he can to follow Christ has not yet forsaken confidence in the flesh. He has not yet abandoned hope in his own righteousness. He has not yet had his mouth stopped of trying to boast in his own righteousness. (Romans 3:19)

The first step to a genuine conversion experience is the abandonment of all hope in our own personal integrity to commend ourselves to God. The first step to a genuine conversion experience is not an attempt at self-reformation; it is, rather, a self-*condemnation* which abandons all hope in vain promises to God that we will “do the best we can.” The one who is trying to be saved by promises of turning over a new leaf has not yet given up on personal righteousness as that with which he can commend himself to God. Consider the following context:

Romans 10:1-3 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

Notice in the above context why the Israelites are not saved. It is because they were refusing God's provision in Christ for their righteousness by seeking to be eternally established before God on the basis of their own personal righteousness. To not believe in security is to ultimately believe, not in Christ's once and for all provision for your righteousness, but in your own conduct. The person who does not believe that the work of Christ procures a perfect standing before God does not believe in what Jesus has done, but rather in what he is going to do for the rest of his life. In this way, he who rejects security refuses to submit himself to God's provision for his righteousness in Christ. Consider also the following context:

Luke 18:9-14 Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised (counting as nothing) others: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men -- extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax

collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

By the way, if your assurance is bound up in your personal performance, then you are deriving such assurance from comparing your conduct to that of a person whom you consider less virtuous than yourself. In other words, yours is a relative righteousness. Of necessity, you are finding hope in another's moral failure.

"WHEW! I'm glad there are others who are not right with God! Did you hear about sister so-and-so and that new guy?"

You see, gossip, pride or taking delight in the moral failures of others stems from a soul which must derive its assurance from the moral failure of others. When there is no Spirit-induced joy or peace abiding in a person's soul, assurance must be derived from finding somebody you perceive to be less godly than yourself and deriving your assurance from the fact that the Lord is going to judge him before He judges you. This is despising (or counting as nothing) others as the Lord spoke of in the first verse of our above context. Instead of longing for the

eternal well-being of the sinner, the sinner's existence in his present state of moral failure is a source of your assurance. How utterly contrary to the love of God, to find security in the moral failure of others! Yet this is exactly what the person who believes in his own rightness of necessity must do, if he is to glean any sense that he is right with God. Oh how the Lord understands our callous, selfish hearts!

The person who denies the doctrine of eternal security has not yet abandoned hope in his own integrity because deep, down in his soul he is still hoping in his own integrity to commend himself to God. The person who does not believe in eternal security is not betting the eternal destiny of his soul upon what Christ has done about sin on the cross; such a person is, rather, betting the eternal destiny of his soul on what he is going to do for the rest of his life about his own sin, which is a gospel of works.

The gospel that Paul preached included the concept of eternal security.

Consider the following context.

Colossians 1:5, 6 because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to

you, as *it has* also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as *it is* also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth;

Notice, in the above context, that the gospel Paul preached made mention of a positive future expectation (hope) securely stored away (laid up) for believers in heaven. In other words, when Paul preached the gospel, his gospel included the concept of a secure future destination. Notice also the context below:

2 Timothy 1:9, 10 who has 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 to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, *who* has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

Life and immortality were to be the result of rightly responding to the gospel invitation.

Or how about this most familiar passage in the Bible:

John 5:24 Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

It is a one-time act of hearing, comprehending and believing the simple gospel invitation that results in a permanent change in status. The person who believes passes from death unto life in such an irreversible way, that the Lord says that he can never come into judgment. The offer of salvation is a forever change of status before God based upon the merits of Christ's cross work in our behalf. When the merits of that work are personally appropriated, it results in a permanent change of status before the Father. So, once again, to reject "once saved, always saved" is to not have understood God's gracious invitation to believe and be forever saved.

Four positive statements in Scripture on the security of the believer

1. **John 5:24** Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

Could the Lord Jesus have made it any clearer than what we see in the above verse? Read it again. An expanded translation of this verse from the Greek would be as follows: "Amen, amen, I am saying to you, that the one hearing my words and believing the one who sent me, is having everlasting life and is

not coming into judgment but has been crossed over out of the death into the life.”

The contrast of the last half of the above verse is more than a compelling argument for the doctrine of eternal security. The one who believes, at that moment, has everlasting life such that his future is no longer anticipated as coming into judgment. Furthermore, the reason the believer has no condemnation in his future is that, at the moment he believed, there was an irreversible change of position before God. He has passed out of death, into the life. The key to understanding the permanence and irreversible nature of the new birth experience in this verse is in understanding that the verb “passed,” is in the perfect tense. The perfect tense denotes action which occurred in the past and has abiding results. In effect, the perfect tense is the tense of abiding state. The action which occurred in the past is still a permanent reality. The force of the perfect tense in the above verse means that a one-time act of saving faith results in a permanent change of position such that the person who experiences the new birth will never come into judgment because he has, in an everlasting and final way, passed out of the death into the life.

2. **Ephesians 1:13,14** In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the

guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

The above passage may be the most comprehensive statement on eternal security in the New Testament. Notice the order of salvation:

1. You hear the gospel.
2. You believe the gospel.
3. As a result of believing you are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. It is the understanding of the purpose of this sealing of the Holy Spirit of promise which constitutes probably the most comprehensive statement on security in the New Testament.

Let us, first of all, understand the purpose of this sealing. During the first century, when letters were posted, instead of sealing those letters in an envelope, to assure the privacy of the letter, people of authority had their own unique seal. To secure the contents of a posted document, the sender would roll the post up as a scroll, tie it with a string and then secure the scroll with sealing wax and impress the still-hot wax with his own signet ring. The signet ring left the sender's own unique identification mark impressed in the wax, thus ensuring that the contents of the letter would not be read by anyone except for the intended recipient. The purpose of this seal was to secure the letter until it arrived at its final destination. Just as the letter was secured until delivery at its final destination by the affixing of the seal, thus the believer is secured until arrival at his final destination by the affixing of the seal of the Father, which seal is none other than the Holy Spirit Himself.

Another verse in Ephesians indicating this securing of the believer unto our final destination by way of sealing is found in the following verse:

Ephesians 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

The purpose of this sealing of the Holy Spirit of God is in order that we might be delivered safely to our final destination: the day of redemption. The day of redemption is that day on which the Lord obtains full enjoyment of the person He has already purchased. Notice also that, apparently, grieving the Holy Spirit of God with worldly conduct does not weaken the seal. The Holy Spirit may be grieved, He may become jealous while indwelling us (James 4:5), we may seek to extinguish His conviction in our hearts (I Thessalonians 5:19), but He never leaves us nor forsakes us.

Another verse addressing the securing of the believer through sealing is found in the following verse:

2 Corinthians 1:22 who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

This sealing is associated with a guaranteed delivery of the believer to his final destination.

Notice also that this verse introduces another component of our security in Christ: the guarantee. This guarantee is actually the word for down payment. It is the down payment of God through which He promises to complete the terms of the purchase at a later date. You see, when we believe, even though God at that point takes ownership of us, He does not enjoy final possession of us because we are still on this earth, still in possession of a flesh which God still finds repulsive, which prohibits God from enjoying full fellowship with us. But God does guarantee to us that He will one day completely enjoy our presence. Moreover, the giving of the Holy Spirit is His pledge to us that He fully intends to complete that transaction. This verse brings us back to our original verse under consideration.

