

Eternal Security

Once a person believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, and is saved, can that one eventually be lost for any reason? This question has plagued and robbed many Christians of peace and joy for centuries. There are of course two positions that can be taken: 1. The believer is not secure because he can be lost if.... 2. The believer is secure forever because.... How can we know? Both sides have their scriptures and are very confident in their positions. Would God want us to know for certain such a foundational doctrine? Hopefully after reading this entire discourse, we can come to understand what God's will is in this matter.

Another problem exists that must be addressed. The two positions are so opposed that they cannot be reconciled. The saved one is either secure or not secure, there is no middle ground. If someone was looking on, they would think that there are two different God's and two different Bibles. We must take a stand, and that is, the Bible is God's word and there are NO contradictions. Then, we must believe the word of God even if it contradicts our reasoning or understanding. In fact, we must throw out human reasoning for "*There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.*" (Prov. 16:25). God is the only One who can save man, it is God who devised this "so great salvation" and offers it to man as a gift given in grace. Who is man that he can change or improve or revise or adjust or fine tune God's perfect and marvelous salvation plan. God operates on an entirely different plane than man. "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts*" God's thinking is not the same as man's thinking, therefore what may seem reasonable to man is not necessarily reasonable to God. "*Neither are your ways my ways declares the LORD.*" As a result of different thinking, God's ways or way of doing things will be different as well. "*As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*" (Isa. 55:8, 9). God's thinking and way of doing things is so much higher, that man need not try to figure out God, but can only allow God to reveal himself through His word.

Faith is looking *away from self* to another for knowledge, truth or action. Man is always ready to define God, to limit God, but man is only in the position to be taught of God and believe the divine testimony. "*Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God that he should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever! Amen.*" (Rom.11:33-36).

Where to Start

There is an abundant amount of evidence that can be called as a witness in the defense of eternal security. Let us begin with the most common of all scriptures found in the bible, John 3:16. "*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*" This passage tells the whole story. God takes it upon himself to say that anyone who believes in Christ "*shall not perish*" and there is no double talk. What a statement! Not one person who believes in Christ will be lost, NOT ONE! If one person believed in Christ and was for any reason

lost, then God would be a liar. I realize that is a strong statement, but it is the only way we can consider such a bold assertion. For God to make such a statement, He must have the power to back it up. If the statement was based, in any way, on man's power and abilities, to that extent, man must back it up. In other words, man must keep himself from perishing in order for God to be true and not a liar. If one man failed in this superhuman task and perished, God would be discredited, His word proved false by a mere creature from His hand. Further, we need not trust anything else God says because maybe His word could fail us again.

This line of reasoning is of course blasphemous! Salvation is the work of God for man, NEVER the work of man for God. In the salvation of man, it never says that God believes in man and man is saved. God does not depend on man, in any way, for salvation. Salvation is accomplished by God and offered to man as a free gift given in grace and received by faith. Grace cannot function where there is the slightest degree of human merit or works (Rom. 11:6; Eph. 2:8, 9). There is nothing that man can give to God for the salvation of his soul, for he has nothing to give. Man is spiritually dead, bankrupt, condemned by God and has an inherited sinful nature. As a result, man is totally helpless to save himself or help God to save. God does not require ANY works from man for salvation. This is a matter we MUST forever settle before we can gain acceptance with God. Please review the following:

The Testimony of God

"Then they asked him, what must we do to do the works God requires? Jesus answered, the work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." (John 6:28, 29). "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast." (Eph 2:8, 9). "Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of Faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law." (Rom. 3:27,28). "If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about--but not before God. What does the scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. Now when a man works (for salvation), his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However to the man who does not work, but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him." (Rom. 4:2-8). "Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.." (Gal. 3:16). "He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit." (Titus 3:5).

