

Start your study here

Read Read, Record, Reflect, Respond

Prayerfully	Conscious dependence
Reflectively	Constantly
Extensively	Background issues Big Idea Basic structure and flow Broad strokes
Creatively	Imagination and View points
Intensively	Questions: Who, What, Where, When, Why, How. . . Repeated Alike Different Accentuated Related
Specifically	Purposefully—with the view of the author in mind
Effectively	By unit of thought— Think Context! Details, ask questions

Romans 8:31-39

- 31 What then shall we say to these things?
If God is for us, who can be against us?
- 32 He who did not spare his own Son
but gave him up for us all,
how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?
- 33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?
It is God who justifies.
- 34 Who is to condemn?
Christ Jesus is the one who died—
more than that, who was raised—
who is at the right hand of God,
who indeed is interceding for us.
- 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?
Shall
tribulation,
or distress,
or persecution,
or famine,
or nakedness,
or danger,
or sword?
- 36 As it is written,
"For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."
- 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors
through him who loved us.
- 38 For I am sure that
neither death nor life,
nor angels nor rulers,
nor things present nor things to come,
nor powers,
- 39 nor height nor depth,
nor anything else in all creation,
will be able to separate us from the love of God
in Christ Jesus our Lord. (ESV)

Review: present reality (Romans 8:1-11), present empowerment (8:12-17), potential for suffering (8:18-25) and the hope of future glorification (8:26-30) which includes God's purpose for believers—transformation.

Observations: 1) questions 2) lists 3) hope

Key Question: Can a person who "once believed" decide not to believe any longer? Do the promises of Romans 8 (no condemnation and no separation) apply to those who decide they no longer want to be Christians?

Point: God's loving assurance

Tied to the affirmation of God's unbroken plan mentioned in vv 28-30

Romans 8:31-39

? 31 What then shall we say to these things?

? If God is for us, who can be against us?

1st class condition—assumption of reality for sake of argument

32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all,

Notice—God gave Him up, not someone took Him

? how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

? 33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?

It is God who justifies.

The gift of Christ is the greatest gift. If God would give us that, there is nothing He won't give us.

? 34 Who is to condemn?

Christ Jesus is the one who died—
more than that, who was raised—
who is at the right hand of God,
who indeed is interceding for us.

death
resurrection
exaltation
Present work of Christ

? 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

? Shall

tribulation,
or distress,
or persecution,
or famine,
or nakedness,
or danger,
or sword?

Tie to 8:18 ff
Connections?
Flow?

36 As it is written,

"For your sake we are being killed all the day long; Ps 44:22
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

Purpose: show that what is possible, v 35 is actual
Point: even in suffering, we will not be separated

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Overwhelming conqueror

38 For I am sure that

neither death nor life,
nor angels nor rulers,
nor things present nor things to come,
nor powers,

Human experience--physical

Spiritual world (versus the physical)

All that is contained in history, including people

Don't over interpret these statements—don't lose the rhetorical force

39 nor height nor depth,

Not even space or distance

nor anything else in all creation,

Just in case I missed anything—"NOTHING" can separate us

will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (ESV)

Future—but certain

Working Idea (this is to help you see how the main idea was developed)

This passage is a celebration of God’s abiding love.

Main idea:

Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus!

Teaching idea:

Calvary’s doctrinal statement states,

7. The New Birth

We believe that all who receive by faith the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting Him alone for eternal salvation, are born again by the Holy Spirit and thereby become children of God, that they are indwelt and sealed by the Holy Spirit and therefore are secure until the day of final redemption. (John 1:12-13; 3:3-16; 10:28-29; 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 4:30)

We will again deal with the issues of security and assurance as we conclude chapter 8. We build on what we have discussed previously in Romans. We will try to lay out a biblically supported doctrine of security.

“Biblically supported” not cliché supported. That is, we do not want to say more than Scripture does; for fear of people taking salvation for granted. Nor do we want to say less than Scripture says; for fear that people will not worry about their sanctification.

The materials provided (along with some repetition from previous chapter 8 lessons) will hopefully also help us answer the thorny question of “can someone choose to stop believing, choose to stop being a Christian?”

Interactive Questions

I normally start by asking questions—but this passage has enough question

Are there mortal and venial sins?

What have you been told or believe about eternal security?

If you believe in eternal security, what do you respond to:

People who have “walked away” from the faith or “sinned in a way” that is not in keeping with what a true Christians should do?

If you do not believe in eternal security, why not? What keeps you from believing it?

Why would someone, who is seeking to be faithful to Scripture, disagree with Calvary’s view of eternal security?

Potential answers:

Difficult passages

Hebrews 6 et. al.

Experiencing—seeing people who at one time claimed to be “Christians” walk away

Fear that people will use a doctrine like “eternal security” as an excuse for sin.

Introduction



The doctrine of eternal security and assurance of salvation are too often misunderstood and misapplied. In this lesson we will see the climax of Paul’s teaching on sanctification which results in wonderfully encouraging truths about God’s steadfast commitment to His own.

We will seek to both worship, as a result of seeing God’s promises and we will seek to understand how they should impact our lives on a daily basis.

We will also interact on a few difficult issues related to security.

Review

In Romans 6 Paul taught us that, as a result of God’s grace through faith, we have freedom from sin’s controlling power.

In Romans 7 Paul reveals the internal struggle of those who seek by self-effort to live-up to their position in Christ.

Both chapter 6 and 7 are true—great freedom, great struggle on our own. Which leads Paul to encourage and explain the believer’s present reality (Romans 8:1-11), present empowerment (8:12-17), potential for suffering (8:18-25) and the hope of future glorification (8:26-30) which includes God’s purpose for believers—transformation.

Overview / Preview

The last section of Romans 8 is a celebration.

Catch Phrase / Key Phrase:

“no separation”

Outline

I. Doctrine: Justification—The Righteousness of God Revealed 1:18–11:36

God’s Gracious Provision of Righteousness is Acquired by Faith in Jesus Christ

A. The Need of It 1:18–3:20 **What a Mess!**

The Righteousness of God Revealed in Condemnation: The Universal Need of Righteousness

The Bad News: All condemned for sin—no exceptions

B. What It Is 3:21–5:21

What a God—The Way of Salvation

Justification: The imputation of righteousness to all who believe

C. How It Affects Me 6:1–8:39

Sanctification: The Impartation of Righteousness

The Purpose of Salvation: Conformity to Christ’s Image

	6:1 Principle	7:7 Practice	8:1 Power
Key Subject	Surrender	Self	Spirit

1. Believer and Sin 6:1-23
 - a. Believer’s Freedom from Sin’s Domination 6:1-14
 - b. Believer’s Enslavement to God’s Righteousness 6:15-23
2. Believer and the Law 7:1-25
 - a. Believer’s Freedom from the Law 7:1-6
 - b. The Law’s Relationship to Sin and Death 7:7-25
3. **Believer and the Holy Spirit 8:1-39**

The believer’s relationship to the Holy Spirit gives assurance of victory in Christian life.¹
 To have victory over sin—you must live in the Spirit.