Ephesians 1:14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

Once again the word “guarantee” is the down payment. It is a little-known fact that a down payment obligates the purchaser to complete the financial transaction at a later date. While some believe that reneging on a purchase forfeits only the down payment; actually, by law, the seller has the right to file suit for the entire purchase price, should the buyer decide he wants to back out of the transaction. Thus, God obligates Himself to complete the final salvation of the believer. By the giving of the Holy Spirit as His guarantee, He promises to complete our salvation when we shed our mortal flesh upon departing from this world.

A third passage containing the concept of the down payment is found in 2 Corinthians chapter 5:

2 Corinthians 5:1-5 For we know that if our earthly house, *this* tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in *this* tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing *is* God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

Now, the whole purpose of our salvation is that one day God might take us home to heaven, even though in this earthy body we groan. Why does the believer groan in this earthly body? It is because we are constantly battling the deceitfulness of our own sin. If we stop being careful in our walk with the Lord, sin creeps in, our fellowship with the Lord is broken and we become miserable. We long for the day when there is no more sin or pain attached to our earthly deportment. Well, the good news is that the new birth was designed for that very purpose! Moreover, God gives us the Holy Spirit as a down payment, thereby promising to complete His salvation in our lives.

Let us again return to our original passage under consideration:

Ephesians 1:14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

The third statement regarding security that we want to look at in this passage involves the phrase “until the redemption of the purchased possession” The believer is a blood-bought possession of God. He is bought and paid for and is now the special possession of God, who fully intends to get full fellowship out of His purchased possession when He takes full possession. Until then, however, that believer is His special purchased possession. Peter also uses the same word in this way:

1 Peter 2:9 But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

Literally in the Greek, the phrase “his own special people” would be rendered “a people preserved.” Just as we harvest and can certain fruits, preserving them for our future enjoyment, thus God preserves His people, for His own present and future enjoyment. This word *περιποιησις* in the Greek denotes a prized and guarded possession. He has purchased us with the

blood of Christ, He is preserving us for His present and future enjoyment, which will fully be realized when we depart from this earth and are ushered into His presence.

Below is another positive statement in Scripture on the doctrine of security:

3. **1 Peter 1:3-6** Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,

The above passage in the Greek is literally (however awkwardly) translated as follows: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who, according to His much mercy, has begotten us again unto a positive future expectation through the resurrection of Jesus Christ out of the dead unto an inheritance imperishable and unstained and permanent, safeguarded in heaven for you, you who by the power of God are being protected during your faith unto a salvation prepared to be revealed in the last time. In this you are greatly rejoicing, though now, for a little while, if it is necessary, you have been grieved with various trials.”

We can once again see in the above context that one of the fundamental purposes of the new birth is to create within us an identity and person who will one day dwell in the presence of the Lord in heaven. This context also teaches us that this positive future expectation cannot be destroyed, but is safeguarded in heaven for the person who has been born again. Moreover, the person who has been born again is now protected by God during his earthly sojourning (which this context identifies as faith). We are protected by the power of God during our earthly sojourning until we arrive in the future kingdom of God (in this context called salvation) which is ready to be revealed during the time of the end. Moreover, according to this context, this is a source of great rejoicing for the child of God even though, during the time of our earthly sojourning, if it is necessary, we need to be tested by various trials.

The purpose of these trials is as we read in the next verse:

1 Peter 1:7 that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

In other words, the purpose of our trials on earth are not to keep us saved; rather, they are in order that our faith, (that is, our earthly functional frame of reference) might be found

praiseworthy by Jesus at His judgment of His children which is to take place when He arrives.

Below is our final positive statement from the Scriptures demonstrating the eternal security of the once-saved person. There are many more, but we do not have space to mention them all in this book:

4. **Hebrews 10:10-14** By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*. And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

The above passage contains two of the most iron-clad promises on security found in the Bible. We will consider them separately.

The first promise is found in verse 10: “sanctified once for all.” The phrase, “once for all,” even though it is in italics in our English Bibles, is in italics, not because that is not what the original Greek actually says, but simply because there is not a single English word which can be employed to translate this adverb from Greek to English. The adverb ἐφάπαξ does indeed

mean once for all. Moreover, because this is an adverb and there are no adjectives in the context, the only other word that this adverb can modify is the verb “we are sanctified.” So the verse literally states that the once-saved person is, because of a one-time act of saving faith, once and for all sanctified.

Another characteristic of this verse, which underscores the reality of the security of the believer, is the fact that the participle “sanctified” is in the perfect tense, the tense of abiding results. So this might actually be better translated, “we stand sanctified...once for all.” Christ’s offering of Himself, when appropriated by faith, produces a once and for all salvation because the offering itself is once and for all.

The last verse in the passage under consideration also presents to the believer another iron-clad promise on security. “For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.” This verse presents to us the fact that our salvation is both a completed event and a work in progress. A one-time act of faith secured for us a home in heaven (perfected forever) and the person who continues to occupy himself with the grace of God is said to be “being sanctified.” So, the first time a person believes in a saving way, his standing before God is “perfected forever.” As the child of God continues to believe, he, in an experiential sense, is having his affections set apart unto God, which is practical sanctification. So, Hebrews 10:14 demonstrates to us that our salvation is both a perfect, forever

standing before God the moment we believe and a lifelong transformation of our character into the image of Christ. The lifelong process of the transformation of our character does not make us any more secure than the day we first believed. However this lifelong process does yield joy and peace in this life and rewards in the life to come.

Passages demonstrating that the security of the believer is secured by an event in the past (the new birth) and not by the continuing performance of the believer.

The Scriptures, in several places, demonstrate that that event which secures the believer a home in heaven occurred in his past, when he believed, and is not the result of continued acts of obedience or faith.

Titus 3:5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

Literally, in the Greek, the above verse reads as follows: “Not out of work, the ones, while in a state of righteousness

which we are done, but according to His mercy He has saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.”

The cause of our salvation is an event which occurred in our past, when we were born again. We were constituted children of God by the new birth, which in this context is identified in both its negative and positive components: the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. When we were born again, the Holy Spirit washed from our eternal identity that which is repugnant to God (the old man) so that he, the old man, is no longer part of our eternal identity before God. When we were born again that old man was crucified with Christ in such a way that he is no longer part of our eternal identity before God. The following verse makes this clear:

Romans 6:6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

From the above verse we can see that the moment we are saved, our former identity, the old man, is eternally disassociated from the eternal person that we are. As a result of the new birth, the old man is no longer part of our eternal identity before God. The old man is no longer inextricably infused to our eternal identity. His lusts may still remain in our untransformed flesh; but when the believer exits this world, the old man stays behind. The second half of Titus 3:5 is equally instructive: “and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.”