The scriptures have spoken, and man MUST listen. Salvation is not by works. Of course I realize some may still insist on works for salvation, and will with the sincerest and earnest appeals to holy living, intrude on God's perfect salvation with their imperfect works. Since the scripture says what it says, they will attack the words used of salvation,

stretching, twisting and adding to their clearest and most lucid meanings. Two attacks will be noted here, but there are more I'm sure:

A. The word saved or salvation. Many will read the scripture "*believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved*" and will begin the assault. To them, this seems unreasonable and far too easy. When they read the scripture, to them it says "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you may have chance to eventually get saved." Saved, in their minds does not mean eternal salvation but just a step in the right direction. It is just the opportunity to begin walking with God, and if you are good, God might save you in the end. To them, God is just placing the saved one in a position where their works determine their ultimate acceptance or rejection by God. And of course, sin can separate them too, and as to what degree of sin, some differ. If you ask them if they are they saved, they will reply with "I attend church and try to do good and oh yes, I believe in Jesus Christ." This first attack is on their understanding of salvation and the word "saved."

We need an accurate understanding of the word "save" as used in the bible. The Greek word is SODZO and means to save, or to deliver. Two primary meanings are found the scriptures:

1. To save as in Physical Deliverance. Matt. 24:13 "*but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.*" Many think this implies eternal salvation and say that works are necessary for salvation. Physical deliverance is in view here. Jesus gives many commands concerning this time of trouble. If you are on the roof or in the field go immediately, to flee into the mountains, beware of false Christs, etc. Verse 13 refers to Jesus Christ actually coming to deliver these believers physically, see verse 27 and 30, 31 "*At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.*" The "elect" are those who are physically delivered by Jesus at His Second Coming. Verse 13 is not a reference to eternal salvation, for they are already saved. There are many other scriptures in the bible where SODZO refers to physical deliverance and the context must be studied carefully to determine how it is used. Please note the following scriptures in this regard: Gen 12:12; 50:20; Exo. 1:22; Judges 6:14; 2Kings 19:34; Mark 13:20; 15:30; James 2:14.

2. To save as in Eternal Salvation. The clearest example of eternal salvation is the Apostle Paul's usage in Eph 2:8 "*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.*" No doubt that Paul is referring to eternal salvation. Note some other passages in this regard: John 10:9; Acts 4:12; 16:31; Rom. 10:9; 1Cor. 3:15; 1Tim. 1:15; 2:4.

One point should be made clear, if God pronounces one saved, they cannot be lost. To be saved with the possibility of being lost is not salvation at all! If there is the possibility of being lost, we cannot claim salvation. How can anyone say with assurance that they are saved if they can possibly be lost? Invariably, that type of salvation is always

dependent upon human works. Those who maintain this attitude have violated the scriptures that say salvation is "*not from yourselves*" or "*not of works lest any man should boast*." If our salvation is of ourselves or it is according to our works, certainly we could possibly fail because maybe we will, or will not do or act according to God's will; BUT it is not, it is by GRACE. God pronounces someone saved based on the work of Jesus Christ receiving the full penalty for their sins, and gives salvation in grace, FREE, not based on that person's works or simply put "*not of yourselves*." If after that, God condemns that person for some sin (Christ already paid for) or something he did, or did not do, then God is a liar, and we cannot trust Him keep His word. On the contrary, God is faithful and promises that "*therefore, there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus*." (Rom 8:1). If our salvation is dependent upon us in any way, other than faith or believing (which is non-meritorious), it is NOT salvation by grace, and we deceive ourselves.

B. The Second Attack is on the words "believe" or "faith" found in the scriptures. Since salvation is "by grace" and "*not from yourselves*" and "*not of works*" or "*not by works done in righteousness*" the word faith or to believe cannot carry with it ANY works. Why? Because the scripture says so! There are those who have designed a salvation that includes works. They maintain that works are an essential part of the faith they need for salvation. Paul says "*And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace*." (Rom 11:6). This salvation they have fabricated is not by grace. Since they admittedly include works, they exclude grace. They cannot say that salvation is by grace in one breath, and add works to salvation in another. Works according to the scripture cancels Grace. There is only ONE way of salvation, that is salvation by grace! If the slightest of human works is added to salvation, it violates the scriptures and is not of God (Galatians 1:6-12). For more information on faith see "The Atonement." Faith or believing is the only obligation for salvation on the human side. Faith is looking away from yourself to another. As far as salvation is concerned, man MUST understand that he is hopelessly and helplessly lost, condemned and under the wrath of God. If that is not understood, he will not know what he is being saved from. The Gospel is God's solution to man's problems. There is nothing man can do to save himself, and God does not require what man does not have. Man has only one thing God can use in his salvation, that being faith.

