

**THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS (ETERNAL SECURITY)** - This lesson follows naturally from the study of *sanctification*. The understanding you have of the "*perseverance of the saints*" will be determined, in large measure, by the understanding you have of the doctrine of sanctification. If the work of sanctification is *God's alone*, and man is uninvolved with no genuine options for *refusal* or *rejection*, then obviously, redeemed man can never be lost. If, on the other hand, God sovereignly decreed that the creature has, with the Spirit's enablement, *conditions to fulfill*, then God's intent for man's final redemption can be frustrated. We all know that salvation (in all its phases) is *free*. But that is not the same as saying it is *unconditional*.

- 1) **BIBLICAL SALVATION IS OF GOD** - This is important to note right at the beginning. We are not questioning *if* salvation is of God. We are examining *how* God has sovereignly chosen to work His plan. Clearly, God *wills* salvation and *sustains* it. The whole Trinity is involved to make our salvation secure:
  - a) **The FATHER** - Salvation finds its source in *God's will and purpose* - John 6:39 - "And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day." Also Philippians 1:6 - "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." What wonderful words! Salvation is accomplished through God's mighty *power* - Jude 24 - "Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy...." Also, the Bible teaches that salvation is maintained through God's *faithfulness* - 1 Corinthians 1:8-9 - "....who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. [9] God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."
  - b) **The SON** - Jesus takes great care to *keep and protect* those who are His John 10:27-28 - "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. [28] I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand." Jesus also makes *intercession* for us in ongoing prayer support - Hebrews 7:24-25 - "....but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. [25] Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them."
  - c) **The SPIRIT** - Jesus promised the Holy Spirit's *abiding* presence to guide and strengthen - John 14:16 - "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever...." And the Apostle Paul teaches that believers have been "*sealed*" with the guarantee of their future inheritance in Christ - Ephesians 1:13-14 - "In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, [14] who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory."

These truths are to help us appreciate *how much we have going for us as God's children*. He has invested much to insure our joy and confidence in His ultimate glorifying of our lives. There is *nothing questionable or tenuous about God's intention and plan for His children*. I do not believe in "*eternal insecurity*."

- 2) **BIBLICAL STATEMENTS REGARDING HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY** - Perhaps the most important general principle emerges from 1 Peter 1:3-5 - "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, [4] to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, [5] who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

Notice particularly the phrase "*....who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*"(5). This in no way diminishes God's power, but calls attention to the *channel* through which His power functions. God's power doesn't manifest itself *randomly, automatically, nor unconditionally*. Faith is the channel through which God's preserving power is carried forward in our lives. *God's power is activated by our faith and trust*.

"God's intention is always affirmative, to 'lose nothing,' and to 'bring to completion.' His power to 'keep from falling' is unlimited. His faithfulness to 'strengthen to the end' never ceases. But it all operates *through the faith of the one who believes*." - Rodman Williams in "*Renewal Theology*", volume 2. So the question we must now ask is a bit different. *How* does faith function in the believer?

- a) **By ABIDING** - 1 John 2:24-25 - "Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. [25] And this is the promise that he made to us— eternal life."

See also Hebrews 2:1 and 3 - "Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it....[3].... how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard...." And again, John 15:6 - "If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned." These verses make clear that our abiding is neither *coerced* nor *unconditional*.

Most importantly of all, these verses do *not* merely teach our *involvement* or *participation* in abiding. They say much more than that. They stress involvement with *responsibility*. They hinge consequences on our actions. No *conclusion* is assumed as to which response we will make.

- b) **By CONTINUING - Colossians 1:21-23** - “And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, [22] he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, [23] if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.”

See also **Romans 11:11 and 22** - “So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous....[22].... Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off.” We see that salvation is not only *initiated* by faith in Christ, but is ongoingly *sustained* in exactly the same way.

- c) **By ENDURING - Hebrews 10:35-39** - “Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. [36] For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. [37] For, ‘Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; [38] but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.’ [39] But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.”
- d) **By "MAKING SURE" OUR FAITH - 2 Peter 1:10** - “Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.” Once again, notice that our calling and election are not treated as being *automatic*. They *are* abundantly supplied graciously in Christ. Our calling is to make them *sure*.
- e) **By FOLLOWING - John 10:27-28** - “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. [28] I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.”

- 3) **SOME CONCLUSIONS TO BE HELD WITH HUMILITY** - One must be faithful to both the sets of Scriptures we have looked at above (in points 1 and 2):

- a) **I believe emphatically that all who trust in Jesus Christ are eternally secure** - God is not indifferent about our salvation and eternal state. His will is that none who are in Christ shall be lost.
- b) **God's saving and keeping grace are free but not unconditional or irresistible** - They are bestowed in grace, apart from merit or work, to all who believe the gospel. God never fails to keep and preserve those in Christ. There is a great foundation for assurance and security.
- c) **I believe forsaking faith in Christ can lead to apostasy** - While I do not believe this is *easily* done, nor that God gives up on the weak and erring, there is warning in the Scriptures which I find difficult to explain away - **Hebrews 3:12** - “Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.” And **1 Timothy 4:1** - “Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons....”

It is sometimes argued that those who fall away were never true believers in the first place. A text usually cited to prove this is **1 John 2:19** - “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.” John's words deal with *hypocrites - false teachers and phoney leaders*. *Hypocrisy* and *apostasy* are two very different sins.