When a person is born again, not only is the part of him that is offensive to God eternally disassociated from his eternal identity, but, simultaneously with that event, a new person is created by the Holy Spirit on the inside of the believer. This new person is, as we read in Ephesians 4:24, “created according to the pattern of God in righteousness and true holiness.” Then God, as an act of divine decree, determines that this new man, created in His own image, is now the believer’s eternal identity before Him. It is this new man which goes to heaven. When you are born again, before God, you are now a new person. The eternal person that the believer is before God is this new man which resides in the heart of the believer. That is why Paul says in II Corinthians 5:16-17:

2 Corinthians 5:16,17 Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him thus* no longer. Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Paul states that he regards no one according to the flesh. That is to say, he no longer deals with his brethren in Christ from the perspective of their unredeemed sin natures; now Paul recognizes that his brethren in Christ are governed by a whole new set of spiritual dynamics, which includes the indwelling Holy Spirit comforting and teaching a new inner man with Bible truths assimilated from the Scriptures. This new set of dynamics

means that the saints are no longer to be occupied with laws meant to keep the flesh in check through fear. The child of God is to be occupied with a new set of divine enablements designed to build up the inner man so that the lusts of the flesh take a back seat in the heart of the believer. Paul, in his relating to his fellow believers, no longer relates to them according to the flesh; instead, he relates to their seeking to build up the inner man. That is what Paul means in the above verse when he says he no longer regards people according to the flesh. Paul also made mention of our positional reality before the Lord in the following context.

Romans 7:15-25 For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that *it is* good. But now, *it is* no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but *how* to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not *to do*, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to 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 will deliver me from this body of 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.

In verse 17, Paul says, “But now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.” This does not mean that Paul is no longer responsible before God for his sinful actions; rather, Paul is stating the truth which we have previously identified: when a person is born again, the eternal person that he is before God becomes the inner man, which is created in the image of God and, as such, is not capable of sinning. The sinful actions which Paul still committed were not committed by that new inner man made in the image of God. Rather, when Paul transgressed the precepts of God, it was due to fleshly lusts which were still part of his earthly existence.

Another passage demonstrating that the believer is secured by an event in his past (the new birth) and not by the continued performance of the believer is found below:

Colossians 1:12, 13 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love,

That which qualifies a believer to have an inheritance in the presence of the Lord is an event which occurred in the believer’s

past, that is, when he first believed. This qualification is further explained in verse 13 as a transferal of the believer out of the power of darkness and into the authority of Christ's secure Kingdom. So, once again, we see that the believer is qualified for a home in heaven by an event which transpired when he was born again, and not by events which occur in his life after his conversion experience.

Consider also the following verse:

Ephesians 2:8, 9 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. (NKJV)

This verse is a bit awkward to translate, which is why the different English translations of Scripture translate it differently. For example, consider the King James translation:

Ephesians 2:8, 9 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. (KJV)

The King James uses a present tense verb but in the New King James the verb "saved" is in the past tense. So which is correct? Actually, both are true. What we have in the Greek is a perfect tense participle occurring with a present tense verb. The present tense verb underscores the present condition of the believer (you are saved) while the perfect participle underscores

a past action with abiding results (you have been and because of that one time action in the past you remain saved). Unfortunately, the quite literal and expanded translation of the verse I have just given would be very awkward if it appeared in our English Bibles. Suffice it to say, that, once again, because of an initial act of saving faith, the believer was and remains a child of God. Again, a home in heaven is secured by virtue of the events of the new birth experience and not by our subsequent acts of obedience.

Passages demonstrating that Salvation is not forfeited by a failure of watchfulness.

So what happens to the believer who stops walking with the Lord? Or how about the believer who, through neglect becomes totally conformed to this world? What about all the feeble-minded who stop believing? For instance, my mom, who is 90 years old, suffers from dementia, and who has been away from church for about 6 years now, said to me the other day, “Oh Danny, I don’t know if I believe that stuff anymore.” Did she lose her salvation because she stopped believing? Do we lose our salvation if we stop believing and start enjoying sin?

2 Timothy 2:11-13 *This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him,*

He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

Jesus remains faithful to us even when we, for whatever reason, become faithless. Consider also the backslidden condition of the Corinthian Christians below:

1 Corinthians 3:1-3 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able *to receive it*, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men?

Several things should be pointed out the about the Corinthian brethren:

1. They were carnal, which means they were operating according to their fleshly lusts.
2. They were fighting with one another.
3. Their behavior was no different from that of the people of the world.
4. In spite of their untransformed status before the Lord, they were still considered to be baby Christians who were still in Christ.

Certainly, if anybody's carnality should have resulted in forfeiture of position as child of God it certainly would have been that of the Corinthian church members! The entire book of

I Corinthians is one rebuke after another, one correction of behavioral or doctrinal error after another.

When people stop believing, their conduct can get quite atrocious. Here is an example in the Scriptures of somebody whose conduct got pretty ugly when he stopped believing, so ugly that he publicly railed against the credentials of the Lord. The passage below is the record of one of the most backslidden people in the history of serving the Lord.

Luke 7:19-28 And John, calling two of his disciples to *him*, sent *them* to Jesus, saying, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look of another?" When the men had come to Him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?'" And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight. Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that *the* blind see, *the* lame walk, *the* lepers are cleansed, *the* deaf hear, *the* dead are raised, *the* poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is *he* who is not offended because of Me." When the messengers of John had departed, He began to speak to the multitudes concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? "But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings' courts. But

what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. This is *he* of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.' For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

Two things are apparent in the above context:

1. John had lost his faith and:
2. The Lord was not mad about it.

Notice the rebellious tone of John in prison "are you the coming one or do we look for another?" Notice also how the Lord was not at all angered by John the Baptist's tone which he took with the Lord. In fact, Jesus did not send the disciples of John back with a message of rebuke. Instead, Jesus, knowing that John had lost his faith, performed miracles in the presence of the disciples, miracles designed to re-establish John's faith. In fact, before the disciples even got back to John with the report of miracles, Jesus was already relating to his audience that no greater prophet than John the Baptist had ever lived. Suffice it to say, that our lapses of faith do not disqualify the Lord's sheep from a home in His presence. Quite frankly, it happens to all of us much more often than we would like to admit.

Let's now look at another passage in which a lack of watchfulness does not cause a forfeiture of an eternal home in heaven:

1 Thessalonians 5:10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

The key to understanding what the above verse is actually saying is to understand that in the Greek, there are two words used in I Thessalonians which are translated "asleep" in our English Bibles. Those two words are κοιμάομαι and καθεύδω. The first word in our list, κοιμάομαι is used to speak of a person having died. It is found in the following context.

1 Thessalonians 4:15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

The second word translated sleep in I Thessalonians is καθεύδω. This other Greek word for sleep simply means to fail to be alert. It is found in verse 10 of the following context:

1 Thessalonians 5:5-10 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others *do*, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the

breastplate of faith and love, and *as* a helmet the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

This passage is not a contrast between being alive or having died. Rather, the above context is a contrast being reckless in your spiritual walk versus being careful to be consistently occupied in grace. With that in mind, let's consider again verse 10:

Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

The word “wake” in this verse is the Greek word *γρηγορέω* which means to be watchful. It is a commonly used word in the Bible, occurring 23 times in New Testament. So the resultant meaning is that, quite apparently, believers, whether they have been watchful or reckless in their earthly deportment before the Lord, will nonetheless all live together with Christ.