Faith requires that man *look away* from himself, his solutions, his works, his trying and his human effort for his salvation. Faith requires that he abandons all such efforts and believes, trust, depend and rely on the Lord Jesus Christ to save him. Until a person relinquishes his dependence on himself and what he can do, and depends entirely on Christ for salvation, that person is NOT saved. The life of the saved is spoken of as rest. For those souls who have been working hard to be saved, Jesus says "*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light*." (Mat 11:28-30). For salvation we must depend or trust in Jesus Christ, that is our only hope.

Salvation from God's Perspective

We need an accurate understanding of salvation and that must come from the bible. In Romans 8:29, 30 "*For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.*" This scripture tells us that it is God who undertakes the great task of the salvation of man. From eternity past, before you existed, God knew you would be saved and foreknew and predestined you. Before salvation God called you. At salvation God justified you, and it is God who glorifies you in the future. This is the process God takes in the salvation of man. Will God fail in this process? Can we really trust God to do what He promised with regard to this process of salvation? "*Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*" (Phil. 1:6). Who began this work and who carries it to completion? God! Do you have this confidence that God will do what He said? If not, why not? Who is it that is urging you to be distrustful of God? From the Old Testament "*The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your love, O LORD endures forever...*" (Psalm 138:8). We can be confident, but not in ourselves and our works, but in God and His word and His works in our behalf "*because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.*" (2Tim 1:12). What is it that Paul entrusted? The salvation of his soul to Jesus Christ. What was Paul so convinced of? That the Savior Jesus Christ (Vs 10) is able (omnipotent) to guard Paul's salvation until Jesus returns and he receives his resurrection body. Paul was convinced that it was God's power that kept him saved and not his works of self-determination.

After Salvation, the Christian way of life is still not by human effort, but dependence or trust in God's provisions for us. "*I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God (not man's power) for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: the righteous will live by faith.*" (Rom 1:16, 17; Hab 2:4). After salvation, we must believe or depend on the written word of God, its promises and provisions to live our lives. We are exhorted to "*live by faith and not by sight.*" (2Cor 5:7). We live by faith, but faith in what? The Word of God. We order our lives by what the word says, not what we see or reason. Therefore, we rest on the promises and provisions of God. How can we know that someone has entered into this rest? "*For anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work...*" (Heb 4:10). How exactly does one enter? "*Now we who have believed enter that rest...*" (Heb 4:3). Faith then is dependence on God, not ourselves. Faith does not carry with it any works and it is a non-meritorious perceptive ability. All the merit is contained in the object of faith, NEVER the subject. Faith does not violate any of the words used in salvation i.e. grace, free gift, gift of God.

Faith and Works

Many will cite the book of James to support the view that faith includes works for salvation. Well, did James' statement "*faith without works is dead*" contradict Paul? Absolutely not! Paul clearly teaches that salvation is not by works and even separates

faith from works in the following passages: Rom 3:28-30; 4:1-8; Eph 2:8, 9; 2Tim 1:9; Titus 3:5. Paul clearly says that saving faith does NOT include works. Paul's subject is definitely salvation by grace. On the other hand James' subject is not one of salvation, but how Christians should live. After examining the book of James closely, I do not find James instructing anyone on HOW to be saved, or HOW to become a Christian with the exception of James 1:18. Those who have designed a salvation by the works system, do not care about the context, they just cling to the words "faith without works is dead." How can we be sure of James' subject? By examining the context!

We should begin with James 2:14--26: "*What good is it, my brothers* (here is the first evidence of who his audience is meant to be. The unsaved are never spoken of in terms of brother or sister), *if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds, can such faith save him?* (First, James is asking a question that he will answer in the next verse. Second, faith must always have a working object. In salvation the object of faith is Jesus Christ. After salvation, the object shifts from the person of Jesus Christ to the thinking of Christ, i.e. Bible doctrine or the word of God. The subject here is NOT saving faith in Jesus Christ, but it is living faith in His Word. How can we be sure of this? Let us allow James to illustrate for us), *Suppose a brother or sister* (terms used ONLY for believers, those already saved by grace) *is without clothes and daily food. If one of you* (someone who claims to have faith) *says to him, Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed, but does nothing about his physical needs what good is it?* (No good for that starving and naked brother or sister in Christ). *In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action* (works) *is dead.*" (If a believer claims to have faith, he is claiming that God's word is in him, that he depends on the Word. The bible says, "*the word of God is living and active*" [Heb 4:12] it is not dead. If a believer has the Word in him, it will motivate him to do good works in the power of the Spirit. The Word of God inside a believer will ensure that "*the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*" [2Tim 3:17]. But this man only claims or alleges to have faith. The greatest command to believers is to love one another, see also Gal 5:6).

