

“Once Saved *Always* Saved”?

Does the Bible Teach “*Eternal Security*” for Believers?

Once you accept Christ as your Saviour, are you “saved” and nothing can come between you and ultimate salvation? Are you “once saved ALWAYS saved”? This subject is one of great contention, strife and controversy! Many ministers claim “eternal security” belongs to every believer, and once you accept Christ nothing can deprive you of salvation. But let’s take another look at this question, because it is definitely NOT TRUE – and you had better understand this, or YOUR salvation may be at serious risk!

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This morning on the radio I heard a popular minister discussing the subject of what he called “the eternal security” of believers – that is, he said with great confidence and dogmatism, as if it were set in concrete, that EVERY BELIEVER who sincerely “accepts Christ” as their Saviour need have no further worry or concern about their future salvation, because once you accept Christ, he said, you are then and there “SAVED”!

Wouldn’t that be a thrilling prospect – if it were true? Wouldn’t you just LOVE to know – for certain – that as if right now, you are indeed “SAVED”, meaning that now nothing can keep you out of God’s Kingdom and gaining salvation and eternal life?

The minister explained once you make a decision for Christ, it is all decided, and your salvation is sealed – determined – and “set.” Nothing can derail you from entering God’s Kingdom and receiving eternal salvation!

Millions, thus reassured by many popular ministers and preachers, confidently and happily go on with their lives, no longer worried, anxious or concerned about “salvation,” or “good works,” or anything else – because they “have it made,” as it were.

As if to “prove” this belief to be true, the radio minister, who has a large following, quoted the apostle Paul’s words in Romans, chapter 8. Once we accept Christ,

the pastor declared, God is then “for us.” Notice the exact words he quoted from Paul! Paul said, “If God is for us, who is going to be against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . No, in ALL these things we are *more than conquerors* through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 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” (Rom.8:31-39, NRSV).

Wow! Quite a wonderful promise, isn’t it? But read it carefully. For God’s truly converted “elect,” true believers, indeed there is no power in heaven and earth that has the ability or power to tear us away from God, and Christ, and salvation. Even Satan the devil has NO POWER to force you to lose your salvation!

But notice very carefully. Don’t misread Paul’s words. Don’t fall into the trap that this popular minister has fallen into. Carefully reading Paul’s words, we must take note of ONE THING he left out of the picture – one item he neglected to mention in this overall scenario. There is *one thing that CAN cause you to lose out on your salvation! And I can PROVE it to you, if you’re willing to listen to the Words of God!*

What is that one thing that Paul left out? It is simply *you yourself!*

“YOU!”

That’s right! YOU! YOU are the missing equation – the bugaboo – the missing ingredient.

In other words, you yourself can CHOOSE to depart from God and Christ, and to go “astray,” to go after “false gods,” to commit idolatry (which means to place anything else ahead of God in priority or value in your own mind), to DISOBEY God, to reject the Word of God, and Christ Himself!

There is, in other words, NO “eternal guarantee” that you will automatically be “saved,” once you profess belief in Christ as your Saviour! Not at all!

Notice what the Scriptures themselves have to testify on this subject – and remember – “the Scripture cannot be annulled” (John 10:35, NRSV). Remember, “All scripture is *inspired by God* and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work” (II Tim.3:16-17).

So – what do the SCRIPTURES have to say on this subject? Let’s ignore, for a moment, the opinions of mere men, and look to GOD for the answers to these eternal issues of life and death, perdition and salvation!

What the Word of God Says

This all seems so perfectly clear to me, because God has blessed me with a good understanding of His Word, which I have studied intently from my youth. Yet, I find people listen to these messages over the radio, or in magazines, or from the pulpit, and the ministers can sound very persuasive and reassuring – with cotton-candy soothing and comforting words – yet they are speaking LIES, and untruths, and Satanic rubbish and drivel which in reality can DESTROY a person’s hope of salvation and eternal life!

This is important! Don’t let anybody deceive you! Jesus Christ Himself prophesied, “BEWARE that no one leads you astray” (Matt.24:4). He added, “And MANY false prophets will arise and lead MANY astray” (verse 11). He went on, warning His true followers, especially those at the END of this present age, “And because of the increase in lawlessness, the (Christian) love of many will grow cold. *But the one who ENDURES TO THE END WILL BE SAVED*” (Matt.24:12-13).