By the way, this does not mean that all believers will be promoted equally in the age to come. Faithful, watchful believers will receive rewards at the judgment seat of Christ resulting in eternal distinction. But all believers, whether they were watchful or reckless in their earthly deportment, will forever enjoy living in the presence of the Lord.

Part 2:

Verses which Seemingly Refute Security Explained

Let us now look at some of the passages in the Scriptures that, on the surface, seem to teach against the doctrine of the security of the believer and explain them.

Matthew 24:13

Matthew 24:13 But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

Probably one of the first passages that comes to mind is the phrase “he that endures to the end shall be saved.” This quote occurs three times in the synoptic gospels and, in every place it occurs, it is in the context of the Great Tribulation. Luke also makes reference to this concept in Luke 21:19, which reads, “by your patience you shall possess your souls.”

Let us first of all acknowledge an apparent contradiction with the teaching of the apostle Paul, if, indeed, this phrase “he that endures to the end shall be saved” is to be taken as a requirement of holding out until the end in order for us ultimately to be saved; for Paul did not consider that which

secured him a home in Heaven to be a work in progress, but a completed transaction which occurred as a result of the New Birth.

Listen carefully to the Apostle Paul's words in Colossians 1:12-13:

giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

Notice the uses of the past tense in this passage. Paul said that the Father qualified us (past tense) to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints. To partake of the inheritance of the saints in the light, is to have your eternal home in the midst of the glory of Christ. That which has qualified the Apostle Paul to partake of the inheritance was an event that had occurred in his past: namely, his deliverance from the authority of darkness and conveyance into the Kingdom of Christ.

Paul also referenced his qualification for Heaven as being a completed transaction in Titus 3:5. Notice once again the use of the past tense.

not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.

Truly, Paul did not consider securing a home in Heaven to be a work in progress. Such citizenship was secured to him as a result of the New Birth.

So, what did Jesus mean when He said “He that endures to the end shall be saved”? It is significant to note that in every occurrence of this phrase in the Scriptures, it is in the context of the Great Tribulation. It is also important to realize that, (unlike the Church) to the Jew, to be saved means “ultimately arriving safely in the promised land.” That’s right, while we in the church look for a heavenly city, the Jewish saint’s future hope is in the earthly Kingdom of Israel. Furthermore, for a still-living earthly Jew, the desire is to survive the Great Tribulation and, in an earthly body, enter the earthly Kingdom. But there is a catch: the earthly Jew must endure the Great Tribulation. He that endures to the end of the Great Tribulation will be bodily delivered into the Kingdom.

By the way, the Gospel of Luke contains a very important parallel verse: a formula for the Jew to survive the Great Tribulation. This is found in Luke 21:19.

By your patience possess your
souls.

Now, in the Greek, the word “patience” is the same exact word translated “endure” in the “endure to the end” passages. Patience is the application of and operation according to Biblical principles in the midst of trials. “Possessing your soul” means remaining alive in the midst of the Great Tribulation. Patience is the ability to conduct oneself according to divine perspective in the midst of trials. It is the ability to respond in the midst of

that pressure with the wisdom of God: a wisdom that is at our disposal because of our previous reception of the Word of God.

It is interesting to note that the book of Revelation also gives this formula for the tribulation age saints to survive the persecution of the Great Tribulation in Revelation 13:10.

He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity;
he who kills with the sword must be killed with the
sword. Here is the patience and faith of the saints.

In other words, rather than frantically responding to trials with weapons and war tactics during the Great Tribulation, the tribulation age saint who maintains his divine perspective and operates accordingly, will be the survivor.

So, we can see that enduring to the end has nothing to do with believers in the dispensation of grace getting to Heaven; but it has everything to do with Jewish saints bodily surviving the Great Tribulation and entering the Kingdom of Israel in flesh and blood bodies.

Here is another verse we need to consider, which I feel sums up the challenge for the Jewish saint in the Great Tribulation: Luke 21:36. The Lord said:

Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be
counted worthy to escape all these things that will
come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.

In other words, the Jewish saint of the seventieth week needs to soberly prepare for the events that will transpire during the Great Tribulation; and if he does, he may be one of the few who

enters the earthly manifestation of the Kingdom in a flesh and blood body.

Notice once again the verse says, “pray that you may be counted worthy.” This is not the language of justification by grace through faith; it is the language of reward by diligence.

One thing that is very important to note concerning these instructions of the Lord to the tribulation age saint: they do not constitute the means by which a tribulation age saint is accounted eternally righteous before God. Indeed, some believing Jews during the Great Tribulation will die and be ushered immediately into the presence of the Lord. To die during the Great Tribulation is not necessarily a sentence of eternal condemnation in hell; but to survive will be a badge of honor.

1 Corinthians 6:9, 10

Here now is another context which, on the surface, seems to contradict the doctrine of security:

1 Corinthians 6:9, 10 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the Kingdom of God.

On the surface it looks like this passage is, in effect, saying, “I don’t care if you are saved; people who commit these sins are not going to make it to Heaven.” Let’s read the larger context in which these verses are found:

I Cor. 6:1-11 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life? If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge? I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers! Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated? No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren! Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the Kingdom of God. And such were

some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

Several questions need to be answered in this passage. First of all, who were the unrighteous that Paul had in mind in verse nine? They obviously were not believers in the Church at Corinth. Listen again to verse 11: “and such were some of you, but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”

Those believers in the Church at Corinth are no longer considered to be this type of sinners (“and such WERE some of you.”) They, by virtue of the new birth, were washed, they were sanctified, and they were justified from such an identity even though, back in chapter 5, some in the assembly were still guilty of such sins -- so guilty, in fact, that Paul commanded they be excommunicated!

This passage actually demonstrates that there is a difference between a believer’s position and his conduct, a believer’s relationship versus his fellowship, a believer’s standing versus his state. The Corinthian believers’ standing before God was washed, sanctified, and justified. Their state in the world was carnal, un-transformed and behaving just like mere men (I Cor. 3:1-4). It was this untransformed state of the Corinthian believers which was at the root of all of this assembly’s problems.

So, who were the unrighteous of verse 9 who were not going to inherit the Kingdom of God? They were the same unrighteous people whom Paul mentions in verse 1:

Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints?

It was these people, the truly unrighteous, the unsaved, about whom Paul was concerned. The untransformed conduct of the believers at Corinth was quenching the convicting power of the Holy Spirit in the conscience of the unsaved. The unrighteous of verse 1 were not receiving a convicting witness because of the untransformed behavior of the Corinthian saints!

The untransformed walk of a believer is one of the greatest tools of the Devil in keeping the unsaved in the dark concerning their need for righteousness. In Philippians, Paul calls such untransformed believers “enemies of the cross of Christ” (Philippians 3:18). The unsaved man, who can conceive of a relationship with God based only on personal merit, observes an untransformed believer and says, “Hey, if he’s going to Heaven then I must be too, because he is no better than I am.” In this manner, the conscience of the unsaved is lulled into a state of terminal complacency concerning his need of righteousness. Not until the Judgment Seat of Christ will we know how many more unsaved we could have reached if we, as believers, had only lived a transformed life in the presence of those in our sphere of influence.

This is what Paul was concerned about in I Corinthians 6. In fact, in verse 6, he again expresses his abhorrence for the

untransformed life that the Corinthian believers were living before unbelievers.