Or
 Believer’s freedom in Christ 8:1-11
 Believer’s responsibility in Christ 8:12-30

- a. Victory Today: Living by the Spirit 8:1-17
The Spirit’s Enablement for Sanctification

¹ Dr. Harold W. Hoehner’s outline (DTS, Spring 1991, Exegesis of Romans 206, unpublished class notes)

- (1) Believer's Freedom in Christ through the Spirit 8:1-11
 - (a) Life in the Spirit freed believers from condemnation 8:1-4
 - (b) Life in the Spirit contrasted to life in the flesh 8:5-11
- (2) The Believer's New Relationship to God—living by the Spirit, putting to death the deeds of the flesh 8:12-17
- a. Hope Today: Truths that Sustain 8:18-30

*The believer is to endure the present sufferings in light of the incomparable future glory in which he will partake.*²

 - (1) The Believer's Present Suffering and Future Hope 8:18-25
 - *Endure because the future glory far exceeds the present suffering*
 - (a) Perspective on suffering 8:18-21
 - (b) Perspective on patience 8:22-25
 - (2) 8:26-30
 - (a) The Spirit praying for us 8:26-27
 - (b) God's eternal purpose in Christ: The transformation of the believer 8:29-30
 - (3) Nothing can separate us from the Love of God 8:31-39

Exposition / Key Exegetical Issues to be Aware Of



This passage is the crescendo of not only Romans 8, but 6, 7 and 8. He boldly and poetically provides assurance of salvation.

The Biblical View of Security

"They whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally or finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved."³

The biblical doctrine of the security of the believer rests in part on the nature of Christ's salvation. All of the work of God in salvation strongly argues for a salvation that is permanent.

General List: Biblical Statements of Eternal Security

- (1) Foreknown from before the foundation of the world (Rom. 8:29; 1 Pet. 1:2)
- (2) Chosen before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4)
- (3) Predestined (Rom. 8:29)
- (4) Redeemed (Gal. 3:13-14; 1 Pet. 1:18)
- (5) Called (Rom. 8:29)
- (6) Name written in the Lamb's book of life (Luke 10:20; Rev. 21:27)
- (7) Forgiven (Eph. 1:7)
- (8) Reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:18, 20; Col. 1:22)
- (9) Indwelt by the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-17)
- (10) Regenerated by the Holy Spirit (John 3; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:23)
- (11) Baptized by the Holy Spirit [United as a member of the body of Christ] (1 Cor. 12:13)
- (12) Sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30)
- (13) United with Christ [includes the concept of "in Christ"] (Rom. 6:1-10)
- (14) Justified [Declared righteous or not guilty] (Rom. 8:30)
- (15) Grafted into the Vine (John 15:5)
- (16) Adopted as sons (Eph. 1:5) and declared to be sons of God (1 John 3:1-2)
- (17) The objects of Christ's intercession (Luke 22:32; Heb. 7:25)
- (18) Sanctified (1 Cor. 6:11)
- (19) Glorification assured (Rom. 8:30)

² Dr. Harold W. Hoehner's outline (DTS, Spring 1991, Exegesis of Romans 206, unpublished class notes)

³ *Westminster Confession of Faith*, XVII:1.

Context

Romans 8:28-30

“All things work together for good. . .” (8:28)

From foreknowledge in eternity past, to glorification in eternity future no one is lost. (8:29-30)

8:31-39

No condemnation (verses 31-34)	Security as seen in the believer’s relationship to God the Father 8:31-33
No separation (verses 35-39)	Security as seen in the believer’s relationship to trials 8:34-39

While Paul used a number of terms in contrast to each other, many who have studied this passage have spent much time trying to determine specific nuances to terms. However, it is more likely that rather than seeking to provide specific nuances, Paul is seeking to paint a magnificent picture with broad strokes.

So as we walk through these last verses in Romans 8, our focus will be more on the whole than the part. We will seek to understand the poetic and practical force. Then we will seek to apply it to our present context.

8:31-34

Question #1:

“What then shall we say to these things?” (8:31), that is “how should we respond to what has just been written?”

This has the force of an inference drawn from the previous verses, e.g. “what shall we conclude from this?” (28-30).

The point: We should say something! In light of the fact that “there is no condemnation” (8:1), the provision of the Holy Spirit (8:4-27), and the sovereignty of God in salvation (8:28-30)—Don’t keep silent, praise God.

God’s revelation requires response. Praise. Thanksgiving. Worship.

Question #2:

“If God is for us, who can be against us?” (8:31)

“if” – first class condition, assumption of reality for the sake of argument

“With God on our side, who can be against us?”

The point: Clearly implied is that, if God is for us, no one can be against us with success.

Notice what God has done for us

God “for” us – accepted salvation 8:31

Christ is “for” us 8:34

The Holy Spirit is “for us” 8:26

Question #3:

While it might appear that 8:32 is an answer to the question in 8:31, there is probably a break between the two verses. And 8:32 starts with a statement and ends with a question.

“He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” (8:32 ESV)

The point: God has already given the greatest Gift. There is no reason that He would withhold anything from those who are in Christ.

(Note that Paul recognizes the origin of Christ’s death is in the will of the Father.)

Question #4:

“Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. (8:33)

On the surface the answer seems incomplete.

The point is that since God alone justifies, no one can successfully bring a charge (make it stick) against God’s elect.

No charge can be brought against the Christian because God has already pronounced a verdict of not guilty.

Question #5:

“Who is to condemn?”

Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.” (8:34 ESV)

What is the connection between the question and the statement?

Is the question, “who is to condemn” actually a rhetorical question responding to the last statement in 8:33—“it is God who justifies”?

If that is true, the statement in 8:34 serves to answer the question in 8:33.

The point:

Since Christ intercedes for us, He would not—could not—bring a condemning charge against us.

Since Christ is at the right hand of the Father and intercedes for us and since He died to remove the curse and condemnation, there is none who could bring a condemning word against those in Christ.

Conclusion of the section:

This section presents a courtroom scene on which Stiffler comments,

As no one can open the case against and bring a charge before the court, so no one can condemn, for Christ is a fourfold protection.

Are there offences? “He died for them.

Is there a need of life? He is “risen again” and we are “saved by His life” (v. 10).

Do we need representation and influence at the court? He is in the chief place of authority—“even at the right hand of God.”

Do we in hours of transgression and weakness need an advocate (1 John 2:1)? He “ever liveth to make intercession for us (John 17).⁴

8:35-39

Questions #6 and 7:

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”

“Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? (8:35 ESV)

The “who” should probably be seen to include the believer—but we’ll get to that at the end of the lesson.

tn Here “sword” is a metonymy that includes both threats of violence and acts of violence, even including death (although death is not necessarily the only thing in view here).⁵

⁴ *The Epistle to the Romans*. By James M. Stiffler. Moody Press, Chicago, Ill., 1960.