Verse 18: "*But someone will say, You have faith; I have deeds. Show me your faith* (faith is synonymous with doctrine here) *without deeds* (Just someone who has a lot of mouth), *and I will show you my faith* (show that I have doctrine) *by what I do.* (Action speaks louder than words, James is very practical). *You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-and shudder.* (Again the subject is not salvation, the demons are not saved, and Christ did not die for their sins. They believe that there is one God, but they don't do His will therefore they shudder because they know their judgment. James uses a striking analogy. The demons believe or know there is one God and refuse to do His will, therefore their belief is useless or unproductive. The believer in Christ, claims to be mature "full of faith" as Stephen was in Acts, but doesn't do anything for his fellow believer who is starving and naked, his profession is useless, unproductive and dead. If you only listen to the word and do not really believe it, you "deceive yourself" as James puts it in chapter 1:22).

You foolish man (same man as in Vs 14), *do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?* (Remember the subject is not salvation, but can we be sure? Yes, James will

give us more evidence.) *Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness, and he was called God's friend.* " (James gives us the example of Abraham, but NOT when he was saved, but when he offered Isaac. Abraham was saved or justified long before Isaac was born! Abraham was saved before he left Ur of the Chaldeans. James gives an example of Abraham, but not at his justification at salvation, but when he heard, and believed and did what the Lord told him to do. Paul also recalls and uses the example of Abraham the father of faith, "What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather discovered in this matter? (The matter of justification by faith apart from works, see context.) *If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about (see Eph 2:9) but not before God. What does the scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.*" [Rom 4:1-3]. Paul uses him in a different way, his subject is salvation.)

Verse 24: *"You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead."* (Jas 2:14-26). James uses yet another example to show believing in the word produces action, the subject is not the salvation of Rahab, but what she was motivated to do because of the word that was in her.

We need to have assurance in God. Some say they believe in eternal security, but it is based on their works, commitment, or dedication to God. If they did not maintain these things they would not think they remained in salvation. This is false confidence. We can have true confidence when it is based on God and His word. *"We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us."* (1John 5:9-14). According to these verses, God does not want us to be ignorant. We should have full assurance of our salvation. Such positive affirmations, if we believe them, will only develop confidence, not in ourselves, but in God and His infallible Word.

Assurance

We see the many positive statements, but to truly be confident, God also gives us the negative statements. We need to ask the "what if...?" questions to satisfy those who have doubts. Usually these questions are based on what seems to be right from the standpoint of human thinking. Thanks to God we don't have to rely on speculation, but on the unalterable word of God. Question, "can a person who believes in Christ ever perish for

any reason?" Answer "*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*" (John 3:16). Also another familiar text "*I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one.*" (John 10:28-30). Jesus said they will not perish and again He said they shall never perish. Question "if a person believes in Christ can he be condemned or judged for any reason?" Answer "*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*" (Rom 8:1). "*Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already (why?) because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.*" (John 3:18). "*I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.*" (John 5:24). This condemnation or danger of judgment is removed forever from the child of God. These texts are given to us to let us know that we stand on solid ground. The solid rock Jesus Christ is our foundation, "*for no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.*" (1Cor. 3:11). The foundation is not our determination to stay saved or our works or human power, which will not suffice! We need divine power to keep us saved, "*and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.*" (1Pet. 1:4, 5).

We must settle this fact; these scriptures cannot be twisted to arrive at another meaning. There is a sense where the child of God can be judged. The judgment, however, is NEVER to determine if the child of God will be lost or saved eternally. In 1Cor 11:29-32 "*For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.*" Here we have it, we are not to show up at the communion table out of fellowship (with un-confessed sin in our life). We are to examine ourselves. Judging self is confessing our sins (see 1John 1:9). If we do judge ourselves then God will not judge us. If we do not judge ourselves (name, acknowledge, admit our sin to God) we will be judged by God. What is judgment by God? It is being disciplined, chastised. Notice we are NOT condemned with the world! There are also degrees of discipline *for many are weak*, first stage of discipline, *and sick*, this is intensified discipline; *a number have fallen asleep*, this is dying discipline or what is termed the "*sin unto death.*" In addition see the related texts on discipline in Hebrews 12:5--13.

