

Testamentum Imperium
An International Theological Journal

www.PreciousHeart.net/ti

Volume 1 – 2005-2007

14 – The Security of the Believer

Dr. Ronald L. Rushing, Vice President for Academic Affairs,
Southeastern Bible College, Birmingham, AL, USA¹

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Introduction: The Issue

One of the most enduring and emotionally debated issues among Christians regards the issue of the security of the believer (also called perseverance of the saints). Tempers seem to rise to a fevered pitch the moment one asks “Can a believer lose their salvation?”

¹ Southeastern Bible College (www.sebc.edu), 2545 Valleydale Road, Birmingham, AL 35244.

I was raised in a church setting that taught the security of the believer. However, I did not have assurance of that security until much later in my life. I struggled with issues in my life which led me to doubt whether I would go to heaven if I died. Some of this was related to the fact that every Sunday I heard a sermon that talked about how God would send sinners to hell. I knew I was a sinner. Now please understand that I believed that Jesus died for my sin and rose again. I believed the Bible was God's Word and read it everyday. From the world's standard, I lived a morally upright life. I just wasn't sure salvation really stuck to me. I knew I couldn't go long without committing some sort of sin. It wasn't until I was in my 20's that I finally settled the issue. It boiled down to a decision of faith. Did I believe that God means what He says in His word about His work of salvation? Up until that point, questions and doubts plagued my mind. In the end, I memorized John 5:24 and 1 John 5:11-13 as verses that helped me claim the security that is mine in the Lord. From that time on, I have not struggle with security. I still sin. However, I know that nothing can separate me from the love of God (Rom. 8). Nothing can tear me out of God's hand. Nothing can keep me out of heaven.

One item should be noted. Often assurance of salvation and perseverance of the saint are combined under the concept of security. While these concepts do intertwine in the discussion of security, distinctions exist between the two. Assurance relates to the ability of an individual to know whether or not they are genuinely saved. In other words, can one know with certainty that they are saved? Perseverance relates to the degree to which salvation is firmly fixed before God. In other words, how secure is the salvation of a believer?

This paper attempts to give a brief overview of the issues involved and presents a reasoned defense for the doctrine of the security of the believer as I explain my journey from fear to faith concerning the doctrine of the security of the believer. In essence, what I have tried to do is give the basic study arguments that I went through as I worked my way through the issue. These are not necessarily covered in the order that I went through them. However, they hit the highlights that settle the issue of faith for me.

A. Various Approaches to Security of the Believer

By way of overview, we should recognize that there are several different approaches to the debate that have been taken over the centuries. The following views are representative of variations within the discussion. They are presented in very broad strokes. The reader should understand this and realize that differences exist even within each view.

1. Roman Catholicism

Roman Catholicism sees salvation more as a goal than an accomplished task. Baptism is viewed as removing original sin and personal sin to date. However, after baptism one has to contend with mortal and venial sins which necessitate confession.

2. Arminianism or Free Will

A number of variations exist within the realm of Arminianism. Some distinguish between the elect and the regenerate. In essence those who distinguish between the elect and regenerate teach that the regenerate can be lost, but not the elect. In this view, regeneration does not guarantee salvation while election does. A regenerate person could still lose their salvation but only if they were not elect. This view is taught in some Lutheran circles.

Others within the Free Will camp teach that a person can lose their salvation by any willful sin. Under Wesleyan teaching, two kinds of sins exist: Sins of ignorance (or inadvertent sins) which result in the loss of *fellowship* with God; and Willful sins (or deliberate sins) which result in the loss of *relationship* with God.

Additionally, apostasy would be seen as a cause for the loss of salvation. Apostasy is a form of willful sin that deliberately and intentionally rejects Jesus Christ.

3. Calvinism or Reformed

The basic concept within this camp is that “all who are truly born again will be kept by God’s power and will persevere as Christians until the end of their lives, and that only those who persevere until the end have been truly born again.”² Chapter XVII, sections I-III, of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* is as follows:

² Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 788.

I. They, whom God has accepted in His Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.

II. This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them, and the nature of the covenant of grace: from all which arises also the certainty and infallibility thereof.

III. Nevertheless, they may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins; and, for a time, continue therein: whereby they incur God's displeasure, and grieve His Holy Spirit, come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts, have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded; hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves.³

In Baptist circles, this concept is sometimes stated as “once saved, always saved.”