⁵ *The NET Bible First Edition Notes* (Biblical Studies Press, 2006). Ro 8:35.

8:36-39 provide the *answer*

The quote in 8:36 from Psalm 44:22 might seem both out of place and unnecessary, for it breaks the flow. So why did Paul include it?

Rather than being unnecessary it is key. The list of potential troubles in 8:35 is not left just as “potential” the quote makes it clear that not only “might” these troubles happen, they do happen—and still we are not separated from God’s love.

See how Paul includes a similar thought in Romans 5. After stating the reality of the present position of believers “having been justified, we have peace with God” (5:1) he states that even in suffering we rejoice, since the suffering strengthens not diminishes our hope in God (5:3-5).

The OT context of Ps. 44 is instructive because the psalmist laments the suffering of the righteous, who have not abandoned God’s name and yet are subjected to humiliation, defeat, and mockery. What Paul affirms in Romans is that such mockery and suffering are inevitably the lot of Christians.⁶

Answer absolutely nothing.

“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” (8:37)

or

“We overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.” (8:37)

tn BDAG 1034 s.v. *ὑπερνικάω* states, “as a heightened form of *νικάω* *prevail completely* *ὑπερνικῶμεν* *we are winning a most glorious victory* Ro 8:37.”⁷

Nothing in the world or out of the world can separate us from the love of Christ (8:38-39)

This victory of remaining in the love of God, and thus in salvation, a victory attributed to the loving God, extends also to the judgment day when all will meet their final destiny (see Eschatology). On that day the elect will not be convicted as guilty and condemned. For the Christ who loved them and died for them is the same one who was raised and now sits at the right hand of God and makes intercession for them before the Judge who has already justified them on the basis of Christ’s work (Rom 8:33–34). The love of a vindicated and exalted intercessor is surely a supreme guarantee of a positive outcome of judgment for the justified. Paul sums it up: “if God [is] for us, who [is] against us?” (Rom 8:31). That is to say, no challenge to believers’ final salvation can be successfully mounted because the omnipotent, loving God has taken their part. The same love of God which guarantees final salvation “has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit,” so that believers now subject to affliction are enabled to have “hope that does not disappoint” in the eschatological test (Rom 5:5).⁸

Discussion and Application

Nothing in the world can separate us. But can we separate ourselves from God?

This is the thorny question many people come to when reading Romans 8:31-39; particularly see the list in vv. 35 and 38.

Can someone choose to “stop being a Christian?” That is, if eternal security is true, is it only true in relationship to external forces? Can internal forces—ourselves—cause us to lose our salvation?

⁶Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998). 464.

Paul’s interpretation of Ps. 44 may ultimately seem to contradict its message since he envisions victory through and in spite of afflictions. But this understanding of the psalm is valid. The psalmist prays that God will vindicate his people and bring them victory in the midst of their sufferings, and the implication of the psalm is that this petition will be answered.

⁷The NET Bible First Edition Notes (Biblical Studies Press, 2006). Ro 8:37.

⁸Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin and Daniel G. Reid, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993). 41.

First an answer from a Romans' commentary, then a broader look:

Some scholars have argued that although nothing in creation can separate one from the love of God, people can themselves choose to depart from God and thereby fall outside the scope of the saving love of Christ.²² This interpretation should be rejected. As we have seen, Rom. 8:28–30 constitutes an unbreakable process. All those who are foreknown end up being glorified. No possibility is extended that some of those who are justified may not be glorified. The category of the justified is inseparable from the category of the glorified. Such an interpretation makes sense because those upon whom God set his covenantal love before creating the world are those he predestined to share the eschatological image of the Son. Those whom he has chosen before history began will surely persevere and attain to glorification. These comments should not be interpreted as a denial of the necessity to meet conditions in order to obtain eschatological salvation (cf. 8:17). The point is that God will grant sufficient grace so that believers will inevitably and surely be enabled to meet those conditions.

Those who defend the view that believers may possibly forsake their salvation note that nothing is said here about the impossibility of believers separating themselves from Christ's love. Gundry Volf (1990: 57–58; cf. Calvin 1960: 189; Moo 1991: 589), however, is correct in arguing that the objective of the text is to rule out that very eventuality. Affliction, persecution, famine, death, and so on are mentioned because these are the sorts of things that would cause a believer to renounce faith in Christ. Paul is not only saying that Christ still loves believers when persecution arrives, although that is doubtless true. He is also saying that the love of Christ is so powerful that believers will not forsake him despite the sword, persecution, famine, and so on. There is no need to mention the will of the believer in this text because Paul canvasses every possible thing (οὔτε τις κτίσις ἑτέρα, *oute tis ktisis hetera*, neither any other created thing) that could provoke believers to apostatize. None of these threats will succeed, for the love of Christ is stronger still and he will see to it that what has been started will be finished (cf. 1 Cor. 1:8; Phil. 1:6; 1 Thess. 5:24).⁹

The question begs other questions:

Is there any sin, including rebellion that the Cross can not cover?

Is there any sin, after “conversion” (new birth) that the Cross was not intended to cover?

Can someone be deceived by a heresy or cult therefore forfeiting salvation?

An additional question that some might have is—what is the unpardonable sin?
Matthew 12:22-29; Mark 3:22-30

While I can't go through all the exegetical issues here, *very briefly*:

Observations

What does it mean to “blasphemy/speak against the Holy Spirit”?

Blasphemy is an expression of defiant hostility toward God¹⁰, either in claiming to be God when one is not, or claiming that God is not who He says he is.

“Blasphemy” is extreme slander, equivalent to “speaking against”.¹¹

The sin was committed by unbelievers

The sin involved accusing Jesus of being in league with Satan

The sin was committed by the Pharisees when they willfully rejected the Holy Spirit's work **through** the Messiah.

They saw a great miracle and heard Jesus' own teaching, but they called good evil (Isa. 5:20) by attributing the miracle to the devil. The person who commits this sin is not ignorant, but chooses in the face of irrefutable facts to reject God, to call God the devil.¹²

²² So, e.g., Melancthon 1992: 183–84 (the promise applies only as long as we exercise faith); Bengel 1860: 98–99; Godet 1956: 333; Sanday and Headlam 1902: 220–21; Marshall 1969: 93–94.

⁹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 466.

¹⁰ William L. Lane, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974, p. 145.

¹¹ EBC, D. A. Carson, Electronic Media, Zondervan

¹² Randall C. Gleason, *The Old Testament Background of the Warning in Hebrews 6:4-8*, *Bib Sac*, Vol155 Num 617, Jan 98, p. 80.

Scribal Tradition: Sifre on Deut. 32:38 (end). “The Holy One, blessed be he, pardons everything else, but on profanation of the Name (i.e. blasphemy) He takes vengeance immediately.”