Judgment for Believers

The believer's works will be judged. "*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body whether good or bad (worthless).*" (2Cor 5:10). Sin is not the issue at the judgment seat of Christ, why? Because our sins were already judged in Christ (see The Atonement). Furthermore, we have Paul's testimony in the same chapter just verses later "*that God*

was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them." (2Cor 5:19) and also *"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God"* (5:21). Our Lord Jesus Christ is our substitute, He took our place. The sins of the entire human race were judged already, and *"it is finished."* However, our works were not judged at the cross. Everything that the sin nature produces must be judged or shown up by God to be absolutely worthless. The sin nature doesn't just produce sins, but human good also. Isaiah says *"all our righteous acts are like filthy rags..."* (Isa 64:6). God's perfect righteousness and justice reject human good and must judge it, just as it did for sin. God does not recognize anything that comes from the sin nature as good. The unregenerate cannot perform divine good (Rom 3:10-12; 8:8).

God has equipped the believer to be able to perform good works for he is *"created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."* (Eph 2:10). Good works must be motivated by bible doctrine, which is the thinking of Christ, and performed in the power of the Holy Spirit. That must be the source of our works if they would be acceptable to God. If we are not controlled by the Spirit, or walking in the Spirit, or filled with the Spirit, the source of our works is the flesh or the sinful nature. The unbeliever's works will be judged at the last or Great White Throne Judgment, (see Revelation 20:11-15). Note, their sins are already judged in Christ and are not mentioned. Their works are judged and they are thrown into the lake of fire. The believer's works are judged at the Judgment seat of Christ. If the source of our works are from the sin nature, they are burned (rejected), but not the believer.

At the judgment seat of Christ we will receive rewards for service. Even if our works are not what God desires, or if He rejects our works, they will not affect our salvation, why? Because salvation is *"not of works."* That means the basis of salvation is not dependent on works. Just as doing works cannot save you, you cannot be lost if you lack them or they are bad or worthless. In 1Corinthians 3:10--15, we found out already that the foundation is Jesus Christ, so we pick up at verse 12 *"If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones (desirable, fire resistant, good works, done in the power of the Spirit), wood, hay, straw (undesirable building material, combustible, bad or worthless works, from the source of the sin nature), his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire (judgment), and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward (not salvation, for he is already saved). If it is burned up (works rejected by God); he will suffer loss (not loss of salvation, but loss of his reward); he himself will be saved (remember salvation is a gift, not a reward) , but only as one escaping through the flames"* (he will not go into eternity with any misconceptions, he will be stripped of everything but the foundation Christ Jesus). The first person believed in Christ and was saved. He lived his life according to God's will, purpose and plan and received his reward for service. The second person believed in Christ and was saved. He did not live according to God's will, purpose and plan, but his own will, purpose and plan. He works are characterized as *wood, hay and straw*. He suffered a loss, because his reward is forfeited. His salvation is not affected.

The Sealing of God

There is yet more evidence of the security of the one who has trusted the salvation of his soul to Jesus Christ. The seal of God is like God's signature guarantee of salvation. It is as if God places His stamp of approval on every child of God. Let us examine carefully the next verses to determine if, when, how, and for how long this happens for the child of God. Let us turn to Ephesians 1:13, 14 "*And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession to the praise of his glory.*" Note first that the Holy Spirit is the seal. Second, upon believing we are sealed with the Spirit. Third, we are sealed UNTIL the redemption of those who belong to God. This redemption refers to the time when Jesus Christ comes and at that time we receive our resurrection bodies (see Rom. 8:23: 1John 3:2). Fourth, this sealing is a guarantee, not from man but from God! The only human condition given is hearing the gospel and believing, no works. God, to whom we belong, personally guarantees our salvation. No reference is found anywhere in scripture of anyone being unsealed. The sealing is a work of God that is permanent.

