

Greater Than: The Security of the Believer

No belief can be sequestered from practice or other beliefs; that is, a point of doctrine can not be fully teased away from other doctrines as there is overlap and crossover with foundational doctrines (for example: Jesus being sinless, by necessity, impacts the doctrine of His sacrifice (the Atonement) which, again by necessity, involves the Resurrection). Since so many doctrines are related, we must understand the context of belief by which we approach the topic of eternal security by looking at three major points of doctrine which if understood incorrectly will surely lead to theological error when attempting to grasp the concept of salvation in general:

1. Mankind fell through original sin and all people are sinners in need of salvation (Gen. 3:16-17, Rom. 5:12-15).
2. Jesus is wholly God and wholly man, lived a sinless life, died as a perfect substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of mankind, was buried, arose from the grave and ascended to Heaven (John 1:14, John 3:16, Matt. 4, Luke 4, Heb. 4:15, 2 Cor. 5:21).
3. Salvation is a gift of grace from God, received through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is available to all through faith in Jesus Christ as the only way to God the Father and eternal life (Rom. 6:23, Titus 3:5, Eph. 2:8-9, John 1:12).

On Scripture Interpretation

Secondly, there are principles we must bear in mind when approaching Biblical interpretation. This too is highly important as when one approaches a text with the wrong understanding of how to understand Scripture, error is a certain result.

1. Scripture cannot contradict Scripture.
2. Scripture interprets Scripture. When you come upon a difficult passage or something that seems contradictory to other passages, you should use the clearer passages to interpret less clear ones.
3. If passages seem to contradict one another, you should examine related doctrines to determine how the Scripture harmonizes the passage with the whole of the Bible.

So, with those in mind, let's approach eternal security...

Definition of Term and Nature of Apostates

First, we must define what is meant by "eternal security." **Eternal security means that all those who are truly born again will be kept by God's power and will continue to be Christians until the end of their lives, and only those who endure to the end are truly Christians.** Let me stress that the last part of the definition above (...only those who endure to the end are truly Christians) is of great importance. Many people (not all) have made coming to Christ into a

dangerously cheapened version of true, Biblical Christianity; this has not been isolated to one denomination, or one group, but it occurs, both from pulpits and among the pews. Coming to Christ is not just mere intellectual assent. It is more than nodding at certain times to a list of beliefs. There are many who may say “I believe...” yet have no radical change of heart that would align their lives with Christ. Over the years of visiting churches, I’ve seen people pray a prayer of salvation, be baptized before believers, cry while giving a “testimony,” shout to God during the worship time...and then say later, “I never really believed in my heart; Jesus didn’t change my life.” I believe it’s important to stress the great responsibility of the faith to those considering coming to Christ: that this not some “easy come, easy go” arrangement, nor is it something to take lightly.

It is possible to be among a group of Christians, make a confession of faith, be baptized, go through the motions of worship, regularly attend church, sing in the choir, read the Bible every day, live an impeccable lifestyle as compared to the rest of the world by removing yourself from the influences of it...but still not have a saving relationship with Christ (although you may fool everyone around you). These are key questions: Is everyone who seems like a Christian really a Christian? Is everyone who is a member of a local church a Christian? Is everyone who claims the name of Christ really a Christian? The Biblical answer to each question is “no.”

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' (Matt. 7:21-23).

Notice what Jesus will say, “I never knew you...” He won’t say, “I knew you, but you fell away” or “I knew you once, but not any longer.” He **will** say, “I never knew you.” **Obviously, these individuals will show great works, prophesying, casting out demons, working wonders...yet they never knew Christ. Again, they showed marks of actually living the life, yet they were not.**

The average visible church body is made up of wheat and tares, goats and sheep, believers and non-believers. Each church can do its best to examine, question, and listen before admitting membership, but some members will prove to be unfaithful to Him. But simply because unbelievers can show a counterfeit faith doesn’t mean that believers can fall away; just because there are counterfeit bills discovered in the cash register does not mean that real bills will become worthless.