1 Corinthians 6:6 But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers!

Not only are the unsaved lulled into a state of complacency concerning their need of salvation by the example of the untransformed believer; believers living untransformed lives also lull one another into a state of complacency about the plight of their unsaved loved ones. Look again at verse 9: Paul says, “Do not be deceived.”

This, by the way, is why it is important for believers in an assembly to excommunicate the unrepentant, worldly believer. Not only does the unrepentant, worldly believer negatively impact the church’s efforts to reach the lost; but such worldliness, when tolerated in the assembly, causes growing Christians to set their sights on something less than the fullness of the stature of Christ. In order for persons in an assembly to have a purifying impact upon one another, it is essential that this world’s affections not be directing the lives of individuals in that church. Those who refuse to participate with the Holy Spirit in His transformation process are to be disciplined out in order that the overall influence of the assembly remains a purifying and evangelistic influence. As Paul said, “purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump.”

In conclusion, it is the untransformed lives of the believers in the church at Corinth that was, to a large degree, keeping the unsaved in the dark concerning their need for righteousness. The Corinthian believers needed to be clear about that and clean up

their act, if they ever hoped to be a vessel of honor useful for every good work.

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

Our next verse to consider is 1 Corinthians 15:1-4:

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the Gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you - unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.

The verse that prompts a question is, of course, verse 2:

by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you – unless you believed in vain.

On the surface, it appears that this verse teaches that faith that is not rigorously maintained is vain faith. It appears to be teaching that, ultimately, we will not be saved unless we hold fast to the Gospel.

The confusion over this verse comes from a lack of recognition that there are actually two issues at stake here:

maintenance of the potency of the gospel for future generations and what would constitute vain faith. We will tackle the second first: what constitutes vain faith.

1 Corinthians chapter 15 is often referred to as the “resurrection chapter” of the Bible. It, more than any other chapter of Scripture, expounds for us the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead.

The reason Paul so thoroughly offers such instruction here is that there were apparently some in the church of Corinth who did not believe in the resurrection. In I Corinthians 15:12-17, we read,

Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection from the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up - if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!

According to this context, vain faith is to have believed upon Jesus as your Savior even if He had not risen from the dead. Such faith would be to no effect because the miracle of the new birth could not take place if the Lord Jesus had not risen from the dead.

Okay, back to 1 Corinthians 15:1 & 2:

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the Gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you - unless you believed in vain.

The second aspect of this passage that is troubling is the concept of not being saved unless you hold fast. The key to understanding this concept is the tense, voice and number of the verb “saved.” This verb “saved” is a second person plural present passive indicative. Literally translated it would be “by which ye will continue to be saved if you hold fast.”

The present tense here needs to be taken as an iterative present, or the present of repeated action. It is used of an event that is often repeated. Basically, what Paul is saying is that people in your sphere of influence will continue to get saved as long as you keep the Gospel straight. Paul is not saying that individuals will hold onto their salvation if they keep the Gospel straight; rather, he is saying that people will continue to be saved by the Gospel, if it is the Gospel that Paul originally delivered to them.

So, 1 Corinthians 15:2 addresses two issues; a vain act of faith, that is, faith in Christ even if He hadn't raised from the dead, and then maintaining the saving potency of the Gospel for future acts of faith.

Colossians 1:21-23

Another verse which often causes people to question the doctrine of security is found in Colossians 1:21-23:

And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight - if indeed you continue in faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the Gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under Heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Once again, this passage seems to teach that in order to ultimately make it to Heaven, it is necessary to “continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast.” But read the passage again a little more carefully. It says, “to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.” This passage is not telling us how to make it to heaven; it is telling us how to have a positive experience at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

This is the language of our presentation before the Lord at His Judgment Seat. Every believer will one day stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, but not every believer will be presented holy, blameless, and above reproach in that day. Indeed, many believers will experience shame at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Listen to the Lord Jesus’ exhortation to the believers in the Church of Laodicea:

Revelation 3:16-19 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’ - and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor,

blind, and naked - I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, [that] the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

Notice, the Lord exhorts the Laodiceans to get serious about fruit bearing in order that the shame of their nakedness may not be revealed. Many believers will walk away from the Judgment Seat of Christ naked of any reward. As we read in Revelation 16:15:

Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed [is] he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.

In contexts addressing rewards, the garment is the article of clothing that represents the everlasting value (or lack thereof) of the believer's accomplishments here on earth. Believers whose earthly goals centered around selfish ambition will leave the Judgment Seat of Christ without a garment and will thus, throughout eternity, lack a wardrobe as complete as those believers who, in this life, made God's priorities their own.

Likewise, John exhorted believers in 1 John 2:28:

And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

But, even though believers will experience great shame over their wasted earthly lives, they will, nevertheless, make it into the heavenly city. As we read in 1 Corinthians 3:14-15:

If anyone's work which he has built on [it] endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Even though many believers will experience reproach and shame at the Judgment seat of Christ, they will ultimately survive that judgment and realize their citizenship in the heavenly city.

Let's look back at Revelation chapter 3 again and examine another passage that causes people to doubt the doctrine of security:

Revelation 3:14-16 And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things say the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: 15 "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

Of course, the phrase that causes people uncertainty is the warning of the Lord, "vomit you out of my mouth." In a nutshell, this verse is not speaking about our position in Christ, but our fellowship with Christ.

It is important to catch the imagery of this verse. Christ will not commune with world-temperature believers; that is, believers who, in a spiritual sense, taste and smell like the world. The imagery is of an individual who is handed a beverage to drink and takes in a mouthful, only to discover that the beverage is room temperature.

Ask yourself this question: how often would you drink a beverage that was room temperature? When was the last time you took a big ol' swig of milk only to discover that it was room temperature? What would be your response? You would quickly spew it out of your mouth! You would want nothing to do with assimilating room temperature milk; it would probably make you sick! Now imagine yourself in the first century when there were no treatments for food poisoning. Think how much more urgent it would be for you to expel from your mouth any beverage you suspected of being spoiled.

Well, neither does the Lord want anything to do with room temperature, lukewarm believers; they are unsuitable for fellowship with the Lord. It is important, in this passage, to understand this imagery. To be cold or hot is desirable as opposed to lukewarm because cold or hot beverages are safe for drinking. Lukewarm is not better than cold. Cold is safe and hot is safe, but lukewarm is indicative of a beverage that is no longer suitable for enjoyment. Room temperature beverages are dangerous to drink.

Those who think that cold is worse than lukewarm are failing to grasp the imagery of this passage. Just like an individual will not take into his stomach a beverage that is the temperature of

the world, neither will the Lord take into fellowship those who are, spiritually, the temperature of the world.

Let's talk a bit about communing with the Lord. Communion with the Lord occurs when a believer is operating from God's perspective, a perspective gained through His Word. A person who is in communion with the Lord values that which the Lord values. Such a person in communion with the Lord longs for that which the Lord desires, sharing with the Lord a common frame of reference.

When we think of communion we think of the communion meal. This is because, in the early church, it was the means by which communion with others was expressed. Communion was not grape juice and a wafer tacked onto the end of a church service; rather, it took place around the dinner table, fellowshiping with like-minded believers in the Lord. So, it should not surprise us that the Lord likens an attempt at communion with world-temperature believers to taking in a mouthful of spoiled milk. A believer's worldliness is as distasteful to the Lord as spoiled milk is to us.