Which means it can not be done accidentally or inadvertently
 The nature of the sin is to ascribe what is the obvious work of the Holy Spirit (e.g., releasing people from Satan’s power) to Satan himself

Did the Pharisees commit the unpardonable sin?
 Some say no because they “spoke against Jesus” not the Holy Spirit
 But it seems better to understand Jesus words, rather than a **warning** that they (Pharisees) were approaching the point of no return, as a **judgment/condemnation** for their lack of faith in Jesus, particularly the attributing of Jesus’ miracles not to the Spirit, but to the devil.

Interpretation
 Attributing to Satan the works of the Holy Spirit as done by Christ in His earthly ministry
 Attributing Jesus miracles (which were to authenticate who He was, 11:4-6) to Satan.
 In this historical context, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit denotes the conscious and deliberate rejection of the saving power and grace of God released through Jesus’ word and act. Jesus’ action in releasing men from demonic possession was a revelation of the Kingdom of God which called for decision. . . . This severe warning was not addressed to laymen but to carefully trained legal specialist whose task was to interpret the biblical Law to the people. It was their responsibility to be aware of God’s redemptive action. . . The admonition concerning blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is not to be divorced from this historical context and applied generally. Mark emphasizes this by terminating the incident with a reference to the specific accusation that Jesus was possessed by an unclean spirit. The use of the imperfect tense of the verb in the explanatory note, “because *they were saying* that he was possessed,” implies repetition and a fixed attitude of mind, the tokens of callousness which brought the scribes to the brink of unforgivable blasphemy.¹³

Historical sin—not possible now
 Unpardonable—because history cannot be changed
 That is, the sin the religious leaders committed resulted in their condemnation and a delay in the establishment of the earthly kingdom.

To answer this question we must reflect not only on individual specific passages, but on the whole teaching of salvation.

There are at least two approaches to eternal security:

- (1) begin with proof texts and answer difficult passages,
- (2) begin with the accomplishments of God in salvation and then continue as in number one.

The nature of salvation

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Who conceived of salvation? | God (Ephesians 1:3-14 particularly v. 4) |
| Who provided for salvation? | |
| Who enacted salvation? | God, through the death of Christ and the conviction/regeneration by the Spirit (Romans 3:21-26; 5:1-2, 9, 11; Titus 3:5) |
| Who is able to ensure salvation? | God, Christ and the Spirit (1 Peter 1: 3-5; John 6:39-40; Ephesians 4:20) |

More specifically, notice how the Godhead is involved in providing for the believer’s security.

The believer’s relationship to the Godhead:

- ▶ Security through the Father:
 - Purpose (Ephesians 1:4)
 Salvation is intended to produce conformity to the image of Christ
 Romans 8:28-30
 - Power (Ephesians 1:18-20; 1 Peter 1:3-9)
 As heirs of God, we are assured that He is powerful enough to insure our inheritance

¹³ William L. Lane, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974, p. 145-146. In the footnote he adds:

“This sin is committed when a man recognizes the mission of Jesus by the Holy Spirit but defies and resists and curses it.”

- Love (Romans 5:7-10)
 - What God began He will complete
 - Philippians 1:6
 - 1 Corinthians 1:8-9
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24
 - 2 Thessalonians 3:3;
 - 2 Timothy 1:12; 4:18

Even when discussing the real and grave threats to continuity in salvation posed by present afflictions or trials and the last judgment, Paul expresses certainty of Christians' final salvation. His confidence even reaches a mighty crescendo in his acclamations of God's faithfulness: "God is faithful!" and "will strengthen you and keep you from the evil (one)" (2 Thess 3:3); God "will not allow you to be tested beyond what you are able [to endure] but will provide ... the way out that you may be able to endure" (1 Cor 10:13), and "will confirm you until the end blameless at the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 1:8–9). Paul prays that God may "sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess 5:23–24).¹⁴

- ▶ Security through the Son:
 - Dying for sinners (Romans 8:34)
 - Rising again to be the believer's advocate (Colossians 3:1; 1 John 2:1-2; Hebrews 7:25).

Christ's accomplishment

All sins paid for
Past, Present and Future
Colossians 2:13-14
John 5:24

- ▶ Security through the Holy Spirit:
 - He is the Agent in regeneration (Titus 3:5)

The Spirit is a guarantee

- He indwells the believer (Romans 8:9-11; 1 Corinthians 12:13; John 14:16-17)
- He is the guarantee through the sealing (Ephesians 1:14; 4:30)
 - a mark of God's ownership

"Although salvation was planned and originated by the Father, and actually accomplished by the Son, it is the Holy Spirit who applies it to the life of the believer, thus bringing to fulfillment the divine intention for humans."¹⁵

¹⁴Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin and Daniel G. Reid, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993). 41.

¹⁵ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), p. 945.

Can someone be so deceived that they forfeit salvation?

A clearer statement of the consequences of abandoning faith in the gospel is found in Galatians 5:2–4. If the Galatians embrace the false gospel of justification by works of the Law, Paul warns, “Christ will not benefit you at all. ... You are severed from Christ, ... you have fallen away from grace.” In other words, the Galatians would cut themselves off from the hope of salvation. On the other hand, Paul cannot imagine this actually taking place: “have you experienced such great things in vain, if [at all one] really [can experience such great gifts] in vain?” (Gal 3:4). Unless this cryptic verse is a threat that it was all in vain, Paul here thinks of their losing salvation as an impossible possibility. And in the final analysis he is “confident in the Lord” (Gal 5:10) that the Galatians will not make the decisive break with the gospel (and lose salvation). This expression of confidence does not make the danger less real or the warning less urgent, but it finds the way out in the faithfulness of the Lord, through whose intervention Paul anticipates his admonitions achieving their desired result.¹⁶

The question naturally arises, Must a believer spend his whole life on earth frustrated by ongoing defeats to indwelling sin? (7:21-25) Is there no power provided to achieve victory? The answer to the first question is no and to the second, yes. In chapter 8, Paul described the ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit of God who is the source of divine power for sanctification and the secret for spiritual victory in daily living. But first Paul reminded his readers that **therefore**—since deliverance is “through Jesus Christ our Lord” (7:25)—**no condemnation** (*katakrima*, “punishment”) awaits **those who are in Christ Jesus**, as a result of their faith and identification with Him (cf. 6:13; John 5:24). They are justified, declared righteous, and therefore stand in His grace (Rom. 5:2) and not under His wrath (1:18), and possess eternal life (5:17-18, 21). Christ is the sphere of safety for all who are identified with Him by faith. In the better Greek manuscripts, 8:1 ends here. The words “who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit” were probably transcribed from verse 4.¹⁷

This section on the doctrine of a believer’s sanctification (vv. 28-39) logically follows the discussion of its goal or end (vv. 18-27). To discuss the goal of sanctification—a believer’s hope, which he awaits eagerly and steadfastly—is pointless unless realizing that goal is certain. God provided that certainty and confirms the believer’s hope, since sanctification from its beginning in regeneration to its completion in glorification is ultimately God’s work, which believers appropriate by faith (cf. Phil. 1:6).¹⁸



Implications/Application

“I have held many things in my hands, and have lost them all; but whatever I have placed in God’s hands, that I still possess.”¹⁹

“The biblical representation of the believer’s role in perseverance allows no room whatsoever for passivity, moral carelessness, easy-believism, or antinomianism. The Christian strives for godliness as if everything depended on him or her, while confident that the outcome ultimately rests in God.”²⁰

By way of warning—there is a difference between security and assurance, and between security and perseverance. When one who claimed to be a Christian no longer gives evidence that he or she is a Christian, it does call into question the reality of their relationship with God. We, however, cannot know the heart. If we know someone who has wandered from the Lord, we should pursue them. God is able to keep His own, but not all who think they are His are (Matthew 7:22-23)

The perseverance which Paul affirms, therefore, can only be “in faith.” Only the one who believes in Christ can know assurance of final salvation (Col 1:22–23). Perseverance is not automatic. Estrangement from the gospel through unbelief can break the continuity in salvation and bring its

¹⁶Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin and Daniel G. Reid, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993). 43.