Did you catch that? The Messiah Himself said that because of worldwide lawlessness, and iniquity, that many “Christians” will “grow cold” and lose their love for Christ and for each other! He said – and remember, *HE is the Messiah – He is the “way, the TRUTH, and the life”* (John 14:6) – He said, “the one who ENDURES TO THE END will be saved”!

If you really want to be saved, there is something you *MUST DO*. You must “endure to the END”!

Does that sound like it is all settled already – that you are “guaranteed salvation,” and possess “eternal security,” at this very moment – no matter what you do or what course of action you take, in the future days ahead?

Of course NOT!

Who are we going to believe? Some penny-ante preacher or pastor, no matter how much respected, or beloved? Or the very Son of God Himself?

Only the Overcomers

This theme of enduring to the end, and overcoming to the end, is repeated throughout the Scriptures – especially in the New Testament. I cannot be plainer than that.

Jesus Christ gave many instructions for Christian living in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt.5-7). Among many other things, He declared, “But I say to you, Love your

enemies and pray for those who persecute you, *so that* you may be children of your Father in heaven” (Matt.5:44). He went on, “Be [or become] *perfect*, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (verse 48).

Perfection, my friends, is a process. It is a state that must be gained, or acquired, through diligent constant effort and “overcoming” one’s own selfish nature, selfish interests, influences of other people, including false ministers and teachers, and constantly striving to perfect oneself before God by following His every Word and living by every one of His commandments!

Jesus Christ, the Saviour, explained, when He defeated the devil after being tempted for forty days, “It is written, One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matt.4:4).

What must one do to be saved – to gain salvation? Jesus Christ, whose name in Hebrew is Yeshua, declared, “REPENT, for the kingdom of heaven has come near” (Matt.4:17). The word “repent” means, by its very definition, to stop living the wrong way, in indifference and disobedience to the Word of God, and to begin living your life, as Christ Himself said, “*BY EVERY WORD that comes from the mouth of GOD!*”

In other words, one must not only “believe” in Christ, as all the ministers tell you – but one must also REPENT OF SIN! And what is “sin”? The apostle John defines it for us: He wrote, “Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; SIN IS LAWLESSNESS” (I John 3:4). Or as the Amplified Parallel Bible has it: “Everyone who commits (practices) sin is guilty of lawlessness; for [that is what] sin is, lawlessness (the breaking, violating of God’s law by transgression or neglect – being unrestrained and unregulated by His commands and His will)” (I John 3:4).

What Is “SIN”?

To be saved, we must repent of SIN – and SIN is “breaking God’s law” – “violating God’s law” – failure to live by and keep God’s commandments, which are found in the Bible, the Word of God! These, of course, include but are not limited to the Ten Commandments, the law to love God, to love one’s neighbor, and when we finally boil it down to the essence – God commands us to *live by His every Word found in the Scriptures of truth – the Bible!*

Unless we strive faithfully to do that, for the rest of our lives, and “endure to the END,” we cannot be saved, but would lose out on salvation!

God made this crystal clear to the prophet Ezekiel. He said to the prophet, “But if the wicked man turns from all his sins that he has committed and keeps all My statutes and does that which is LAWFUL and right, he shall surely LIVE [gain salvation]; he shall not die” (Ezek.18:21).

On the other hand, though, God tells Ezekiel, “But *if the righteous man turns away from his righteousness* and commits iniquity and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? None of his righteous deeds which he has done shall be remembered. In his trespass that he has trespassed and in his sin that he has sinned, in them shall he die” (verse 24). This is so important that God repeats it in verse 26: “When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity and dies in his sins, for his iniquity that he has done he shall DIE” – that is, he will suffer the pangs of Gehenna fire and die the final death of the wicked in the Lake of Fire at the end of the age!

To Him that ‘CONQUERS’

Notice! In the letters to the seven churches of God described in Revelation 2-3, Christ gives each one of His churches a warning. He says to them:

Ephesus – “To everyone who *conquers* I will give permission to eat of the tree of life that is in the paradise of God” (Rev.2:7, NRSV).

