

“These things have I written unto you...that ye may know that ye have eternal life...” (1 John 5:13)

Light from the Word

The Assurance of True Faith



Writings based on God's Word

The danger of labeling a complex subject is that we run the risk of oversimplifying to the point of distortion. Such may be the case with “once saved, always saved,” the common name for the false doctrine of unconditional eternal security. Make no mistake: it is a false doctrine; the Word clearly shows that. However, in rejecting “once saved, always saved,” we must be careful not to deny the power of God in the lives of His children. Let’s review what we know from the Word about our salvation, the promise of eternal life, and the need to remain faithful.

First, we must recognize that God is sovereign and free to save whomever He wills (Rom. 9:15). When Adam sinned, God would have been justified in closing the book on His relationship with man. *“But God, who is rich in mercy...even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ... that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace...for by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God”* (Eph. 2:4-8). God chooses to save those who come in humble faith in Christ (Eph. 1:15-16; 1 Tim 2:4), and thus His people are repeatedly called the “chosen” and the “elect” (Col. 3:12).

Though God’s gift of salvation is unearned, it is not unconditional. The answer to the Philippian jailer’s question, “What must I do to be saved?” was a condition: *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”* (Acts 16:31). God’s Word has many conditional statements, including 2 Chron. 7:14: *“If my people...shall turn from their wicked ways,”* and Romans 10:9: *“If thou shalt confess...and believe that God hath raised [Jesus] from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”* Thus, we know that God requires genuine faith on the part of those who are to inherit eternal life. Further basic responses are embodied in the *“fruits of repentance,”* which result from true faith (Mat. 3:8): confession of sin, sorrow for and turning away from sin, and submission of one’s will to God’s by obedience to His Word. They are modeled in David’s Psalm 51 prayer and proclaimed by God

as the type of heart He seeks: *“...him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my word”* (Is. 66:2). God promises to save those who choose to respond in faith to His free gift (John 1:12).

God desires that all men come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9) and that those whom He saves possess their vessel in sanctification and honor, *“for God hath called us unto holiness”* (1 Thes. 4:3-4, 7). We are sanctified as a result of God in His mercy justifying us through Christ. It is His work, available by grace through faith (Heb. 10:10, 14; 12:14; Phil. 2:12-13). We are to be dead to sin and alive unto Christ, no longer under the dominion of sin (Rom. 6:11, 14).

Yet, as Christians, we are subject to temptation and if we yield it is sin. If we deny this, we deceive ourselves (1 John 1:8; 5:17). We are called to walk in faith and in the Spirit, whereby we can overcome temptation (Rom. 6:13; 1 Cor. 10:13). Thankfully, Christ is our *“advocate with the Father”* and *“the propitiation for our sins,”* (1 John 2:1-2). We trust His ongoing sanctifying work in our lives (John 17:17; Eph. 5:25-26) which moves us to humbly repent for any sin we commit and be cleansed through the propitiating sacrifice of Jesus Christ, by which he is qualified to be our advocate (1 John 1: 7-9; Heb. 7:24-25; 9:14, 22; 10:19). Thus, we need not live in anxious fear of our salvation being snatched away. God promises to never leave or forsake us (Heb. 13:5), and He wants us to rest in the confidence of the gift of eternal life. The same Paul who warned of *“every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us”* (Heb. 12:1), expressed confidence that *“he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”* (Phil. 1:6). We who are in Christ Jesus rest in the promises that no external forces can separate us from Him (Rom. 8:38-39).

We may, however, choose to walk away (Luke 8:13, Heb. 6:6). Man’s free will does not end at the foot of the cross. Christ said, *“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me”* (Luke 9:23).

Indeed, the Word teaches that some will walk away. Paul writes, *“The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, and having their conscience seared with a hot iron”* (1 Tim. 4:1). Christ warned the church at Ephesus: *“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen...or I will come unto thee quickly and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent”* (Rev. 2:5). He later exhorts them to *“be faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life”* (Rev. 2:10), which echoes his earlier words: *“He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved”* (Mat. 24:13). Clearly, lifelong perseverance is another condition of God’s free gift of eternal life.

These Scriptures refute any notion that man is free to do what he pleases upon finding salvation in Christ. They also counter the idea that a man who “falls away” was never really saved in the first place. We must remain diligent in our walk with God life-long. In Hebrews we read this warning: *“Exhort one another...lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, for we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end”* (Heb. 3:13-14). 2 Peter 2:20-22 removes any remaining doubt: *“If, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb: the dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.”*

What a joy to undergird our peace by simply trusting in the whole counsel of God. *“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith...”* (Heb. 10:22); *“Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast...”* (Heb.6:19).

An editorial committee of elders prepares articles for this section of Silver Lining to address some special needs of our times.

Suggestions for subjects are welcome and can be sent to:

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