¹⁷John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985). 2:469.

¹⁸John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985). 2:473.

¹⁹Martin Luther (1483-1546) at the Commemoration of Bridget of Sweden, Abbess of Vadstena.

²⁰Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), p. 450,

completion into question—or call the genuineness of a person’s conversion itself into question. Nevertheless Paul can view the threat of unbelief from the ultimate perspective of his confidence in God, the gracious and faithful giver and finisher of salvation. This perspective enables Paul to hold onto perseverance in this non-automatic sense, always dependent on divine intervention.²¹

Key Point

Secure in God



What do we learn
About God?

Faithful
Powerful



Act on it

For some, the best application of this passage would be to memorize it and memorize other significant statements about security like:

John 10:27-29 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. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. (ESV)

1 John 5:13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life. (ESV)

For some, the best application of this passage will be to, after meditating on it—to thank God for His forgiveness and longsuffering mercy. To allow the truths of this passage, and the whole of Romans 8, to serve to assure—remove guilt—and provide a basis for understanding and living the abundant life God has promised.

For some, the best application of this passage will be confession—confession that they have taken God’s grace for granted. That rather than the certainty of their salvation motivating their obedience, they have used it for passivity.

If we know someone, in our circle of influence who has wandered far from God—don’t give them assurance. Challenge them, as Paul would say, to “repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance” (Acts 26:20), the very words that Jesus spoke to the self-righteous religious leaders of Israel.

Matthew 3:8 “Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance” (NASB95)

²¹Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin and Daniel G. Reid, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993). 44.

Appendix 1: Thoughts from Theologians

Scott Hafemann³: This is a much needed topic in our day of nominal, American “Christianity” and the “decisionism” of much of American evangelicalism. Moreover, I realize that what I am about to say cuts across the grain of much of contemporary preaching, but this is the way I read Paul. So right up front let me emphasize that I believe that the apostle Paul is absolutely convinced that those who have been redeemed by Christ *will* continue to “fight the good fight” and “finish the race” by “keeping the faith” (2 Ti 4:7). But for Paul this statement of confidence concerning the believer is first and foremost a conviction about God’s grace.

The doctrine of “perseverance” is a statement about the surety of God’s merciful commitment to us, not a reflection of our commitment to God. On the one hand, believers persevere in their faith not because of their own decision, but because of *God’s* self-generated eternal decree, which unleashes a chain of consequences that begins with God’s foreknowledge and predestination and climaxes with our glorification (Ro 8:29–30). On the other hand, believers persevere not because of their own fortitude, but because of *God’s* historical activity of working all things together toward this good end (note that Ro 8:29–30 functions to support 8:28 and 8:31–39).

Hence, God’s commitment to sanctify and glorify those whom he has predestined and justified, and to orchestrate all things together to that end, means that *God’s* glory is on the line and being displayed in the perseverance of those whom he “chose before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love” (Eph 1:3; cf. Col 1:21–22, 1 Th 5:9, 2 Th 2:13–14). Conversely, our “hope in sharing the glory of God” (Ro 5:2) honors not ourselves but *God*, since it reflects our confidence in the perfection of *his* character (i.e. his integrity to do what he says he will do) and in the strength of *his* might (i.e. his ability to do what he says he will do) (Ro 4:20). Those to whom God is committed will therefore remain committed to God because God’s ultimate commitment is to display his glory, one means for which is ensuring the perseverance of his people in accordance with his promises (Ro 11:36, 16:25–7, 1 Co 15:28, 2 Co 1:20, Eph 1:6, 12, 14, Php 2:11, etc.). For this reason, Paul is convinced that “he who began a good work [in the Philippians] will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Php 1:6). This is why those who do not persevere show, by their very lack of perseverance, that they were never called and justified by God.

So, given his theocentric perspective, Paul’s crucial question concerning perseverance is not whether we have made a “decision” for God, but whether God has called us to himself. Paul’s first consideration as a pastor was whether there was genuine evidence that the grace of God had been poured out in a person’s life. But Paul’s desire was not to be a “spiritual cop.” Rather, he wanted to comfort God’s people in the midst of their personal and circumstantial adversities by pointing to that evidence in order to assure them that God was present and powerfully at work in their lives for their good (note, e.g., the evidence for Php 1:6 in 1:5, 7; for 1 Th 1:4 in 1:3, 5–10, for 2:13 in 2:14, for 3:7 in 3:6; for 1 Co 1:4 in 1:5–7, with the promise of 1:8, because of God’s faithfulness as declared in 1:9; for Col 1:3 in 1:4–8; etc.). Paul is sure that where the Spirit is present, he will produce “fruit” (Gal 5:22–23). Where

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the glory of God is encountered, it will produce transformation into the image of God (2 Co 3:18). Where God has called his people, they will follow with faith, hope, love, and suffering for the sake of the gospel (1 Th 1:3, 6, 3:3, 2 Th 1:34, Eph 3:14–19, Ro 8:37, 2 Ti 3:12). The sign that the Spirit poured out through the gospel has taken root in one’s life is “obedience [that comes from faith],” which, in order to glorify God, was the purpose of Paul’s entire ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles (Ro 1:5, 15:18, 16:26). For this reason, since the Corinthians had shown signs that God had indeed “washed,” “sanctified,” and “justified” them (1 Co 6:11), Paul expects them not to be classified any longer among the morally wicked who will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Co 6:9–10, cf. Gal 5:21, Eph 5:3–11). Paul asserts that perseverance is *visible* in a real change of life in real people in the midst of the real world (Tit 2:14). Perseverance is not a continuing mental assent to the truth of events in the past; it is a continuing and active obedience to God’s will as the expression of a growing trust in his promises.