This does differ somewhat from the reformed approach to “perseverance.” Perseverance for the reformed theologian means that those who believe will continue in faith until their death. The nuance is subtle but in essence perseverance states that a true believer would never abandon the faith. This could be interpreted to mean that a true believer will not wander from the faith in terms of living in a lifestyle of sin. The “once saved” view states that once faith has genuinely occurred, the person's salvation is secure for all eternity regardless of the circumstances or sins in the life of the individual from the point salvation onward.

Both views would agree that people may *process* (i.e., claiming or saying one has salvation) without having experienced salvation (i.e., had genuine faith). Profession is sometimes described as mere head knowledge, apart from faith. Those who hold to perseverance would say that genuine faith would be manifest for the remainder of one's life and in the end their life will continue to display the

³ See www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs for one internet copy.

essentials of truth both in lifestyle and practice (i.e., While it is possible that this a bit of an overstatement, it is done in order to show the differences in nuance between the views).

B. Arguments *For* Eternal Security

1. Argument from Logic for Eternal Security

I tend to think in terms of logic. Maybe college courses helped me to process things in this order. One of the first issues I had to settle was whether or not it was logical to lose one's salvation. A verse that helped me deal with the logic is John 6:38-40. Since my 20's I have gained greater insight into these verse through the study of Greek. Here are a few observations followed by my logical conclusions.

KJV John 6:38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. 39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. 40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Jesus states that those who believe in Him will have eternal life. The word "believe" is in the present tense in Greek. As a general observation, those who take security from the perseverance side would say that this means "those who CONTINUE in belief until death." Those from the "once saved" side would say that anyone who demonstrates faith at any moment has eternal life. An honest evaluation of the present tense does allow for both of these views. The use of the present tense does not automatically rule out either of the two views. It is viable to see the present tense used in either fashion in this context.

Additionally, the verb is a third person singular. The singular verb emphasizes the individual nature of salvation. Salvation is not a group event but an individual decision and is possessed by the one who expresses faith.

One specific point needs to be made for the sake of discussion. The word eternal is John 6:40 is "αἰώνιον adj acc fem sing [Fri] αἰώνιος *eternal, everlasting*; (1) of God *without beginning or end, eternal* (RO 16.26); (2) *without beginning* (RO 16.25); (3) *without*

end, everlasting (2C 5.1); (4) neut. sg. αιωνιον as adv. *for all time, forever* (PM 15).⁴ It is interesting to note that the state of life for the believer is eternal. The rudimentary definition of eternal life is “endless existence.” The emphasis is placed on “endless” because that is the meaning of the adjective “eternal.” It is a correct emphasis. However, care should be taken with this definition. In reality, Scripture makes it clear that all people live forever. The only question is the quality of eternal life that they have—eternal life separated from God or eternal life in the presence of God. For the believer, eternal life is endless existence in the presence of God. It is a quality of eternal life that is being developed along with continual existence. Most assuredly, the believer will live forever in a quality of life that supersedes anything imaginable.

All of these observations pose a logical consideration. One has only to ask the question, “If you have eternal life, can you lose it?” Logically, it is an oxymoron to say that a person has eternal life but can lose it. If it is everlasting by nature, then it can not be lost! Logically, you can’t lose that which is eternal or it never was eternal to begin with. This is a simplistic argument but it helped me to understand that if I had eternal life then it was eternal life.

2. Arguments from Biblical Passages for the Security of the Believer

Furthermore, my study of the issue led me to many more passages that I believe teach the doctrine of the security of the believer. The basis for the security of the believer is found in the clear teaching of the Word of God. Space does not allow an examination of all passages that pertain to the subject. However, several key passages follow that develop a Biblical perspective of this concept.

1. KJV John 10:27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand.

In verse 27, Jesus describes the nature of the true believer. My sheep refers to those who believe in Jesus. He “possesses” the sheep. They belong to Him.

⁴ Bible Works for Windows.

The believer does not determine who owns himself/herself just as the sheep do not determine who owns him/her or even is capable of selling themselves. Instead, they are owned or possessed by Jesus (i.e., possession is determined by Jesus). Additionally, the sheep (believer) “hears My voice” (sensitivity to Jesus because they recognize their possessor); is known by Jesus (fellowship is the active response of Jesus to all those who believe); and “they follow Me” (obedience is the outworking of a believer’s faith). As a result, Jesus gives (Present Indicative Active Verb) the individual eternal life. As a result, they shall never perish (assurance that judgment and destruction are not part of the relationship one has with Jesus). Furthermore, no one can snatch them from the hand of God (the believer is untouchable/unsnatchable in the hand of God).