Likewise, Judas (an apostate) was among the 12 for the years of Jesus’ ministry and when, at the Last Supper, He said that one would betray Him the disciples did not all turn and say, “Of course, it’s Judas!” Rather, they began to ask, “Is it I?” (Matt. 26:22; Mark 14:19; Luke 22:23; John 13:22).

Paul speaks of those who are “false brethren” (Gal. 2:4; 2 Cor. 11:26). He **mentions that sometimes those who serve Satan “disguise themselves as servants of righteousness” (2 Cor. 11:15).**

Similarly, in Mark 4, in the Parable of the Sower, Jesus describes those who receive the word and begin to grow only to fall away when tribulations come (Mark 4:5-17). A closer inspection shows that these “have no root.” There is no genuine, deep connection with Christ. One could argue the same for the passage in John 15 when the non-fruit bearing branches are destroyed. Branches may give the impression of being a true part of the vine, yet without fruit, they prove they have never been rooted in Christ. (Of course, the other danger in interpreting parables is assigning vast and complex meanings to every single, tiny aspect of a parable. Parables are used to convey a deep, main principle in a simple way; we *don't* interpret them as allegories. Unfortunately, we miss this point too often and attempt to read volumes of theology into them.)

Never, in any of the passages pertaining to apostates falling away, does the Bible ever say that those “falling away” were ever regenerated, justified, or adopted by God.

As John writes, “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 they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us” (1 John 2:19).

Falling away is proof you never were truly connected.

The Big Objections and The “But What About...?” Verses

The most common concern about the doctrine of eternal security is this: “If you believe this, you will become careless in your walk with Christ, lazy in the work of God, and will slip into immorality.”

The obvious idea behind that objection is a mistaken belief that a person can come to Christ and then live however he or she wants and still be saved. Anyone who teaches that there is no connection between salvation and progressive sanctification is denying foundational Biblical truth. You can't accept Christ as Savior now and then Lord later, and you can never separate faith and fruit. In other words, coming to Christ and growing in His likeness are connected. Once you are justified by Christ, you begin a lifelong process of becoming more like Him (Phil. 1:6). Growth and holiness do not contribute to a person's salvation (otherwise salvation would be based upon human effort, cf. Eph. 2:9), but if you are a Christian, you will bear the fruits that come from repentance and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:8-10; Gal. 5:22-25).

Jesus preached justification by faith (John 5:24; Luke 18:9-14), but also stated, "You shall know them by their fruits" (Matt. 7:16).

This concept is exactly what James is getting at when he writes: "What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe--and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2:14-20).

We don't work for salvation, but from salvation. True salvation will produce fruit.

"Works" in James does not refer to things done to gain salvation, or to keep salvation, but things done as a result of salvation. To think that one can do something to gain salvation or to keep salvation is an exercise in spiritual pride.

Besides, the Bible teaches clearly that the liberty and freedom found in Christ can never be used as a justifiable excuse to sin freely (Rom. 6:15-22; 13:13-14; Gal. 5:13-26; Titus 2:11-14).

The other major objection is this: "If God can keep you secure, why then would He give all the warnings and admonitions to hold fast to the faith?"

There are many verses that have "if" in them: "If you abide..." (John 8:31), "...If indeed you continue..." (Col. 1:21-23), "...If we hold..." (Heb. 3:14). There's also John 15:6-14; Heb. 2:1-3; 1 Cor. 15:1-2; et al.

Some will say, "Enough said! These verses show that it's dependent upon us and our behavior!" But then, if that were true, we would have a reason for boasting (Rom. 4:2; Eph. 2:9) because we could say, "I didn't fall away because I did everything better than these others." This boasting will lead to legalistic behavior and belief as surely as it did among those who were influenced by the false teachers in the church at Galatia (Gal. 3:3).