Of course, Paul recognizes that perseverance in sanctification is a matter of progress over a lifetime, not perfection overnight (cf. Php 1:25, Col 1:10, 1 Th 4:1, 2 Th 1:3). Thus, Paul gives those Corinthians involved in the strife of 1 Corinthians 1:11–12 the benefit of the doubt. They *may* be Christians. But if so, they are still “babes in Christ,” inasmuch as they are acting as “men of the flesh,” and not spiritually (1 Co 3:1, 3). But if they *are* “spiritual,” then Paul fully expects them to grow up (1 Co 1:10, 3:18–22, 4:7, 16, 5:1–2, 6:4–8, 18, 11:17–22, 14:20)! And he expects those in Corinth who are already strong in the faith to

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get even stronger (1 Co 8:11, 10:24, 31, 11:1, 14:1, etc.; cf. Ro 14:13–21), just as he expected those who eventually did repent to demonstrate it by giving their money away (cf. 2 Co 8:7–8, 24, 9:3, 13).

Paul's imperatives are not options or good advice, but the necessary implications of the indicative reality upon which they are based (cf. Php 2:12–13, 2 Th 2:14–15). Perseverance in a growing spirituality is not the experience of the Christian elite, but the promise to all those who belong to God. Paul demands what he demands because he is convinced that God has granted what he has granted. Sanctification is consequently *inextricably* linked to justification as its manifestation in daily life! “How can we who have died to sin still live in it?” (Ro 6:2). Because we *are* saved we must therefore exhibit “endurance with regard to good work” in order *to be* saved (Ro 2:7; cf. 2:10–13, Gal 6:9, 2 Ti 4:7–8).

First Corinthians 3:1–3 is not a word of comfort (“relax, the issue is not your salvation, but your growth”), but of chastisement (“watch out, the issue of your growth is a matter of your salvation”)! First Corinthians 3:15 is not the loophole in the doctrine of sanctification that denies the necessity of spiritual growth. Paul's concern there is with evaluating the work of his fellow ministers, not with their personal status in Christ (Cf. 1 Co 3:9–10). Nor does it turn obedience into the striving for rewards, as if there are some optional things that we do earn with our efforts. The “carnal Christian” of 1 Corinthians 3:1–4 is not a third class of humanity between being a non-Christian and being a “Spirit-filled Christian.” Just as “Spirit-filled Christian” is a needless tautology (Ro 8:9, 14), “Carnal Christian” is an oxymoron that cannot endure for long, for in 1 Corinthians 3:3 Paul places the behavior of the “men of the flesh” who

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are still “babes in Christ” in the category of those who do not have the Spirit at all! From Paul's perspective, to claim to be a Christian, while at the same time willingly and gladly remaining in baby-like states of immature sin, is a contradiction in terms that must be resolved in one direction or the other (Ro 6:15–19).

The natural implication of Paul's understanding of the divine foundation and human necessity of perseverance is the fact that whenever he encounters those who claim to be Christians, but show no interest in repenting from sin and becoming more like Christ, he *warns* them that they may be deluded about their salvation (1 Co 15:2, 2 Co 6:1, Gal 1:6). The fear of God is his gracious gift granted to those who believe in order to keep them persevering (2 Co 5:11). The warning of peril is thus God's instrument of perseverance. Hence, Paul's initial word to those Corinthians who were tearing the church apart with their boasting was that “if any one destroys God's temple, God will destroy him” (1 Co 3:16). After doing everything in his power to win them back to Christ, Paul's last word to those Corinthians still in rebellion against him and his gospel was to test themselves to see if they are “holding to [their] faith” (2 Co 13:5). If they do not finally repent, he will have to conclude that they were never part of God's people. God's commitment to perfect us is conditioned by our continuing in the faith, since that is what he enables us to do (Col 1:22–23).

In calling others to account for themselves, Paul is simply preaching what he practices. Like a boxer, Paul's constant admonition to himself is “to pummel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified” (1 Co 9:27; cf. 1 Ti 4:7–10, 6:11–12). For Paul, these warnings are real, since God's work is effective. Those who will not believe them cannot be considered “believers.” Perseverance in repentance, not persistent nonchalance in the face of sin, is the sign that the Spirit is at work in our lives. For if the Spirit is at work within us, “*godly* grief” and the fear of *God's* judgment, not comfort in our condition, will be our response when we recognize our sin (2 Co 5:9–10, 7:1, 9–12, Ro 14:10–12). Since God cannot go back on his word nor be thwarted in his purposes, perseverance in the obedience of faith is *the* evidence of a genuine conversion.

So can we ever be sure of our salvation? Paul's answer is a resounding yes (cf. e.g. Ro 5:6–11)! But since the test of persevering faith is real, true assurance comes when we need it: in the present! The problem with the doctrine of “eternal security” (“once saved, always saved, no matter what you do!”) is that it is focused on our past decisions without regard for the present or the future. This leads to a false assurance. In stark contrast, Paul's understanding of perseverance is focused squarely on trusting God in the present and the future, in confirmation of, but also in disregard for the past (Php 3:12–16). Though there may be many valleys, true faith and its good works will not die, since, by definition, they are an essential part of the gift of God (Eph 2:8). Moreover, genuine assurance is based on objective evidence: upon real repentance and a growing “obedience of faith” (Eph 2:10). “Once really saved, always saved, as seen precisely in what you do!” It is those who feel remorse for their sins, trust Christ for their forgiveness, and seek to live by the Spirit that can be assured that God is mightily at work in them.

As a pastor, Paul therefore comforts the

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contrite and encourages the confident, but confronts the complacent and arrogant sinner with the judgment of God, no matter what his or her past track record in the church. Although Paul never points out any degree of holiness that must be reached at any time to be assured of our salvation (God is the

author of sanctification!), he does paint a picture of what perseverance looks like in our lives: *increasing* conformity to the image of Christ as the image of God (Ro 8:29, 2 Co 3:18, 4:4, Eph 5:1).

Finally, and most importantly, since God is the author of our sanctification, the pathway to perseverance is prayer and the power of the Spirit. For this reason, our perseverance itself is an expression of our utter dependence on God (cf. 1 Th 3:11–13, 2 Th 1:11–12, Eph 1:15–23, 3:14–19, Col 1:9–14). Hence, the end of our perseverance is praise (Ro 11:36, Eph 1:6, 12, 14).²²

Carl F. H. Henry¹: The believer’s eternal security has been doctrinally debated throughout many generations. The controversy has often been depicted in terms of “the perseverance of the saints.” Yet the term perseverance occurs but once in Scripture, and there it is connected with prayer (Eph 6:18).

In any event, it would seem more appropriately connected with the perseverance of our Lord. For if we focus on ourselves we soon know better than to affirm the moral and/or spiritual perseverance of sinners—and such indeed we are.

To be sure, those of us who are “called to be saints” are on the way to sinless perfection. We shall be conformed to the image of Christ, an image that the Pauline epistles characterize in terms of truth and righteousness.

That need not mean, however, that we are day by day progressing in holiness at an always discernible pace. The believer who grows in grace soon becomes aware that our thoughts and deeds are part of the fabric of a daily existence that may improperly be assumed to belong to normative spiritual experience, when in fact they actually compromise an ideal spiritual life.