The Free Will view tends to interpret John 10:28 as meaning “no one *beside yourself* can snatch you from the hand of God.” They leave it open for the individual to remove themselves from God’s hand. However, the construct in Greek makes it clear that no person is able to remove a believer from God’s hand. To say that the individual can remove himself/herself is to say that “anyone doesn’t mean anyone.” Instead this view adds an exclusion from the text that is not present in the text. The Free Will view supports their interpretation by saying it is “understood” or “implied” from the text that it is discussing external snatching not internal decisions to reject Christ. However, the Greek construct is very precise and emphasizes the inclusive nature of the word “anyone.” The emphasis is that NO PERSON is able to remove a believer from God’s hand.

See also John 3:36; 5:24; 6:4-7; 1 John 5:11-13

John 5:24 uses the perfect tense to show that the believer “has passed” from death unto life. This means that the action was completed in the past and has continual results into the present. Salvation is a condition that God accomplishes and the results continue onward.

All of these verses showed me that I was incapable of doing anything that would take me out of the Father’s hand. No person or circumstance or sin was bigger than my God. What He saved, He keeps until the end. It is not dependent upon me or what I do. It is totally a work of Him.

2. Ephesians 1:13 (KJV): In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.

Ephesians 4:30 (KJV): And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

These verses must be viewed together because they develop the concept that a believer is sealed. In Eph. 1:13, the Holy Spirit is seen as the seal for the believer.

Regarding what it means to seal a believer, Bible Works for Windows states , “**evsfragi,sqhte** verb ind aor pass 2nd per pl [Fri] **sfragi,zw** 1aor. **evsfra,gisa**(mid. **evsfragisa,mhnÈ** pf. pass. **evsfra,gismaiÈ** 1aor. pass. **evsfragi,sqhn** *seal*; (1) lit. *seal up, secure by putting a seal on* (MT 27.66); fig. as keeping something secret *seal (up), conceal* (RV 10.4); (2) as providing a sign of identification or ownership (*mark with a seal* (RV 7.3); metaphorically of endowment with the Spirit (EP 1.13); (3) fig. from the idea of an official seal on a document; (a) *confirm, attest, certify* (JN 3.33); (b) metaph. as a business t.t. indicating a safely accomplished transaction **sfragi,zein tini to.n karmo.n tou/ton** *seal to someone this fruit, i.e., safely turn over to someone this kind provision* (RO 15.28).” The aorist passive denotes that this is a past completed action that was done to the subject (i.e., the individual is sealed by an external sources and does not seal himself/herself). This means that the work has already been completed (past – from the aorist tense) and that it was done by the Holy Spirit to the believer. In other words, the believer had no part in the sealing. It was a work of God upon the believer. The word translated “seal or guarantee” is a legal term that means “first installment, deposit, down payment, pledge” and represents “a payment which obligates the contracting party to make further payments.” (BAGD, p. 109) When God gave us the Holy Spirit within, He committed Himself to give all the further blessings of eternal life and a great reward in heaven with him. (Grudem, p. 791).

Ephesians 4:30 states that the sealing lasts until the day of redemption/deliverance. Since the Holy Spirit is the seal (Eph. 1:13) and every believer receives the Spirit at the moment of salvation (Rom. 8:9), the logical conclusion is that believers are permanently sealed by the Holy Spirit. The seal remains until the final day of redemption. All who have the Holy Spirit are truly saved and born

again. They have within them God's unchanging promise and guarantee that the inheritance of eternal life will be theirs. The only way to lose the seal would be to lose the Holy Spirit. The Arminian would respond to this by saying a person could still lose the Holy Spirit by willful sin. The Calvinist understands that the Holy Spirit cannot be removed by an act of man because sealing is an act of God. Only God can remove the Spirit. Since Ephesians 1:13 and 4:30 make it clear that the Holy Spirit is a guarantee and down payment of one's salvation until it is complete, it seems strange to guarantee that which cannot be granted as certain. Also it would be strange to have a guarantee that is revocable when Ephesians 4:30 states that its purpose is to insure a person until the day of redemption.