Smyrna – “Whoever *conquers* will not be hurt by the second death” (verse 11).

Pergamum – “To everyone who *conquers* I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give a white stone, and on the white stone is written a new name that no one knows but the one who receives it” (v.17).

Thyatira – “To everyone who *conquers and CONTINUES to do my works to the END*, I will give authority over the nations; to rule them with an iron rod, as when clay pots are shattered – even as I also received authority from my Father. To the *one who conquers* I will also give the morning star” (vs.26-28).

Sardis – “I know your works; you have a name of being alive [that is, you professed Christ and think you are a Christian], *but you are DEAD*. WAKE UP, and *strengthen what remains and is on the point of death*, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of God. Remember then what you have received and heard; OBEY IT, and REPENT. If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you. Yet you have a few persons in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes; they will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. If you CONQUER, you will be clothed like them in white robes, and I will not blot your name out of the book of life; I will confess your name before my Father and before his angels” (Rev.3:1-5, NRSV).

Notice it! OVERCOMING – CONQUERING – is required for ultimate, final SALVATION! Make no mistake! God means exactly what He says! Thinking you possess “eternal security” and are therefore free to live as you please, or to be negligent of good works, to assume that no works are required for salvation, that it was all decided when you made your “decision” for Christ – is sheer unadulterated NONSENSE and

satanically FALSE teaching which will lead a person straight into the Lake of Fire and brimstone – the final “second death”!

To the church in Philadelphia, God says – “If you CONQUER, I will make you a pillar in the temple of my God; you will never go out of it. I will write on you the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem that comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name” (Rev.3:12).

To receive these wonderful promises, and salvation, one thing is required – we must CONQUER! That is, we must OVERCOME the pulls of the flesh, the human carnal mind, the influences of the evil world around us, the teachings of false ministers and the seduction and deception and enticements of Satan the devil! We must through the help of God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit of POWER, which God gives to us, OVERCOME AND CONQUER all these things!

Nothing therefore is absolutely certain or assured until the END of our lives!

To the Laodicean church, Christ declared – “To the one who *conquers* I will give a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne” (Rev.3:21).

To everyone who *CONQUERS* God will give final SALVATION, glory, and majesty, in the Kingdom of God!

Do you get it? Do you understand?

Run to WIN Your Race!

Paul the apostle understood that we must endure to the end – that we must be FAITHFUL till our dying day, or till Christ returns (whichever comes first!). Paul wrote, of his own spiritual battle: “Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? *RUN in such a way that you may WIN it.* Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one. *So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air; but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified*” (I Cor.9:24-27, NRSV).

Notice this in the Amplified Parallel Bible: “Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but [only] one receives the prize? So RUN [your race] so that you may lay hold [of the prize] and make it yours. . . Therefore I do not run uncertainly (without definite aim). I do not box like one beating the air and striking without an adversary. But [like a boxer] I buffet my body [handle it roughly, discipline it by hardships] and subdue it, *for fear that after proclaiming to others the Gospel and things pertaining to it, I MYSELF SHOULD BECOME UNFIT [not stand the test, be unapproved and rejected as a counterfeit].*”

“Eternal security” once you profess Christ? HOGWASH! Professing Christ is merely the BEGINNING of the Christian faith and walk! Once beginning, you must ENDURE TO THE END, OVERCOMING, CONQUERING, AND BRINGING YOUR SELF INTO SUBJECTION TO CHRIST!

Paul also wrote about this battle in the second letter to the Corinthians. He declared, “For though we walk (live) in the flesh, we are not carrying on our warfare according to the flesh and using mere human weapons. For the weapons of our WARFARE are not physical [weapons of flesh and blood], but they are mighty before God for the overthrow and destruction of strongholds, [inasmuch as we] refute arguments and theories and reasonings and every proud and lofty thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God; and we lead every thought and purpose away captive into the OBEDIENCE of Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One), being in readiness to punish every [insubordinate for his] disobedience, when your own submission and *OBEDIENCE* [as a church] are fully secure and complete” (II Cor.10:3-6).

Notice! We are *not yet* “fully secure and complete.”