The conscience of the unregenerate self easily accommodates what offends the Creator and Lord of Life. Even the believer’s conscience is not infallible, but requires correction by the Scriptures. So it is that what at one stage of spiritual growth seemed to be compatible with Christian commitment is seen in fact to be quite objectionable.

Indeed, the reverse can also be the case: what seems objectionable may in fact not be so at all. For instance, the New Testament mirrors the conflict that emerged over the propriety of eating meat that had been offered to idols.

The Christian is to live with a good conscience enlivened by the Holy Spirit and attuned to the teaching of the Book. The Holy Spirit uses truth as a means both of persuasion and conviction. The professing

Christian who disregards what Scripture enjoins or what the Bible disallows and who appeals to the Holy Spirit to justify the pursuit of unbiblical behavior does violence to some of the Christian basics. We might well question the fidelity of his or her redemption by Christ.

Thus, the issue of eternal security is sometimes raised when what is really involved is salvific confusion. A nonsystematic approach to Scripture is being used to accommodate theological insecurity and moral instability.

Calvinists and Arminians have long debated the doctrine of perseverance of the saints. Some commentators have sought to trace this conflict to an unjustifiable imposition of strict logic on Scripture. But if Scripture is not to be correlated with logic, then no biblical doctrinal distinctions would seem to matter much.

Arminians insist that such passages as Luke 8:9–15, Galatians 5:4, and Hebrews 2:14, 3:7–4:13, and 6:4–6 imply that a believer can defect from faith. Emphasizing freedom of the will, they contend that one may lose salvation apart from continual trust in God.

Calvinists contend that one who is genuinely redeemed by the Saviour cannot forfeit salvation. They cite as evidence such passages John 6:37, 10:28, 17:6–11, and Romans 8:31–39 and 11:29. They correlate the perseverance of the saints with the perseverance of the Savior. Reformed tradition, moreover, stresses divine promises such as Phillipians 1:6, 2 Thessalonians 3:3, and 2 Timothy 1:12 and 4:18.

Strong statements in Scripture emphasize that human misbehavior after regeneration can destroy the achievements of a lifetime. But Scripture stresses also that God knows the thoughts and intentions of every life, and that the grace of God can survive the infidelity of human life, though a rebellious professing believer dare not presume on that grace.²³

²² *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology Volume 2* (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1998; 2006). vnp.2.1.68-2.1.71.

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²³ *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology Volume 2* (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1998; 2006). vnp.2.1.64-2.1.65.

Appendix 2: Assurance and Security (Repeated from the lesson on Romans 8:1-11)

Definition of Security

Eternal security is the theological term used to express the fact that true Christians saved by grace, regenerated through the work of the Holy Spirit, adopted as children of God, and baptized by the Holy Spirit into the family of God are kept in that salvation eternally through the power of God.

The concept of eternal security focuses on the work of God in keeping His true children eternally secure. It is a dynamic concept focusing on the power of God exercised by each of the members of the Trinity actively preserving our salvation (see under Calvinist view for individual works of the Trinity). It recognizes times of backsliding and recognizes the need for fruit in the life but also recognizes that continuance in salvation ultimately depends on the power of God.

Definition of Perseverance

Perseverance is the term used by Reformed writers.

Perseverance is taken to mean that believers “can neither totally or finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.”²⁴

The doctrine of perseverance is that “continuous operation of the Holy Spirit in the believer, by which the work of divine grace that is begun in the heart, is continued and brought to completion.”²⁵

The focus is on the believer who perseveres although by the decree and power of God.

Perseverance²⁶

The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is really the idea of sanctification taken through the whole of a person’s life. If God is the author of their salvation, he is also the finisher of it. As Paul says, he will bring to completion the good work he has begun in Christ (Phil 1:6). Since faith itself is a gift of God (Eph 2:8-9), God enables believers by the power of the Spirit to persevere in their trust and to continually move toward Christlikeness, even if for a long while they err in sin. God does not revoke his call, nor annul the justification he has put in place (Rom 11:32). Those whom he has called...he also glorified (Rom 8:30). He will never let his own perish (John 10:28-30).

Passages such as Hebrews 6:4-6 have often been used to deny the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. But these passages do not teach that people can lose their salvation (cf. Heb 6:9). Rather, the writer is drawing inferences based on the evidence (i.e., behavior of his audience) he sees. Like a good pastor he is warning people of the real consequences for those who live with knowing or unknowing contempt for Christ’s sacrifice. He does not know whether each and every one is saved, only that if they are going to withdraw from Christianity/persecution into the politically safe-haven of Judaism, then one may certainly question whether such a person knows Christ. Thus the writer warns them of the eternal consequences of life apart from Christ. The important point that these so-called warning passages demonstrate is that *one* of the means God uses to protect his saints and enable them to persevere is powerful preaching and his word of rebuke.

Finally, this doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, or as it is commonly called, the eternal security of believers (not exactly the same thing), does not lead to sluggish behavior or a lack of zeal in the Christian life. First of all, it includes severe warnings in this regard; we saw this above. Second, perseverance means that the Spirit is persevering with us in order to bring about the fruit of the Spirit in us. He has been doing this from the beginning since we were at one time dead in sin when he breathed regenerating life into us. Why would he stop after we’re saved? We are no more sinful now, than we were then. Third, our election is unto holiness and glorification and the Trinitarian plan cannot be thwarted (Eph 1:4; Rom 8:30). Fourth, to argue that believers can lose their salvation is to misunderstand many Biblical passages and to position the work of sanctification ultimately in the human will. This is unscriptural and contrary chiefly to the principle of grace. Finally, those who want to argue from Hebrews 6:4-6 that believers can lose their salvation if they don’t live properly, must also accept the truth that, once lost, it cannot be regained—as the passage clearly says. On the contrary, however, the Bible emphatically teaches the eternal security of the believer (Rom 8:38-39).

We must also note that not every one who claims to be a believer is a believer, and therefore to be saved. Thus the warnings by several scriptural writers. Many will say to Him on that day, “Lord, Lord,” and he will say to them, “Depart from me, for I never knew you” (Matt 7:21-23). Therefore, just because a person claims to believe in Jesus does not mean that they do. The doctrine of eternal security refers only to those who are truly born-again and who therefore persevere to the end.

²⁴ *Westminster Confession of Faith*, XVII:1.

²⁵ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p.546

²⁶ Greg Herrick, PhD., *In Introduction to Christian Belief: A Layman’s Guide*, Biblical Studies Foundation, Bible.org, Winter 2001.

Difference between Eternal Security and Perseverance of the Saints

In common use, the two terms and concepts are used interchangeably.

Comparison

Both state that an individual who is regenerated will spend eternity with God
Both place an emphasis on what God has done

Contrast

Eternal security sees the issue from God's perspective. The salvation process from election to glorification is finished from God's perspective, so the individual will be kept by God.
Perseverance of the saints sees the issue from man's perspective. Faith in God will last, based on God's work in the regenerate individual.