In my mind, I saw the sealing of the Holy Spirit like a brand on a cow. Growing up on a farm I understood what a brand was. If a cow had a brand, it could not be removed. It was permanently branded. Later, tattoos replaced branding in some areas. Sealing left the impression in my mind that salvation was a secure event in the life of the one who places faith in Jesus. It is my guarantee from God that I am saved forever.

3. KJV Romans 8:30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. 31 What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us? 32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? 33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth. 34 Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8 in its virtual entirety addresses the nature of the security of the believer. Here is a summation of some of ways in which it broaches the issue.

In Romans 8:1 believers are said to face “No condemnation.” The believer has already been delivered from the curse of the law. No future judgment remains for the believer. The word “condemnation” in the KJV actually means judgment. The believer has already been judged through the blood of Jesus. For a person to lose their salvation, God would have to overturn His previous judgment whereby He declared the guilty sinner righteous by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

In Romans 8:2 Paul states that believers already have within them the principle of eternal life through the Spirit of God. The aorist tense denotes a past completed action. The third person singular verb indicates it is an individual occurrence not a group event. The believer has been set free.

In Romans 8:9 it states that believers have the Holy Spirit within them. All believers have the Holy Spirit. The absence of the Holy Spirit means the absence of salvation. Coupled with Eph. 1:13 and 4:30, this makes a very strong statement about the Holy Spirit’s part in guaranteeing the salvation of the believer.

In Romans 8:14 it states that believers are the sons of God. It is interesting to note that in Roman law a person who is adopted could never be “un-adopted.” From the moment of adoption, they remain forever a child of the parent by legal declaration. Since Paul was writing to Rome, this would have been their understanding when Paul brings up the issue of adoption of the believer into the family of God as sons. It is a permanent condition and irrevocable from God’s standpoint.

In Romans 8:30 believers are said to have been justified. The verb is an aorist tense, simple action completed in the past. For a person to lose their salvation they would have to be un-justified. In other words, God would have to undo the legal declaration whereby He imputed His righteousness to the believer through their act of faith.

In Romans 8:35-39 it succinctly states that the believer cannot be separated from the immutable love of God. This passage is all encompassing. No one, no where, and under no condition can

separate a person from the love of God. Of course, the Arminian's response is that the passage is addressing the love of God which cannot be removed but that salvation is a different issue. In other words, the believer could lose their salvation but still be loved by God. The context of Romans 8 seems to suggest that more than love is at state because it also discusses justification, condemnation, glorification, sonship, etc.

From a personal perspective, I did not fully comprehend what it meant that God loved me. I believed love was earned by my obedience and God works. Instead, I now realize that love is something that is freely given as an unconditional commitment on the part of One for the well being of another. As a parent I have a much better understanding of God's love for me. I love my children. Nothing can separate my children from my love. They may disobey me. They may desert me. I may have to discipline them. But couched in it all is the fact that I love them regardless of people or circumstances. My relationship with my children is fixed. I am my children's biological father. Even if they were to go to court and legally divorce me as a parent, every DNA test imaginable would say that I am their father. The relationship is fixed for all eternity. Even if disappointment and sorrow were to happen, only fellowship could be broken, not relationship.

4. Other key passages used to support the security of the believer include Romans 11:29; 1 Corinthians 1:8,9; Philippians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 John 5:11-13; and Jude 1

As I studied these and other passages, it appeared to me that the insurmountable evidence from Scripture was that my relationship with God is eternally secure.

3. Arguments from the Character of God for Security of the Believer

Eternal security is integrally related to the nature of God. Those who believe and teach that salvation is entirely a work of God apart from any effort of man see security as dependent upon God's faithfulness. 2 Timothy 2:13 states, "If we believe not, *yet* he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." 1 Thessalonians 5:24 states, "Faithful *is* he that calleth you, who also will do *it*." The work of salvation is dependent entirely upon God. 2 Timothy 1:12 states, "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not

ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” Philippians 1:6 states, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ.”

Salvation is a work of God on the behalf of man. The security of the believer is dependent upon God’s ability to save those who believe. As the omnipotent God, He has the power to keep that which He has separated unto Himself. As the omniscient God, He knew in advance all the sins an individual has/would commit before bestowing the Holy Spirit upon the individual. As the omnipresent God, He is with believers everywhere (i.e., the believer is never out of His sight). As the immutable God, He does not change. He has made up His mind about us and He will not separate from us, even when we are unfaithful (i.e., He remains faithful).