But what are we to make of those warning verses? How can they possibly be aligned with eternal security? First of all, remember: "If passages seem to contradict one another, you should examine related doctrines to determine how the Scripture harmonizes the passage with the whole of the Bible." If the "if" verses relate to losing one's salvation and God being incapable of saving to the

uttermost, then we must say that: God is not all-powerful because we can do something to thwart His plans to perfect us (cf. Phil 1:6), God is a liar because the promises He made concerning eternal life will not come to pass (cf. John 3:16), and justification by faith alone is false because we “complete” our salvation by our own works (cf. Gal. 2:16). When you change the meaning of one doctrine, you must eliminate (or ignore) the truthfulness of related doctrines.

Secondly, the “if” verses warning of apostasy were given by God as a warning for those who profess, but are not truly Christians. The warnings also serve as a “check” for those who profess that they are Christians (but may or may not be), yet fall into sinful habits. When that happens, they are in need of examining their hearts as compared to the fruit they should be bearing. If they are not Christians, this examination may bring them to conviction leading to repentance and salvation; if they are Christians, the examination from the warnings given would exhort them to obedience to the will of God. The warnings can also serve Christians as reminders that we are in the midst of warfare (2 Tim. 2:4) and we must continue as we face trials and struggles.

Then there are the verses that are offered as “proof” of the insecurity of the believer. Though when you first read some of them (out of the context of the passage or the book) they may prove difficult to understand, with a little study, careful examination, and using Scripture (2 Tim. 2:15), the truth can be discerned. (Note: The bulleted verses below are the verses typically used to promote the view. The response is under each verse.)

- **2 Pet. 2:20-22: For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."**

At first glance, the passage seems to indicate loss of salvation, but it (like so many other passages) is speaking of those who are not Christians. If you read the passage in context, you find that he wrote concerning false teachers within the church: “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction” (2 Pet. 2:1).

“But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it

pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls" (2 Pet. 2:12-14a).

The Bible clearly says they "have escaped the pollutions of the world" (v. 20). **This means that they had aligned themselves with the church body to the point that they were avoiding certain sinful things in the world. They knew of Christ and His teaching, but had never incorporated it into their lives through faith. Knowledge and profession do not a Christian make. (Even the demons know and profess truth, cf. James 2:19; Luke 4:41). But though they (the false teachers) may have escaped the "pollution of the world" (i.e. they are living externally pious lives), they had not escaped the corruption within their own hearts as they would "utterly perish in their own corruption" (v. 12). These people had not placed their faith in Christ, and who did they entice to live similarly? Unstable souls (v. 2:14).**

So how about the verse "the latter end is worse for them than the beginning" (v. 20)? Now that they have heard the truth, they were responsible for obedience. Because of that, they were all the more responsible to act upon it and live it out. Just as the judgment of teachers is stricter because of the responsibility (James 3:1), so too hearing the Gospel and the truth found throughout Scripture brings a greater responsibility and, if one rejects it, greater punishment.

These teachers would eventually revert to giving their true internal nature an external expression, just as it's natural for a dog to lick its own vomit and for a pig to head instinctually for the mud: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire" (v. 22).

- **Gal. 5:1-5: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith."**

This one seems convincing, assuming that you just pull the section of the verse that reads, "you have fallen from grace." But you have to read the verse in context. The church at Galatia was plagued with Judaizers (those who sought to combine Christian teaching with Jewish practices). Paul wrote and confronted them because they were teaching that you could place your faith in Christ, but must keep the requirements of the law to be justified truly. Paul addressed those who would "attempt to be just justified by law" and told them that they had "fallen from grace" (v. 4), that is, they had fallen from the one thing that could save them (grace) and turned to a damning practice (legalism) for justification. He then contrasted those who would believe they could be justified by works with those

(including himself – “we”) who believed in justification by faith in Christ alone and the resultant righteousness: “For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith” (v. 5. cf. Phil. 3:2-9).

- **Col. 4:14:** “Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you.”
- **Philemon 1:23-24:** “Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.”
- **2 Tim. 4:9-10:** “Be diligent to come to me quickly; for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica-- Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.”