So, what is it that constitutes a lukewarm, world-temperature believer?

Let's continue in the context in Revelation 3:17. It reads:

Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' - and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked -

A lukewarm believer is a believer who has adopted and is pursuing this world's view of success instead of the Lord's view of what constitutes success. The world's view of success is the

acquisition of wealth to the degree that one can be independent of others. Or, as this passage says, “rich, wealthy, and having need of nothing.” The Lord’s view of success is having the consistent manifestation of the fruit of righteousness to the degree that others are drawn to grace. Most believers are spending so much of their time and energy on pursuing the world’s definition of success that they have no time to pursue that which constitutes eternal success.

The Lord continues in this passage (verse 18):

I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, [that] the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

Buying gold refined in the fire is reinvesting your time, talent and treasure into that which is of eternal significance. Verse 18 of Revelation chapter 3 speaks of leaving the Judgment Seat of Christ naked: naked because of having lived a life characterized by misplaced priorities.

The carnal believer will walk away from the Judgment Seat of Christ naked of any accessories of honor attached to his wardrobe. It would be like wearing a tee shirt to a wedding banquet. Such will be the shame many believers will experience at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The Lord does not want believers to experience such shame on that day; rather, He wants believers to, throughout eternity, experience the eternal promotion which will be granted because of a life now lived in the Spirit.

But also notice something else about verse 18. The Lord says “buy gold refined in the fire.” This is not the language of justification by grace through faith; it is the language of self-denial unto rewards. Salvation is not something a person buys; but, in a sense, rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ are something a believer now buys. Rewards in that day will be distributed according to how the believer, in this life, invested his time, talent and treasure.

Let’s continue reading verse 19:

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.

Once again, this rebuke is not directed towards the unsaved; it is chastening directed towards His children. As the author of Hebrews says,

whom the Lord loves He chastens and scourges
every son whom He receives;

And, by the way, when the Lord scourges, we need to repent. The believers at Laodicea, as well as believers today, needed to change their priorities. We need to leave behind that which the world says is success, and focus our time on that which the Lord says is success. Until we do, the Lord will continue to pound upon the door of our conscience, chastening and rebuking us until we repent by making His priorities our priorities.

The last verse of this context is Revelation 3:20. It says,

Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me.

The Lord, in this passage, likens His rebuke and chastening to a continual knocking upon the door of our hearts; a door which we open by turning away from the world's priorities and, instead, embracing God's perspective on life.

Notice also in this verse, that the Lord returns to the concept of dining to illustrate the fellowship of a believer with Himself. The fellowship of the world-temperature believer is spiritually distasteful and sickening to the Lord, but the fellowship of a believer who makes the Lord's priorities his own is sweet, both to the Lord and to the believer.

By the way, this verse is not to be used during a presentation of the Gospel to the unsaved. The unsaved are not made eternally righteous before God by turning from worldliness. Rather, the unsaved are constituted righteous before the Father through a faith that embraces the completeness with which Christ satisfied the righteous demands of the Father for the sins of the unsaved. Revelation 3:20 is not a means to a right standing before the Father; it is, rather, a means by which a believer can be restored to fellowship with the Lord Jesus.

So in conclusion, the Lord spewing out of His mouth a believer is not a forfeiture of eternal life. It is rather the rejection of the fellowship of a believer as long as his affections are upon worldly things.

Revelation 3:5

Revelation 3:5 He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and will not blot out his name from

the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

The problem created by this verse is as follows: if the book of life contains a list of all those who are saved, then to be blotted out of the book of life would equate to a forfeiture of one's salvation in Christ. I think the problem with this passage is that, for years, we believers have just assumed that, since Revelation 20:15 tells us that whoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire, we just assume that the book of life contains a list of all of the saved.

Quite honestly, Revelation 20:15 deserves a second look. Here is the verse in our English translation immediately followed by the Greek:

Revelation 20:15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

BYZ **Revelation 20:15** καὶ εἴ τις οὐχ εὐρέθη ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τῆς ζωῆς γεγραμμένος ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρός

The key to understanding this verse is to observe the tense of the participle which is translated “written.” In the Greek it is a perfect passive participle. A basic rule of Greek syntax (as well as English) relates to how the tense of the participle relates to the main verb of the sentence. For example, if a participle is in the aorist (past tense), it puts the action of the participle

antecedent (or before) to the action of the principle verb of the sentence. Likewise, if a participle is a present participle, then the action of the participle is simultaneous with the principle action of the verb. To make a long story short, the translation before us in our English Bibles would demand a present tense participle. However, the word “written” is a perfect tense participle which places the timing of the participle as having been initiated before the verb “found” which is the principle verb of the sentence. Any translation of this verse needs to account for the fact that the word “written” is a perfect passive participle. A more accurate translation to Revelation 20:15 would probably be as follows:

And if anyone was not found having been written
in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

In other words, it doesn't matter if his name has been blotted out. What matters to the person in question is this: was his name EVER THERE? The practical implication of this truth is that Revelation 3:5 becomes for us, not a threat of forfeiture of eternal life, but rather a threat of forfeiture of privileges that might accrue to the faithful believer whose name remains written in the book after the judgment seat of Christ.

Armed with this knowledge, let us now look again at our verse in question:

He who overcomes shall be clothed in white
garments, and I will not blot out his name from the

Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before My Father and before His angels.

The verb “blotted out” is one of four future tense verbs in this context. These are all future verbs because they describe the results of a future event, which is the judgment seat of Christ. In this context, those emerging victorious from the Judgment seat of Christ will have bestowed upon them at least four special privileges:

1. They shall walk with Christ in white.
2. They shall have a white cloak thrown around them.
3. They shall not be blotted out of the book of life.
4. They shall have their name confessed before the Father and His angels.

The very fact that not having your name blotted out of the book of life is a result of the Judgment seat of Christ should tell us that at least the person in question made it to the judgment seat of Christ. Moreover, anyone at the judgment seat of Christ is already among the saved. Whatever loss having your name blotted out of the book of life might suggest, it does not suggest a forfeiture of an eternal home in heaven. The person at the judgment in question has already made it there.

If the possibility of having your name blotted out of the book of life as a result of the judgment seat of Christ is not a threat of forfeiture of eternal life, then what might it forebode to the believer with defiled garments? How about a loss of privileges

in the age to come? One thing that needs to be pointed out in this passage is that it presents for us a contrast between having your name blotted out of the book of life and having your name confessed before the Father and His angels. So what might be the purpose of having your name confessed before the Father and angels as a result of the judgment seat of Christ? As in keeping with the other promises to the overcomers in the seven letters to the churches, the promises all appear to have to do with access to the center of the administration in the age to come. The angels are the divine bouncers, so to speak, in the age to come. Having your name confessed before the angels as the result of the judgment seat of Christ is, in effect, the Lord saying to the angels, “This guy will be helping me call the shots; he is part of the divine cabinet; he is granted special access.”

This, by the way, is also in keeping with the three other promises of the context in question. For example, walking with the Lord in white might suggest walking with Christ in the midst of brilliant luminance, which one would expect to experience when conferring with Christ in the presence of His unveiled glory.