My first images of God came through the sermons I heard every Sunday. I would hear about God’s anger and wrath. I would hear that God is so holy that He could not look upon sin. These statements are completely true and should be taught. However, they only give one side of God. These statements led me to fear God but not to love God. I now know and understand that every believer needs to have a healthy and reverential awe of the holy and righteous Judge. What I failed to realize is that His love is greater than all my sin. It is His love that constrains me from sin. I love Him because He first loved me. For me, security developed as I understood how much He loves me. He loved me enough that He sent His only begotten Son to die on the cross for my sins while I was still yet a sinner. I came to understand more and more the love of God that encompassed me. If He did not spare His own Son while I was a sinner, what will He do now that I am His child?

C. Arguments from Scripture *Against* Eternal Security

Over the years as I came to grips with my understanding of the doctrine of security, I had to face the fact that people would argue from Scripture for the loss of salvation. I personally believe that Scripture is accurate and does not contradict itself. So I had to reconcile in my mind the arguments that people gave from Scripture for the loss of salvation. I began to deal with these and answer from a Biblical perspective. I knew I had to learn the context of the passage

and maintain the premise that the clear should define the unclear. With that in mind, I began to see patterns developing in the arguments for and against security. Below I have listed a summation of the patterns as identified by Dr. Thomas Figart,, Professor Emeritus at Lancaster Bible College. He examined the passages used to support loss of salvation and categorized them for rebuttal in the following manner. He succinctly states the conclusions that I eventually came to realize as truth.

1. Passages that Deal with Christian Profession as Opposed to Genuine Belief

These passages do not specifically address the saved. They address those who “say” they are saved but have not expressed genuine faith in Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 8:13; 1 Cor. 3:17; 1 Cor. 6:9,10; Gal. 5:19-24; Gal. 6:8; 1 Tim. 1:19, 20; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 Peter 2:20-22) {Hebrews 6:4-9 is one of the most debated passages in Scripture. One of the possible interpretations is that it is talking about profession as opposed to genuine belief. Problems do exist with this interpretation. One of the basic rules of hermeneutics is “Let the clear explain the unclear.” In other words, Scripture clearly teaches the security of the believer. When a passage is difficult to interpret and there is a clearly stated passage, the difficult one should be interpreted to agree with the clear].

2. Passages Dealing with the Jewish Nation as Opposed to Believers

These passages are addressing Israel and not the Church. As such they should not be used for the discussion of loss of salvation because they are not dealing with individuals who are Christians but with Israel (Matt. 12:43ff; Heb. 2:3; 3:2; 3:6ff; 3:29-4:2; 6:4-9 (See note above); 10:26-32; 12:14-17).

3. Passages Dealing with the Distinction between a Christian’s Walk and His Position

These passages discuss sanctification as opposed to justification. The issue is personal growth as opposed to expressing faith in Christ for salvation (Phil. 3:12ff.)

4. Passages Dealing with Subjective Assurance Rather than Objective Security

These passages deal with “How do I know I am a believer?” The issue is assurance, not security. (2 Peter 1:10; 1 John 2:3)

5. Passages Dealing with Rewards as Distinguished from Salvation

Rewards are related to one’s sanctification as well as their service to the Lord. Individuals can lose reward without losing salvation. (1 Cor. 9:2; 2 Peter 1:10-12; Rev. 2:10ff; 3:11-12)

6. Passages Dealing with Exhortations, Promises, Warnings which Imply Contingency

- a. Promises Rev. 2:3, 7, 11; 22, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 12:11; 1 John 5:4
- b. Exhortations Rom. 8:17; 1 Cor. 15:2; Col. 1:22, 23; 2 Tim. 2:11-12
- c. Warnings Rom. 14:15; 1 Cor. 8:11; Gal. 5:19

7. Passages Dealing with Falling from Grace

It is possible for a true believer to fall from Grace. When a person falls from Grace, it means they have abandoned Grace for the Law. This may be seen through legalism or through imposition of the Mosaic Law upon the life of the believer. The individual’s salvation is not in jeopardy but it does lead to a loss of love and a performance mentality. Gal. 5:4

8. Passages Dealing with Specific Cases

- a. Peter Luke 24:31-32
- b. Judas John 17; Acts 2

Scripture makes it clear that Judas was never truly converted. He was a thief from the beginning. His name, Son of Perdition, shows that he belongs to the realm of Hell.