“IF Possible” – Not Guaranteed!

Rather, as Paul himself wrote to the Philippians, again quoting the Amplified Parallel Bible, “[For my determined purpose is] that I may know Him [that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and clearly], and that I may in that same day come to know the power outflowing from His resurrection [which it exerts over believers], and that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually TRANSFORMED [in spirit into His likeness even] to His death, [in the hope] that *IF POSSIBLE I may attain to the* [personal and moral] *RESURRECTION . . . Not that I have now attained [this ideal], or have already been made perfect, but I PRESS ON TO LAY HOLD OF (GRASP) and make my own*, that for which Christ Jesus (the Messiah) has laid hold of me and made me His own” (Phil.3:10-12).

Notice Paul’s attitude! He did not believe or claim to already have salvation, but sought to progressively GROW up into the likeness of Christ, so that “IF POSSIBLE” he may attain to the resurrection of the righteous dead, or salvation! “*If possible*”! It is not already “done.” It was NOT “settled at the cross.” It merely *BEGAN* at the cross, where Christ was crucified!

Paul goes on, vehemently, saying, “I do not consider, brethren, that I have captured and made it my own [yet]; but one thing I do [it is my one aspiration]: forgetting what lies behind and *straining forward* to what lies ahead, I PRESS ON TOWARD THE GOAL TO WIN the [supreme and heavenly] prize to which God in Christ Jesus is calling us upward.” So, Paul declares, “So let those [of us] who are spiritually mature and full-grown have this mind and these convictions; and if in any respect you have a different attitude of mind, God will make that clear to you also” (verses 13-15).

Is it all finished when you simply “accept Christ” as your Saviour? Absolutely NOT! The apostle Paul makes it perfectly plain. Once we begin the Christian life, there is a lot of overcoming to do – straining forward to make sure that we will enter the Kingdom of God and attain to salvation! We must “PRESS ON,” we must “STRAIN FORWARD,” and make sure that we win the ultimate prize!

Peter’s Admonition

As the apostle Peter himself also declared that we must escape the moral decay and rottenness of human nature and become partakers of “the divine nature” (II Pet.1:4). He went on, “For this very reason, adding your diligence [to the divine promises], *employ every effort in exercising your faith to develop virtue* (excellence, resolution, Christian energy), and in [exercising] virtue [develop] knowledge (intelligence), and in [exercising] knowledge [develop] self-control, and in [exercising] self-control [develop] steadfastness (patience, endurance), and in [exercising] steadfastness [develop] godliness (piety), and in [exercising] piety [develop] brotherly affection, and in [exercising] brotherly affection [develop] Christian love. For as these qualities are yours and increasingly abound in you, they will keep [you] from being idle or unfruitful unto the [full personal] knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One)” (verses 5-8).

“Overcoming” human nature, the pulls of the flesh, the temptations of the world, and the seduction of Satan, involves a “whole lifetime” of work, diligent effort, growth, and steadfast endurance, to the very end – till either death comes, or the Messiah Himself returns!

Peter summarizes the situation, saying, “For whoever lacks these qualities is blind, [spiritually] short-sighted, seeing only what is near to him, and has become oblivious [to the fact] that he was cleansed from his old sins. Because of this, brethren, be all the more solicitous and eager to MAKE SURE (to ratify, to strengthen, to make steadfast) YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION, for *IF YOU DO THIS, you will never stumble or fall*. Thus there will be richly and abundantly provided for you entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (verses 9-11).

Eternal security ONLY comes at the END of a life spent in overcoming, enduring, and serving God, to the very end!

“Work Out Your OWN Salvation”

Therefore, as the apostle Paul also reminds us, we must constantly, diligently “work out” our own salvation. He declared to the church in Philippi, “Therefore, my dear ones, as you have always obeyed [my suggestions], so now, not only [with enthusiasm you would show] in my presence but much more because I am absent, WORK OUT (cultivate, carry out to the goal, and fully complete) YOUR OWN SALVATION with reverence and awe and trembling (self-distrust, with serious caution, tenderness of

conscience, watchfulness against temptation, timidly shrinking from whatever might offend God and discredit the name of Christ)” (Phil.2:12).