Notice also the phrase at the end of verse 4: “for they are worthy.” This cannot possibly be a reference to results of being saved, because being saved is not a reward for obedience. Being saved is a gift bestowed upon the sinner who has embraced the work of Christ as that which merits his eternal standing before God. Being “worthy” is not the language of the gift of righteousness; it is, however, the language of rewards for faithfulness.

Notice also the second promise to the overcomers which is found in verse 5: They shall have a white garment cast around them. This is the garment of authority, similar to a kingly robe. Like walking in white in the presence of the Lord, it speaks of promotion to leadership capacity in the age to come.

In keeping with the promises of promotion in the age to come, not having your name blotted out of the book of life must, by association, also anticipate a promoted status in the age to come.

That is precisely what we see in one other context which mentions the book of life. Consider this following passage:

Revelation 21:26, 27 And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it that they may enter in. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Notice this above passage grants the privilege of entering into the holy city only to those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. It appears that not having your name blotted out of the book of life also equates to special privileges in the age to come.

Having our names confessed before the angels is for the purpose of positive angelic attention being afforded to the person whose name is confessed. Be it an earthly saint serving the Lord or a glorified saint serving in the Kingdom, special

angelic attention is to be afforded the one who experiences his name being confessed before the angels.

Galatians 5:4

Galatians 5:4 You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to* be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

On the surface, the phrase “fallen from grace” in this verse looks like it is possible to lose one’s salvation. Let us first of all establish the fact that the Galatians had at one time believed; and, in fact, at one time in their experience were growing, loving, charitable believers. This can be demonstrated from the following context:

Galatians 4:15 What then was the blessing you *enjoyed*? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me.

Clearly, from the above verse, there had been a time in the experience of the Galatian believers when their faith was manifesting the fruit of love. What had happened to the Galatians is that someone dislodged their faith in the sufficiency of Christ alone; and thus, they were no longer on the foundation. The Galatians were no longer rooted and grounded in grace. They had embraced an error. As a consequence, the Holy Spirit

was no longer producing in them the fruit of righteousness. The Holy Spirit is not going to produce His fruit in an individual who is embracing and promoting a false gospel. Consequently, once the Galatians had embraced a false gospel, the Holy Spirit and His transformative enablements ceased to function in their souls. The Galatian saints had fallen away from the upward momentum which characterizes a believer growing in grace. They had fallen from grace.

This is not to say that the Galatians had forfeited an eternal home in heaven. The Scriptures contain several instances of people who, for whatever reason, stop believing. In fact, the greatest preacher who ever lived, according to Jesus -- John the Baptist -- quite possibly died an unbeliever. Listen to his railing accusations against the Lord Jesus:

Matthew 11:2, 3 And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"

Apparently, John had lost his perspective on the truth while in prison; so much so, that we see him hurling accusations at the Lord Jesus. Nevertheless, while John the Baptist was in this state of unbelief, here is what Jesus had to say about him:

Matthew 11:11 Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than

John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Notice while John the Baptist is in a state of functional unbelief; Jesus calls him the greatest preacher that ever lived. The truth of the matter is, from time to time *everyone* falls into a state of unbelief. From time to time *everyone* doubts. The Lord understands that His children will from time to time fall into a state of unbelief. So does a person lose his salvation when he stops believing? Let's allow the apostle Paul to answer that question.

2 Timothy 2:13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

When a genuine child of God later gets off of the foundation of grace and embraces a false gospel, he will lose many things, but one of these is not his eternal home in heaven. He will lose his joy; he will lose his assurance; he will lose his fellowship with the Lord; he will lose his peace; he will lose his power; he will lose his momentum in grace; he will lose rewards; he will lose promotion in the age to come. But, he will *not* lose his eternal home in heaven!

Now let's return to our consideration of the Galatian saints. Christ had become of no effect to them. That is not to say that the Galatians had lost their salvation. Their faith, which they had now abandoned, was no longer operating to produce the fruit of righteousness in their lives. When believers in grace

stop believing in grace, they get off of the foundation, stop producing fruit, and cease to experience the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. That which was once effectively transforming their lives is no longer doing so. Christ had become of no effect to those who had left the grace way of salvation; they had fallen from grace.

Hebrews 6:6 Falling Away and Being Burned

Hebrews 6:4-6 For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame.

Quite frankly, I don't at all see how this context can be construed as a threat of forfeiture of eternal life. Quite frankly, just the opposite is true. Most theologians get all bent out of shape over the concept of "falling away" in this context. They act as if it is some terrible occurrence. The truth of the matter is, this is the state in which *most* children of God find themselves today.

So, what is going on with these Hebrew Christians? Well, like the Galatians, the Hebrews were also in the process of falling away from the grace way of salvation. For whatever

reason, they were letting slip away that truth in which they had previously been established.

The context of Hebrews chapter six actually begins several verses before. Let's pick up the context in verse one.

Hebrews 6:1 Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary *principles* of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

Here is what the Hebrew believers were trying to do: they had lost their joy and peace because they had ceased their occupation with truth which leads to maturity. As we read in the last verses of chapter 5, they had need that someone teach them again concerning the first principles of salvation. They had come to again need milk and not solid food. Their backslidden condition was producing anxiety in their lives and they wanted their joy and peace back. The Hebrew saints thought the solution to their anxious condition was another conversion experience. So, in the first few verses in the beginning of Hebrews chapter 6, the author tells them that they don't need a second conversion experience. Rather, for lasting joy and peace, they need to press on to maturity. He tells them to "press onto maturity, not laying again the foundations of repentance from dead works and faith towards God." In other words, quit trying to get saved again!

The author of Hebrews then continues in chapter 6 with instructions as to why it is impossible to get saved a second time.

Hebrews 6:4-6 For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame.

We can see here that it is impossible to be renewed again (born again) through repentance. By the way, I am aware of the argument made by many that these people in question were not quite saved but were almost believers. Considering this context, that is certainly a false assertion. Of these people it is said that they ought to be teachers (5:12); it was time for them to press on to maturity (6:1); they could not again lay the foundation of repentance and faith (6:1). Furthermore, they had become partakers of the Holy Spirit (6:4) and had experienced in their souls the “powers of the age to come.” These people certainly were saved but were in danger of falling away. The question is, “falling away from what?”

Believers who are not regularly engaged in occupying and exercising themselves in grace and truth will soon find that they have fallen away. The truths that were once precious to their souls quickly become distant and forgotten. The momentum towards Christ-likeness stalls, and a once exciting walk with the

Lord takes a backseat to the priorities of the world. In short, the believer falls away. Quite frankly, it is probably the reality in which most believers find themselves.

One troubling part of this context which may cause many to become anxious is the exhortation of verse 8:

Hebrews 6:8 but if it bears thorns and briars, *it is* rejected and near to being cursed, whose end *is* to be burned.

Oh no! Fire! I am headed for hell! Such is the fear of the unstable soul who views every probationary passage in the Bible as a threat of forfeiture of eternal life. Actually, this warning is not with reference to believers being burnt up in hell; but, rather, the works of the flesh of the backslidden believer being burnt up at the judgment seat of Christ. It is not talking about a believer's salvation being forfeited; but, rather, as we read in verse 9, "things which accompany salvation". Actually, this context is not very different from Paul's discussion concerning rewards in I Corinthians 3.