D. Common Objections Posed by Arminians Against Security

As I have talked with people about this issue over the years, several different objections continue to arise when I mention the security of the believer. As I considered the arguments, I had to make some conclusion regarding them.

1. Belief in Security Promotes License and Immorality

One objection that many will state as a problem with the doctrine of the security of the believer is that people who believe it are not under any constraint to obey God. The thought is that the individual will think that they can just do what they want and still be saved. I appreciate the words of H. A Ironside on this matter.

People say, “If you preach this doctrine of the eternal security of the believer, men will say, ‘Well, then it doesn’t make any difference what I do, I will get to heaven anyway.’” It makes a tremendous difference what you do. If you do not behave yourself, it shows that you are not a real Christian. I know that a real Christian may fail, but the difference can be seen in Peter and Judas. Peter failed, and failed terribly, but he was genuine, and one look from Jesus sent him out weeping bitterly; his heart was broken to think that he had so dishonored his Lord. But Judas companied with the Lord almost three-and-a-half years and was a devil all the time; he was a thief and was seeking his own interest. He was even made the treasurer of that company and he held the bag, but we read, “He bare [away] what was put therein” (John 12:6), as this has been literally translated. At last remorse overtook him, not genuine repentance, and what was the result? He went and hanged himself. He was never a child of God. There is a great difference, you see, between a Christian and a false professor.⁵

Scripture makes it clear that sin is still an issue in the life of a believer after salvation. Christians can even sin in matters that are even reproachable to non-believers. This is exactly what Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 5:1, “It is reported commonly *that there is* fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife.” Christians can and do commit hideous sins. However, this does not mean that they escape consequences because they are “secure” in their faith. Hebrews 12:5 and following make it clear that the Father disciplines those He loves. As a child of God, sin will bring His disciplining hand upon the individual. God’s discipline is a sign of assurance because it demonstrates that God cares and is active in the life of the believer.

From my perspective, I came to understand that if security promotes license, then lack of security promotes legalism.

⁵ H. A. Ironside, *Eternal Security*.

2. Tends toward lawlessness

Because of God's grace through Jesus Christ, believers are not under the constraints of the Mosaic Law neither are they under the Pharisaical requirements of men. Instead we live under grace and are free from the law. This is called liberty. Liberty is not license. Liberty is not the freedom to do anything we desire. It is the freedom to obey God. James 2:12 states, "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." Those who are lawless are not saved.

Conclusion: Practical Values of this Doctrine

1. From this writer's personal observation, Christians will only grow in maturity to a certain limited level until they settle the issue of their own assurance and security. If one's salvation is at all times in jeopardy, it does not tend to produce love. Instead it tends to produce a works mentality as opposed to the love mentality that God desires of each of us. The lack of security tends to promote a "works" mentality. It is almost like the person is saying, "I may be saved by grace but I am kept in that salvation by my works." This is a vast overstatement meant to show the ramifications of one's conclusions.

A Christian who is genuinely secure his or her faith tends toward a type of Christian piety that encourages spiritual growth, as follows:

- Marked by confidence
- Marked by freedom from anxiety
- Marked by the lack of whining piety
- Marked by even tempered good

In my own life, I began to grow in rapid fashion once I knew that I was saved by God's grace through faith and that nothing could ever take it away from me. I have seen this repeated in countless people. Once they have the come to grips with their own security, their spiritual life begins to blossom and develop.

2. Security encourages people to live in grace, joy, and thankfulness. An old saying states, "We live according to what we believe." If we believe we are saved and kept by grace, we will tend to live in grace. If we realize that we are saved apart from any work on our part, we should strive to thank the One who saved us.

Before I believed in security, I lived in a constant state of fear before God. I believed that if I didn't do enough good things or failed

to obey that God would smash me like a bug. While God may discipline me as evidence that I am His child, He will not smite me like a non-believer. The fear I had turned to joy. My countenance betrayed me. I began to smile and enjoy God's creations. People I had know from years suddenly began calling me "Smilin' Ron." Assurance and security allowed me to grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.