Notice! Salvation requires “working out.” Everyone knows what a “work out” is – going to the gym, or swimming pool, doing laps, walking on the treadmill, getting physical “exercise” to strengthen and tone your body and improve your health.

Even so, we are commanded to WORK OUT spiritually, to grow daily in spiritual character and strength, by exertion and effort, doing GOOD, praying, studying, meditating on God’s Word, tithing to God’s Work, giving offerings, giving to those who are in need, that is – DOING “GOOD WORKS”!

Paul declared, “Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers” (Rom.12:9-13, NRSV).

Peter summarized it this way: “Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called – that you might inherit a blessing. For ‘those who desire life [eternal] and desire to see good days, let them keep their tongues from evil and their lips from speaking deceit; let them turn away from evil and DO GOOD; let them seek peace and pursue it. For the *eyes of the Lord are on the righteous* [those who obey Him], and his ears are open to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil” (I Pet.3:8-12).

Indeed, there are “works” required for salvation! Salvation itself is a free GIFT – but it comes only with stipulations and requirements! The greatness of eternal life and glory is far more than we could ever “EARN” in a thousand life-times. But we must demonstrate to God our utter devotion to Him and willingness to obey Him, follow Christ, deny ourselves, love our Creator and Saviour, and love our neighbor as ourselves!

We must “work out” our own salvation! How? As Paul said, we must do it valuing it greatly, so much so that we work out our salvation with “FEAR AND TREMBLING” – with attitudes of godly fear and reverence and trembling, lest we should succumb to sin and fall short of the mark! We must serve God with godly reverence, fear, awe, and trembling, knowing that if we don’t pay heed and do it, we could and would lose out on salvation, and all the glory that God promises to the believers who endure and overcome to the very end of their lives!

That’s it! That’s what GOD says!

Jesus Christ also declared, firmly and finally, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back [to the things behind] is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62).

He also said, with finality: “Keep your loins girded and your lamps burning; and be like men who are waiting for their master to return home from the marriage feast, so that when he returns from the wedding and comes and knocks, they may open to him immediately” (Luke 12:35-36).

The Example of Christ

Yeshua said with crystal clarity, “STRIVE to enter by the narrow door [force yourselves through it], for many, I tell you, will try to enter *and will not be able*” (Luke 13:24). The Greek word for “strive” here is *agonizomai*, from *agon*, meaning “contest, conflict, contention, fight, race.” It means “to contend, to endeavor, to labor fervently, to fight, to strive.” We get our English words “agony” and “agonize” from this Greek root.

He Himself set us an example. He prayed the night before His death with AGONY and TEARS – “in his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground” (Luke 22:44, NRSV). Paul wrote of His prayers, saying, “In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications,, with LOUD CRIES AND TEARS, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was HEARD because of his reverent submission” (Heb.5:7). He Himself “learned obedience through what he suffered” (verse 8).

Christ, even though He was the Son of God, NEVER took salvation for granted, but FOUGHT and STROVE to overcome and to endure to the end and to CONQUER!

Christian Warfare and Battle

Again, the Messiah compares the Christian life to that of a battle-hardened soldier or warrior, who is assaulting a castle or city with strongholds. Jesus declared, as the Moffatt translation says, “From the days of John the Baptist until now, they are pressing into the Realm of heaven – these eager souls are *storming it!*” (Matt.11:12).

“And from the days of John the Baptist until the present time, the kingdom of heaven has endured violent assault, and violent men seize it by force [as a precious prize – a share in the heavenly kingdom is sought with most ardent zeal and intense exertion]” (Amplified Parallel Bible, same verse).

Let us face the facts, and be frank about it. There is nothing “assured” about our salvation – it is a precious prize for which we must labor, strive, struggle, fight, endure, battle, wage spiritual war, ardently seek, zealously assault as in capturing a city by force of spiritual arms – we must “storm” its ramparts, and climb its walls, and violently fight in order to obtain it! We are engaged in spiritual WARFARE!

The apostle Paul wrote to the Hebrews, “Therefore we must pay greater attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the message declared though angels was valid, and every transgression or disobedience received a just penalty, how can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” (Heb.2:1-3, NRSV).