In Eph. 4:30 "*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*" Here, even though the Holy Spirit is grieved, which is an obvious reference to sin in the believer's life, we are reminded that the Spirit has already sealed us for that day, when we will be free from the body of sin and death. (see Rom 7:24). In 2Cor 1:21, 22 "*Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. he anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.*"

Who is it that makes us stand firm? God! Who do we belong to, ourselves? No, we belong to God, He owns us.

Free will

Many say that our free will is unlimited. They reason that we are free moral agents, able to choose our destiny at any time. They then contend that a believer can will himself out of salvation. These assumptions come from a lack of understanding of what the bible says about free will. Man does have free will according to the bible, he has the power to choose, even his destiny (John 3:36). But we must understand that man's free will is limited. For instance, you cannot choose to be born, you cannot choose to be in another family. You may not like your father, but you cannot choose another father. When we are born into this world we are born condemned, for "*just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men*" (Rom 5:18). You did not choose this condemnation. You did not choose to be born spiritually dead (Eph 2:1, 2). We need to understand that our free will is not sovereign. At best we can say that our free will is limited. We just do not have the power to make certain decisions. We are born with an inherited sinful nature. That sinful nature rules over us as a king reigns over his subjects (Rom 5:21). You don't have a choice; you naturally make decisions according to your nature. In John 8:31-35, the Jews of Jesus' day objected to Jesus saying they would be set free. They said, "*we have never been slaves of anyone.*" Yet they were slaves.

After we believe in Christ and are saved, we are set free from the bondage of the sin nature, only to be married to another--Jesus Christ. "*So, my brothers, you also died to the*

law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead." (Rom 7:4). We belong to Christ or "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." (1Cor 6:19, 20). Note the words used of believers, they are bought, or you are not your own. There are numerous scriptures that speak of God's possession of believers, those redeemed from the slave market, by the precious blood of Christ. We are "all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." (Gal 4:1). Once a son, always a son. Our Lord says "Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever." (John 8:35). We cannot will ourselves out of the family; we do not possess that power, for we belong to God!

Much More

Now if the salvation of man was so expensive for God, so much that the Son had to come down from heaven and offer Himself as a sacrifice to God that man might be reconciled, then God will certainly keep his children, which is much easier to do reasons Paul. *"Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled shall we be saved through his life!" (Rom 5:9, 10). Two emphatic verses bring out the fact that if God did the most for us when we were enemies, certainly, much more, with stronger reason, after being reconciled we will be delivered from God's wrath. This is not my reasoning but that of the Apostle Paul's under the inspiration of God.*

In yet another passage Paul says *"The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more (There can NEVER be so much sin that grace will fail!), so that, just as sin reigned in death (We are born into this spiritual death, no exceptions, and the sin nature rules over us as king, we don't have a choice, we cannot do anything about it in this state.), so also (in the same ways sin reigns in death over all the unsaved.) grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom 5:20:21). Now when you are in Christ, sin and death are not on the throne as king ruling over you. You are not on the throne as king or captain of your ship. Grace is on the throne and it is reigning or ruling through righteousness and you have eternal life. Since grace is ruling, it can never be defeated by sin as we have seen from vs. 20.*

In Conclusion

I cannot address every scripture for or against this great subject. The scriptures offered here do speak for themselves. If one were to still take a position that they feel a believer could be in jeopardy or danger of condemnation for any reason, they do so NOT based on the unalterable, infallible word of God. God will not make anyone trust Him, we must be willing to take Him at His word, and trust Him to be true. All God can do is to give us assurance after assurance, and it is up to us to look away from ourselves, what we feel or think, to God and cling to what His word says. The alternative to eternal security is insecurity. In this day of human safety consciousness, man is constantly looking for guarantees. In the Word, God has given guarantees, encouragement and assurance to

even the weakest of saints. Many will read this and say "what about this or that scripture?" Before you discount every word written because questions linger in your mind, simply ask the questions. This paper was not written to answer every question or objection, but as a basis for understanding this subject. With all the scriptures considered we must never lose sight of the fact that God loves all those who belong to Him with an infinite love. Not only has God equipped each of His children with everything needed to have a relationship with Him throughout eternity, He loves us with a love that can never be severed! *"What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble of hardship or persecution of famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Rom 8:31--39). Trust God, for He is worthy of your trust.

"To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy--to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." (Jude 24, 25).

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