

Major Bible Themes

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CHAPTER XXXIII

SECURITY

This chapter is concerned with the Biblical answer to the question, "Could a person once saved ever be lost again?" Since fear of eternal perdition must destroy the believer's peace, and since to suppose that one once saved might be lost again, of necessity, limits the saving grace of God as it is in Christ, the subject of this chapter is of utmost importance.

The claim that one who is once saved might be lost again is usually based on a form of rationalism which, emphasizing certain passages of Scripture, does not consider sufficiently the testimony of all the Word of God. Concerning this question, church creeds have taken opposing sides; but it will be observed that belief or disbelief in the security of all who are saved is more personal than creedal. While the great body of New Testament Scriptures which bear directly or indirectly on this question declare the believer to be secure, there are upwards of twenty-five passages which have been cited in evidence by those who maintain that the believer is insecure. It is certain that an individual could not be at the same time both secure and insecure. Therefore, of these two bodies of Scripture, one body of Scripture must of necessity conform to the other.

From careful study it will be seen that the so-called "insecurity passages" are not such in reality, that they do not oppose the positive doctrine of security, and that they seem to teach insecurity only when they are misunderstood or misapplied. Certain, of these do not apply to the Christian since they belong to another dispensation (Matt. 24:13; Ezk. 33:7, 8; Matt. 18:23-35; 25:30). Other passages refer only to false and unregenerate teachers of the "last days" (1 Tim. 4:1, 2; 2 Pet. 2:1-22; Jude 1:17-19). One passage describes that which is merely a moral reformation (Luke 11:24-26). Several of these Scriptures bear on the important fact that Christian profession is justified by its fruits. Salvation which is of God will, under normal conditions, prove itself to be such by its own fruits (1 John 3:10; John 8:31; 15:6; 2 Pet. 1:10; Jas. 2:14-26; 1 Cor. 15:1, 2; Heb. 3:6, 14). In addition to this, there are certain passages that contain warnings which, when rightly interpreted, do not imply the insecurity of the believer under grace. Jews are warned that since their sacrifices have ceased they must turn to Christ or be lost (Heb. 10:26), in like manner, unsaved Jews as well as Gentiles are warned against "falling away" from the illuminating, converting work of the Spirit (Heb. 6:4-9). So, also, unspiritual Jews are warned that they will not be received into the coming kingdom (Matt. 25:1-13), and Gentiles are given a corporate warning which has no reference to the individual believer (Rom. 11:21). Again, the one who is saved and safe may lose his reward (1 Cor. 3:15; Col. 1:21-23), and be disapproved concerning his service for Christ (1 Cor. 9:27). Likewise, he may lose his fellowship because of sin (1 John 1:6), and he may be chastened of God (1 Cor. 11:29-32; John 15:2; 1 John 5:16). And, finally, it is possible for the believer to "fall from grace" (Gal. 5:1-4), which, however, is never accomplished by sinning; for the Christian falls from grace only when he turns from his true liberty under grace to the bondage of the law.

The positive doctrine of security rests upon an extended body of truth in which no less than twelve unchangeable facts of divine grace and its accomplishments are declared; any one of which alone would suffice to form an adequate basis for perfect rest and peace.

I. THE COVENANT OF GOD

The direct, unqualified promises of security (John 5:24; 6:37; 10:28) form an unconditional covenant in which God simply declares what He is going to do, which is also an expression of His unchangeable will. In Romans 8:29, 30 this eternal purpose is revealed and its realization is assured through sovereign grace and apart from every human work and merit.

II. THE POWER OF GOD

As being absolutely free from every limitation the Scriptures assert that God is able to keep all who are saved through Christ (John 10:29; Rom. 4:21; 8:31, 38, 39; 14:4; Eph. 3:20; Phil. 3:21; 2 Tim. 1:12; Heb. 7:25; Jude 1:24).

III. THE LOVE OF GOD

Not only is God revealed as one who is able to do according to His eternal purpose, but His love for His own is a motive which can never fail. In Romans 5:8-11 that love is declared to exceed even His love for sinners because of which He gave His Son to die (John 3:16). The argument is simple: If He loved men enough to give His Son to die for them when they were "sinners" and "enemies," He will love them "much more" when, through redeeming grace, they are justified in

His sight and reconciled to Him. Such knowledge-surpassing love for those whom He has redeemed at such limitless cost is sufficient assurance that they could never be plucked out of His hand until every resource of His infinite power has been exhausted.

IV. THE PRAYER OF THE SON OF GOD

While here on earth Christ prayed that those whom the Father had given Him should be kept (John 17:9-12, 15, 20) and this prayer which had its beginning on earth, we may believe, is continued in Heaven (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25. Note, also, Luke 22:31, 32). Considering this, there is abundant assurance of security in the fact that no prayer of the Son of God could ever be unanswered.

V. THE EFFICACIOUS SUBSTITUTIONARY DEATH OF THE SON OF GOD

The death of Christ is the sufficient answer to the condemning power of sin (Rom. 8:34). When it is claimed that the saved one might be lost again, that claim is usually based on the fact of possible sin. Such an assumption of necessity proceeds on the supposition that Christ has not borne all the sins the believer will ever commit, and that God, having saved a soul, might be disappointed and surprised by unexpected, subsequent sin. On the contrary, the omniscience of God is perfect. He foreknows every sin or secret thought that will ever darken the life of His child, and for those sins the sufficient, sacrificial blood of Christ has been shed and by that blood God has been propitiated (1 John 2:2). Because of that blood which avails for the sins of both saved and unsaved God is as free to continue His saving grace toward the meritless as He is to save them at all. He keeps them forever; not for their sakes alone, but to satisfy His own love and manifest His own grace (Rom. 5:8; Eph. 2:7-10). It is because of the fact that salvation and safe-keeping depend only on the sacrifice and merit of the Son of God that all condemnation is forever removed (John 3:18; 5:24; Rom. 8:1. R.V.; 1 Cor. 11:31, 32).