The Theological Statement of Security

The concluding proof for the security of the believer is in his relationship to the Godhead.

Security through the Father: The believer is kept by the Father's. . .

Purpose (Eph 1:4)

Power (Eph 1:18-20; 1 Peter 1:3-9)

Love (Rom 5:7-10)

The work of the Father guarantees the security of the believer (Rom. 5:7-10; 8:28-30; Eph. 1:4-5; 1 Pet. 1:3-9)

Security through the Son: The believer is kept by the Son's. . .

Dying for sinners (Rom 8:34)

Rising again to be the believer's advocate (Col 3:1; 1 Jn 2:1-2; Heb 7:25).

The work of the Son guarantees the security of the believer (John 6:38-40; 17:24; Rom. 3:25; 5:1; Eph. 1:7; 1 John 2:1; Heb. 7:25)

Security through the Holy Spirit: The believer is kept by the Spirit

He is the agent in regeneration (Ti 3:5)

He indwells the believer, (Holy Spirit makes the believer His permanent dwelling place at the time of regeneration) (1 Cor 12:13; Jn 14:16-17; Rom.5:5; 8:9; 1 Cor.6:19)

He is the guarantee through the sealing of the Spirit (Eph 1:13; 4:30).

The work of the Holy Spirit guarantees the security of the believer (John 14:17; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:30; Titus 3:5)

Assurance

Assurance is the personal recognition that one has eternal life. It is the personal recognition of the promises of Scripture related to the permanence of salvation.

Lack of assurance comes from

Uncertainty regarding personal faith in Christ. "Did I really have faith?"

Uncertainty over personal victory over sin or lack of victory.

Uncertainty because of false additions to the Gospel

Was the "right" prayer prayed?

Should the second blessing be experienced?

Is there something else that needs to be done?

Uncertainty regarding the teaching of Scripture

A lack of faith

Basis for Assurance

Scripture: There is a proper basis for assurance given to the believer based on the teaching of security (see above).

Faith includes assurance and should lead to assurance (He. 11:1).

Specific verses related to assurance: 1 John 5:1-15 (esp. 10-13)

Questions

- 1) All that believe in Christ are saved and secure, but how does one know that he has truly believed?
- 2) What relationship does spiritual fruit have to assurance?
- 3) Does the belief that good works are necessary for assurance destroy the ground for assurance?

Answers

In the debate regarding assurance, security and assurance are typically confused. The issue is not the loss of salvation, but one's personal knowledge that they have indeed believed and are saved. Scripture is our final authority and the basis for our assurance, but it does not specifically state who has believed and who has not. How do I know I have truly believed?

First, do I have a love for God and a desire for intimacy with Him as given by the Holy Spirit? (Rom. 8:14-16, Gal. 4:6)

Second, is there Christian fruit in my life, evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit in my heart? (Lk. 6:44; Mt. 7:16,33; Jn. 5:28,29; Rom. 8:1-11; Gal. 5:15-26; Jam. 2:14-26)

Third, do I believe the promises of God regarding the Gospel? (Jn. 3:16, Rom. 4:5)

Fourth, do I keep God's commandments (1 Jn. 2:3;) and love the brethren? (1 John 2:9-11; 3:14)

→ Thus, the ground of assurance is the objective promises of the Word of God, but also the subjective experience of the believer that they have indeed appropriated those promises.

Christian fruit, i.e., a changed life, is fundamental to assurance, rather than a destroyer of it. All who trust in Christ are saved and secure (security), and our personal knowledge that we have trusted Christ and appropriated the promises of salvation is our assurance. The lack of a changed life, perspective, direction, etc., would be evidence that I have not been born again and would be grounds for doubting that I have truly believed in Christ as the Bible describes belief, while the presence of fruit in my life would be an encouragement, even in times of my doubt (1 Cor. 5:17). I may lose a philosophical argument with an atheistic professor of philosophy, and even question the logical and historical validity of Christianity, but I know that God has changed my life, and I know that I love Jesus (2 Pet. 1:10). The subjective elements of assurance combine with the object promises of God to give me assurance.

Problem #1

How does one quantify works as a basis for assurance? When is one doing enough that he or she can feel confident that they have truly believed?

Response

The issue is not that someone must measure up to perfection in order to be assured of their salvation, rather, has there been a change in my life? The transition from death, darkness, blindness, and enmity toward God, to life, light, sight, and love for God is a significant transaction that will result in evident changes in my life.

Nonetheless, to quantify the amount of fruit is difficult. It might be best to ask if there has been a change in direction, a reorientation in one's life (1 Thes. 1:9; Acts 9:35; 11:21). It also should be noted that fruit in one's life is not the only basis of assurance, as it is a significant ministry of the Holy Spirit to give assurance directly to the heart of believers (Heb. 10:15; Jn. 5:10).

Problem #2

Doesn't connecting works with assurance subtly introduce works as a basis of salvation?

Response

No, this is a confusion of evidence and merit, or cause and effect. Fruit is merely evidence of the reality of salvation, i.e., the new birth, not the cause or merit of it (Eph. 2:8-10).

Problem #3

Will not the emphasis on works for assurance cause people to focus upon themselves and lead to a legalistic lifestyle?

Response

An overemphasis on works for assurance may indeed lead to a legalistic lifestyle if one's focus is directed more toward self and one's works rather than upon the person and work of Jesus Christ. We are exhorted to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5), indeed, those in sin are told to fear, lest they fall short of God's rest (Heb. 4:1), but our focus is always to be outward and upon Jesus (Heb. 12:1-3). The heart of the problem is an improper emphasis, and not that works are a part of assurance.

Regarding interpretation, those who would deny that spiritual fruit has anything to do with assurance reject the interpretation that James 2 is referring to works as an evidence of salvation. Hodges, rather, holds that "dead faith" is true faith that is not being obedient, and that "dead faith" is unable to save one from physical death, not spiritual death. Additionally, 1 John is interpreted as dealing with the experience of fellowship with God, and not the marks of a true believer. Belief and reliance on the promises of God is considered the sole basis of assurance, and thus passages that treat works in connection with evidence of salvation are interpreted as referring to rewards.

Romans 8:31-39

- 31 What then shall we say to these things?
If God is for us, who can be against us?
- 32 He who did not spare his own Son
but gave him up for us all,
how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?
- 33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?
It is God who justifies.
- 34 Who is to condemn?
Christ Jesus is the one who died—
more than that, who was raised—
who is at the right hand of God,
who indeed is interceding for us.
- 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?
Shall
tribulation,
or distress,
or persecution,
or famine,
or nakedness,
or danger,
or sword?
- 36 As it is written,
“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”
- 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors
through him who loved us.
- 38 For I am sure that
neither death nor life,
nor angels nor rulers,
nor things present nor things to come,
nor powers,
- 39 nor height nor depth,
nor anything else in all creation,
will be able to separate us from the love of God
in Christ Jesus our Lord. (ESV)

Assurance of Salvation

Aspects of Assurance