Demas worked alongside Paul, but then defected for the world according to 2 Tim. 4:9-10. Does this mean he was a Christian who lost his salvation? Not at all. “But,” some would say, “He was Paul’s co-worker! That means he must have been saved!” Again, are we assuming that all who profess Christ are really Christians? (Matt. 7:21-23). Paul, through Demas, knew the reality of 2 Cor. 11:15 all too well. Again, Judas was a co-laborer alongside Jesus, yet only Christ knew the intents of his heart.

- **Rev. 2:10:** “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

Using Scripture to interpret Scripture, we find these passages:

James 1:12: “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”

1 Cor. 9:24-27: “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”

The “crown” speaks of our rewards in Heaven at our judgment. Things done in the flesh, without reliance upon the work of the Spirit will not be found valuable, only those things done by the power of Christ have merit. “But doesn’t Paul’s statement about being disqualified mean he thought he could lose his salvation?” No, not at all. Certain sins would have disqualified Paul from serving in a ministerial capacity (1 Tim. 3:2-7; Titus 1:7-9).

- **Rev. 22:18-19: “For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”**

Some would say that verse 19 says you can lose your salvation by adding to or altering the Word of God. Notice to whom this applies in v. 18: “anyone.” If anyone adds to, or takes away, from the Bible they are essentially saying is that they reject the perfection found in the Bible...thus proving the condition of their hearts. The emphasis is not on us and our salvation in these verses, it’s on God and His revelation. To alter it would be to make God into someone He is not, and that, quite simply, is idolatry.

Various Other Passages Used As “Proof”

- **Heb. 6:4-6: “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.”**

But if that refers to a loss of salvation, then Heb. 6:4 shows that it’s impossible to be saved more than once. If you can lose it, then, according to this verse, you can never regain it. (This verse is actually used to refer to those throughout Israel’s history who, though they had experienced all the blessings of God, chose to reject the only means of salvation offered to them through Christ.)

- **1 John 5:18: “We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.”**

The tense of the Greek word sin means “to continuously practice sin.” If you practice sin habitually, with no check, no pain of conscience, no conviction, then you weren’t saved anyway. It means the same in the verses below:

1 John 3:4-6: “And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.”

But what about that phrase “he who has been born of God keeps himself”? That surely refers to salvation and our responsibility, right? No, it doesn’t. Here is a

place where, if you look at clearer translations, the answer becomes obvious. The word “himself” isn’t the best way to translate the Greek, in fact, “him” is the **preferred reading, as found in the New American Standard Version (which adheres most firmly to the original Greek text).** The NASV reads: “We know that **no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him.**” He (that’s Christ) keeps him (that’s the believer) safe from the evil one (that’s Satan).

- **Ps. 51:11: “Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.”**

In the OT, leaders chosen by God were anointed with the Holy Spirit for a specific task; God could choose to remove the guidance of the Holy Spirit. David was not in fear of the loss of his salvation but the loss of guidance and spiritual wisdom. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in a permanent capacity didn’t occur for believers until the Day of Pentecost. Baptism with the Holy Spirit now occurs at the moment of salvation.

1 Cor. 12:13: “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.”

- **Rev. 21:8: “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”**

So there’s no forgiveness ever for these people? That’s not what the Bible says:

1 Cor. 6:9-11: “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”

- **Rev. 2:1-5: "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.**

Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.”

Some equate the word lampstand with salvation...But Scripture interprets Scripture!

Rev. 1:20: “The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.”

- **Rev. 21:7: “He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.”**

The argument here is that you must “overcome,” i.e. never sin, in order to be saved. Yet again, Scripture interprets Scripture:

I John 5:5: “Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”

Various Verses Supporting Eternal Security

John 3:36: “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

Everlasting means forever, never ending, eternal.

John 5:24: “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”

If we can lose our salvation, the thought would be like this: You become a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), then sin, lose my salvation, and then become spiritually dead again. If this is true, am I reborn over and over if I keep asking forgiveness? Do I die again spiritually in my sins only to be reborn when I am re-saved?

One thing that must be noted: when you are saved, you changed position (your status because of the righteousness of Christ) as well as condition (who you are in Christ). To believe you can lose your salvation is to say, “My position changed, and my condition, but I can lose my position in Christ and my condition can change. i.e. I can die again in my sins.” Biblically, not only have we been redirected from hell to heaven, but we have been brought to life from death.