Paul warned the church at Corinth, “So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall” (I Cor.10:12). Moffatt makes it plain: “So let anyone who thinks he stands *secure*, *TAKE CARE in case he falls*.”

Paul also wrote, “Share in suffering like a GOOD SOLDIER of Christ Jesus. No one serving in the ARMY gets entangled in everyday affairs; the soldier’s aim is to please the enlisting officer” (II Tim.2:3-4).

Paul also compared the Christian life to a mighty conflict or war, in which we must ARM ourselves, as he wrote: “Finally, be STRONG in the Lord and in the strength of his power. PUT ON the WHOLE ARMOR of GOD, so that you may be able to STAND against the wiles of the devil. For OUR STRUGGLE is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the WHOLE ARMOR of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to STAND FIRM.

“STAND therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the SHIELD of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the SWORD of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end KEEP ALERT and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel” (Eph.6:10-19, NRSV).

Mere “Belief” Not Enough!

There are examples in the Bible of men and women who fell short of the mark, and fell away from the truth – such as Ananias and his wife Sapphira. They sold property and gave the proceeds to the apostles – but the kept back a part. Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, asked, “Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? . . . You did not lie to us, but to God!” Ananias dropped dead, probably from a heart attack. Three hours later, Peter asked his wife if they had sold the property for the amount Ananias had said. She, too, lied, and Peter said, “How is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out” (Acts 5:1-9). She, also, fell down dead, and was buried beside her husband.

Paul, in Hebrews, plainly warns that it is no trifle to mess with God, or to pretend to be converted, or to treat the blood of Christ with impunity. He wrote, “For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the

goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have FALLEN AWAY, since on their own they are crucifying the Son of God and are holding him up to contempt. Ground that drinks up the rain falling on it repeatedly, and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. But if it produces thorns and thistles, it is worthless and on the verge of being cursed; its end is to be *burned forever*” (Hebrews 6:4-8, NRSV).

God’s Word demands we produce GOOD FRUIT! Barren “land” will be cursed, and the “crop” burned up forever. Paul wrote to the Ephesians that God’s grace must lead to good works – or it will be taken away. He declared, “For by grace you have been saved through faith [meaning once we repent, we are now in a “saved” condition], and this is not your own doing [God’s mercy is His gift, when we repent of our sins]; it is the gift of God – not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he made us [His workmanship], *created in Christ Jesus FOR GOOD WORKS*, which God prepared beforehand to be *our WAY OF LIFE*” (Eph.2:8-10).

Let no one be misled or deceived by false teachings of errant ministers and ignorant pastors. God’s Word is PLAIN! Paul also wrote to the Hebrews a dire warning which applies to all God’s people, all Christians – and all whom God has called, to be His “elect.” Paul declared, “For *IF we willfully persist in sin* after having received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a *fearful prospect of JUDGMENT, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries*. Anyone who violated the law of Moses dies without mercy ‘on the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ *How much worse punishment* do you think will be deserved by those who have spurned the Son of God, profaned the blood of the covenant by which they were sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know the one who said, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay.’ And again, ‘The Lord will judge his people.’ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb.10:26-31).

Notice the Amplified Parallel Bible as it has this passage: “*For if we go on deliberately and willingly sinning* after once acquiring the knowledge of the Truth, there is no longer any sacrifice left to atone for [our] sins [no further offering to which to look forward]. [There is nothing left to us then] but a kind of awful and fearful prospect and expectation of divine judgment and the fury of burning wrath and indignation which will consume those who put themselves in opposition [to God]. . . . How much worse (sterner and heavier) punishment do you suppose he will be judged to deserve who has spurned and [thus] trampled underfoot the Son of God . . .?”

Paul concludes, “It is a fearful (formidable and terrible) thing to incur the divine penalties and be cast into the hands of the living God!”

“Hear and fear” these words, dear readers – for God will not be mocked by those who “PROFESS” Christ but then deny Him in their works and deeds, and who do not strive to root out and overcome their wicked, sinful impulses! Paul warns of those who “profess to know God [to recognize, perceive, and be acquainted with Him], but deny and disown and denounce Him *by what they do*; they are detestable and loathsome,

unbelieving and disobedient and disloyal and rebellious, and they [are] unfit and worthless for good work (deed or enterprise) of any kind” (Titus 1:16).