1 Corinthians 3:11-15 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's

work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

First Corinthians chapter 3 is a foundational context to understanding the doctrine of the judgment seat of Christ. We see that, at the judgment seat of Christ, fire will be employed to burn away that which is not worthy of everlasting reward. Those works unworthy of eternal reward will be burned up. Notice also in the context that even though the works of the non-compliant saint will be burnt up, the saint himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. At the judgment seat of Christ, the unfruitful work of the saint will be burnt up, but the saint will be spared.

The above is precisely what we have in Hebrews chapter 6.

Hebrews 6:7-9 For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briars, *it is* rejected and near to being cursed, whose end *is* to be burned. But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.

Notice in verse 9 what is being burnt up: “things which accompany salvation.” God has created us in order that we as

His children might through His power manifest good works in our lives. Those works which are not worthy of eternal approbation will be burnt up in a fiery judgment, before the judgment seat of Christ. Such a believer will remain into the age to come, but his works will not.

Ephesians 5:5 No inheritance in the Kingdom of God

On the surface, the following passage appears to be a warning that, even though someone might be a child of God, if they participate in the same sins that are common in the world, then they are going to end up experiencing the wrath of God just like those in the world. Here is the passage in question:

Ephesians 5:5-7 For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them.

On the surface, it looks like this passage is an exhortation not to become a partaker of the wrath of God with unbelievers. The passage also appears to be teaching that, amongst others, a covetous person (a person who longs to find joy in possessions) will one day be a recipient of the wrath of God. That would include the vast majority of believers in America because, I don't know about you, but I don't think I have ever passed the foreign car dealership and not imagined what it would be like to

own that brand new Lamborghini. What would it be like to feel those lush leather seats, to go from 0 to 60 in 4.3 seconds, to see how close I could get that speedometer needle to the advertised 240 mph! Oh the covetousness of it all! Oh the spiritual fornication we commit when we entertain such thoughts, desiring to find our joy and peace in something other than communion with God!

Of course, the above illustration underscores the folly of attempting to derive assurance from the fact that you are not committing fornication. The truth of the matter is this: all covetousness is adultery before God (James 4:2-4). If you think that, just because your adultery before God does not involve a physical body part, it is not big deal; you have another guess coming. Apparently, finding your sense of well-being in possessing a new thing is no different to God than your wife's finding her well-being in the arms of another man.

Let's return to our context in Ephesians chapter 5. The greater context in which this passage occurs consists of an exhortation to believers to work out practical sanctification in their lives and not to partake of the same sins as unbelievers (sons of disobedience). The warning to the believer is that fornicators do not have any inheritance in the kingdom of God and of Christ.

So the next question to be asked is this: What does it mean to have an inheritance in the Kingdom of God? Actually, there are two ways in the Scriptures in which a believer is said to inherit

the Kingdom of God. There is the inheritance of which all believers partake, which is simply a home in the presence of God. Then there is the inheritance which is for faithful believers only, consisting of helping the Lord to call the shots in the age to come. These two inheritances can be illustrated in the following passage:

Romans 8:17 and if children, then heirs -- heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.

We can see in the above context that a distinction is to be made between inheriting a relationship with God in the age to come and becoming a joint heir with Christ. Everybody who has ever been born again through faith in Christ will one day enjoy eternity in communion with God, but not everyone who has been born again will become a joint heir with Christ. Joint heirship with Christ involves embracing the suffering which is an integral part of the maturation process of the believer. Most believers seek to avoid suffering with Christ by reaching for an of this world solution for their times of testing. Reaching for our favorite addiction to help us through trials, instead of allowing the suffering to purify our character, disqualifies us for joint heirship with Christ in the age to come.

Another passage which shows us the contrast between living and reigning with Christ is found in II Timothy 2:11 which reads:

2 Timothy 2:11-12 *This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. If we endure, We shall also reign with Him.*

Once again, we see here that a distinction needs to be made between living with Christ and helping Him call the shots. Truly, to inherit the kingdom of God means more than just going to heaven; it means helping the Lord call the shots during the age to come.

Now back to Ephesians chapter 5. The warning about having no inheritance in Ephesians 5:5 is not a warning that a believer might forfeit eternal life. It is, rather, a warning that the untransformed believer will not be promoted at the judgment seat of Christ. Such a believer will be naked of any reward, uncrowned for eternity and ashamed of what his life could have been, had he participated with the Lord in the transformation of his character.

One problem that many believers have today is that they do not realize that there are eternal negative ramifications to persisting in an untransformed state before the Lord. Most saints today are of the mindset “it’s no big deal. I am on my way to a heavenly home.” Such believers will have inconsolable anguish of heart after the judgment of Christ when they realize all they could have been and all they could have received had they prioritized that which was of eternal significance while sojourning through this life! They will emerge from the judgment ashamed, naked, and without any inheritance. They

will suffer loss, but they themselves will be saved, yet so as through fire. (I Corinthians 3:15).

Matthew 7:20 "by their fruits you will know them"

This context is probably one of the most misused contexts in Scripture to cause new believers to doubt the genuineness of their conversion experience. Many a misguided preacher has hamstrung the growth of a newborn believer through lifting this verse out of its context. So let's first of all, examine the context of this verse:

Matthew 7:15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"

Clearly, the above context is not a test of a baby Christian's faith; it is, rather, the Lord's instructions for spotting a false prophet. Certainly, anyone who has been assimilating truth, such as would qualify him to be a prophet, should have a degree of transformation of character in his life. Certainly, with the application of truth and the passing time, a genuine prophet of God will manifest the fruit of righteousness in his life. But, there is a clear difference between the fruit which is expected of a prophet and the lack of fruit which often characterizes the walk of a baby Christian.

It is a great mistake to get a new convert to become introspective by looking to his own fruit as a source of assurance. Many a baby Christian has been stunted in his growth, by an evangelist's claim of yet another convert, when all he really did was to scare a baby Christian out of his conversion experience. By getting the new believer to become introspective regarding his assurance, many a misguided preacher has unwittingly disengaged the baby Christian from the true source of his growth: a firmer grasp on the grace work of Christ. When the new believer becomes introspective in regards to assurance, there will be no power to bear fruit. Moreover, where there is no power to bear fruit, there will be no growth. So, to make a long story short, to cause a baby Christian to become introspective with regards to assurance is to permanently entangle that believer in a vicious circle of doubt. Many a Christian has been for years set on the shelf, because some

misguided preacher persuaded that baby Christian that assurance of salvation was derived from taking your eyes off of Christ and becoming introspective with regards to assurance.

Conclusion

People who are not rooted and grounded in a steady assurance of salvation based upon the merits of Christ crucified approach every probationary passage in the Scriptures as a threat of forfeiture of eternal life. As we grow in understanding and assurance, we begin to understand that there is more at stake in eternity than simply an eternal destiny. All of the probationary passages in the New Testament are not a threat of forfeiture of eternal life but are, rather, a warning that the believer will lose eternal distinction in the age to come. While that may not seem like a big deal now, the untransformed believer will spend eternity wishing he had been more responsive to the grace and truth in his life.

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