VI. THE RESURRECTION OF THE SON OF GOD

The eternal security of the believer is made certain through two vital facts connected with the resurrection of Christ:

1. The gift of God is eternal life (John 3:16; 10:28; Rom. 6:23), which life is the resurrection life of Christ (Col. 2:12; 3:1), eternal as He is eternal, and as incapable of dissolution or death as Christ is incapable of dissolution or death.
2. Likewise, by union with the resurrected Christ by the baptism with the Spirit and the impartation of His eternal life, the child of God is made a part of the New Creation in which he stands in the federal headship of the Last Adam. Since the Last Adam cannot fall, there is no fall possible for the weakest one who is in Him.

VII. THE INTERCESSION AND SHEPHERDHOOD OF THE SON OF GOD

The present ministry of Christ in glory has only to do with the eternal security of those on earth who are saved. Christ both intercedes and advocates. As Intercessor, He has in view the weakness, ignorance, and immaturity of the believer -- things concerning which there is no guilt.

In this ministry, Christ not only prays for His own who are in the world and at every point of their need (Luke 22:31, 32; John 17:9, 15, 20; Rom. 8:34), but on the grounds of His own sufficiency in His unchanging priesthood, He guarantees that they will be kept saved for ever (Heb. 7:25; Rom. 5:10; John 14:19).

VIII. THE ADVOCACY OF THE SON OF GOD

The present ministry of Christ as Advocate has to do with the Christian's sin -- that concerning which there is guilt. Since sin is always sinful in the sight of God and can be cured only on the ground of the blood of Christ, the death of Christ is efficacious as much for the sins of the saved as for the unsaved (1 John 2:2). God is infinitely holy; therefore the Christian's sin in every case merits eternal condemnation, and that judgment would of necessity be executed were it not for the fact that, a Advocate, Christ pleads the saving value of His own blood before the throne of God (1 John 2:1; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 9:24). This He does, not after the Christian sins, which would imply that there might be even a moment of insecurity in the believer's position before God; but when he is sinning he has an Advocate with the Father.

IX. THE REGENERATING WORK OF THE SPIRIT

By the regenerating work of the Spirit the believer is made a child of God (John 1:13; 3:3-6; Titus 3:4-6; 1 Pet. 1:23; 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 John 3:9), an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ (Rom. 8:16, 17). Having thus been born of God, he has partaken of the divine nature and that nature is never said to be removed or disannulled.

X. THE SPIRIT'S INDWELLING

The fact that the Spirit now indwells every believer (John 7:37-39; Rom. 5:5; 8:9; 1 Cor. 2:12; 6:19; 1 John 3:24) and never leaves him (John 14:16) should be recognized by every Christian. The Spirit may be grieved by unconfessed sin (Eph. 4:30), or He may be quenched in the sense that He is resisted (1 Thess. 5:19); But He, as the divine Presence in the heart, is never removed. For this reason, the child of God continues as such forever.

XI. THE BAPTISM WITH THE SPIRIT

By the Spirit's ministry in baptizing, the believer is joined to that body of which Christ is the Head (1 Cor. 12:13; 6:17; Gal. 3:27) and he is therefore said to be in Christ. To be in Christ, constitutes a union which is both vital and abiding. In that union, old things -- as to position and relationship which might be the ground of condemnation -- are passed away, and all positions and relationships have become new and are of God (2 Cor. 5:17, 18). Being accepted for ever "in the beloved," the child of God is as secure as the One in whom he is and in whom he stands.

XII. THE SPIRIT'S SEALING

Finally, it is declared that all true Christians are sealed with the Spirit unto the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:22; and Eph. 1:13 which should read "having believed ye were sealed"). Since this sealing is of God for His own purpose and glory, and since it is unto the day of redemption, this ministry of the Spirit also guarantees the eternal security of all who are saved.

CONCLUSION

It may be concluded, then, from this extensive body of truth that the eternal purpose of God which is for the preservation of His own can never be defeated. To this end He has met every possible hindrance. Sin which might otherwise separate has been borne by a Substitute who, in order that the believer may be kept, pleads the efficacy of His death before the Throne of God. The believer's will is held under divine control (Phil. 2:13), and every testing is tempered by the infinite grace and wisdom of God (1 Cor. 10:13).

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that, while, in this chapter, salvation and safe-keeping have been treated as separate divine undertakings as an adaptation to the usual ways of speaking, the Bible recognizes no such distinction; for, according to the Scriptures, there is no salvation purposed, offered, or undertaken under grace which is not infinitely perfect and that does not abide for ever.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the fundamental question involved in the doctrine of Security?
2. Could both the doctrine of Security and the doctrine of Insecurity be true?
3. In what ways are the so-called "insecurity passages" misinterpreted and misapplied?
4. What form of covenant do the promises of saving grace constitute?
5. In what ways do the power of God and the love of God guarantee the believer's safe-keeping?
6. What peculiar certainty is there in the prayer of Christ?
7. How does the death of Christ provide for the Christian's eternal security?
8. Name two assurances of security which are provided in the resurrection of Christ.
9. Distinguish between Christ's intercession and advocacy.
10. Might the divine nature within the believer be disannulled?
11. a. Does the Spirit indwell every true Christian?
b. Does He ever leave the one in whom He dwells?
12. In what way does the baptism with the Spirit guarantee the security of the child of God?
13. What time limit is placed on the Spirit's sealing?
14. Why is it that the believer's sin, his own will, or his own liability to be tempted are unable to break his eternal security in Christ?