John 6:37-40: “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father

who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

Don't miss that: He will "by no means cast out" (won't disown us) and "of all He [God the Father] has given Me I should lose nothing" (He keeps what's his). So, He won't get rid of those who are His, nor can those who are His fall away from Him, thus causing Him to "lose" them.

John 10:27-30: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one."

Read what Jesus said again: "No one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand..." "No one" includes me, you, or anybody else.

Rom. 5:8-10: "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

What a promise that is! "We shall be saved from wrath..." How? "Through Him."

Rom. 8:31-39: "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written:

**'For Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.'**

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

What can separate us, those who are “more than conquerors,” from the love of God for us in Christ? **Nothing.**

1 Cor. 1:4-9: “I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (emphasis mine).

“Confirm” is the word for “establish.” It’s something that’s firm and certain. It’s the same word Paul uses again in 2 Cor. 1:21: “Now He who establishes **us with you** in Christ and has anointed us is God...”

1 Cor. 3:9-15: “For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire” (my emphasis).

Everything you’ve done that is not done by the power of Christ, for the glory of Christ, is burned up and is destroyed. All the “fluff,” the meaningless things, **the posturing, the striving to look good, the pious works of religion done without a true motivation for God**, all those works will perish. Will some “works” of every **Christian be burned away? Yes, seeing how none of us are perfectly sinless here on earth** (for if that were the case, we wouldn’t need Christ). But even if the meaningless things are burned, “he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire” (v. 15).

Eph. 2:8-9: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (my emphasis).

Salvation is not dependent upon us; it’s a gift, and one that we didn’t deserve. **Who deserves the Gospel? No one. To whom is the Gospel offered? Everyone.** Anything we receive from God that’s short of Hell is grace.

Eph. 4:30: “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

Seals show ownership, authority and security. If you are saved, you are sealed.

Phil. 1:6: “Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ”

Jesus will complete what He started in us; He does nothing half-way.

Heb. 7:25: “Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” (cf. Heb. 12:2)

Jesus always lives, there at the right hand of the Father (a position of authority, cf. Acts 2:33; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 10:12; 1 Pet. 3:22), to make intercession for us. So He can save us to the “uttermost.”

Heb.13:5: “Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’”

Another promise from Jesus to never leave us.

1 Pet. 1:3-5: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (my emphasis, cf. Jude 24).

How are we kept? “By the power of God through faith for salvation.”

Final Thoughts

On a personal note, sometimes people start a discussion of this topic by asking me if I have faith in my salvation. My answer is always the same: No, I don't. That answer usually shocks them until I explain what I mean. You see, my assurance of eternal life and my hope is not in my salvation, but my faith is in the God who gave me my salvation. My faith is not in my faith, but in Christ alone and His work on the Cross. The object of my faith is Jesus, not my faith. Belief that one can lose salvation leads to a frightening conclusion...perhaps a hypothetical situation would help to illustrate it:

Let's assume that one can lose one's salvation. Now imagine there are two people, both of which have professed Christ, been baptized, and had a true change of heart and mind; they are, for purposes of our illustration, on the same level ground spiritually in that both are Christians. One endures to the end of life as a Christian, but the other falls away and rejects Christ. What was the

difference between the two? Was it a matter of the grace of God or the natural will of man?

You can't rightly say "both" because both had grace given to them. Ultimately, in this situation, if you believe that salvation can be lost, you must say "the will of man." One sinned less; one sinned more. One practiced holiness; one did not. **One persevered; one did not.**

Which means, if salvation can be lost, we are not "kept by the power of God" (1 Pet. 1:5) and evidenced by obeying Him, but rather kept by the power of ourselves by our works.

Ultimately, if you can lose your salvation due to sin then one must believe that we can commit a sin that is greater than God's grace, stronger than His forgiveness, and more powerful than the blood of Jesus. If you can do nothing to gain salvation, then you can do nothing to lose it!

References:

Wayne Grudem. Systematic Theology. Zondervan (1994)