The King James Version says, they are “being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.”

Faith AND Works Necessary

So, my dear friends – what kind of “works” do you have? Paul says, “But let every man prove his own work” (Gal.6:4). Or, “But let every person carefully scrutinize and examine and test his own conduct and his own work” (Amplified Parallel Bible). He goes on, “Do not be deceived and deluded and misled; God will not allow Himself to be sneered at (scorned, disdained, or mocked by mere pretensions or professions, or by His precepts being set aside.) [He inevitably deludes himself who attempts to delude God.] For whatever a man sows, that and that only is what he will reap” (v.7).

Notice it! Paul continues, “For he who sows to his own flesh (lower nature, sensuality) will from the flesh reap decay and ruin and destruction, but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life” (v.8). If we hope to be in God’s Kingdom, and receive salvation, then we must disown the baggage of false teaching about being “once saved always saved,” and change our lives, and sow good seed to the Spirit of God for the rest of our lives. We must put away the deeds of the sensual and evil and grasping and greedy human nature. We must give our lives to Christ in REALITY – not in “name only.”

Paul then reminds us that it is a fight to the end. He says, “And let us not lose heart and grow weary and faint in acting nobly and doing right, for in DUE TIME and at the appointed season we shall reap, IF we do not loosen and relax our courage and faint” (Gal.6:9).

Are these truths beginning to sink deep into your consciousness yet? Are you beginning to jettison the false and erroneous teachings of those who say “all you have to do is ‘believe’”?

The apostle James points out that NOBODY will be saved merely because they “professed” or “accepted” Christ. True acceptance means that you accept Him as the AUTHORITY over your life, and you OBEY Him, and live by His every Word! It means that you strive to OVERCOME all sins and blemishes, and spiritual faults in your character, so that you can become pure, and faultless, and without “spot or wrinkle” in your character (see Eph.5:27).

Notice! The apostle James says: “So speak and so act as [people should] who are to be judged under the law of liberty [the moral instruction given by Christ, especially about love]. . . What is the use (profit), my brethren, for anyone to profess to have faith if he has no [good] works [to show for it]? Can [such] faith save [his soul]? If a brother or sister is poorly clad and lacks food for each day, and one of you says to him, Good-bye!

Keep [yourself] warm and well fed, without giving him the necessities for the body, what good does that do? *So also faith, if it does not have works (deeds and actions of obedience to back it up), by itself is destitute of power (inoperative, dead)*” (James 2:12-17).

Such faith is absolutely DEAD! As the New Revised Standard Version has verse 17: “So FAITH by itself, if it has NO WORKS, is DEAD”! What can be clearer than that?

James continues, “But someone will say [to you then], You [say you] have faith, and I have [good] works. Now you show me your [alleged] faith apart from any [good] works [if you can], and I by [good]works [of obedience] will show you my faith.

“You *believe* that God is one; you do well. So do the demons believe and shudder [in terror and horror such as make a man’s hair stand on end and contract the surface of his skin]!

“Are you willing to be shown [proof], you foolish (unproductive, spiritually deficient) fellow, that faith apart from [good] works is inactive and ineffective and worthless?” (James 2:18-20).

James points out how Abraham had not only faith in God, but he obeyed God, even to being willing to give up and sacrifice his own son, Isaac! Says James, “Was not our ancestor Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active **ALONG WITH HIS WORKS**, and faith was **BROUGHT TO COMPLETION BY THE WORKS**” (James 2:21-22).

Martin Luther was so angry at these plain words of the apostle James, that he referred to his epistle as “an epistle of straw!” Why? Because Luther claimed that we are saved by “grace **ALONE**,” or “faith **ALONE**”! He disparaged and denigrated the need for “good works” to prove and back up and testify to our “faith”!

Under direct inspiration of God, James concludes, “For as the human body apart from the spirit is lifeless, so *faith apart from [its] works of obedience is ALSO DEAD*” (verse 26). Or as the NRSV has it: “For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also **DEAD**” (v.26).

Yes, dead, dead, dead – dead as a ‘door nail’! Dead as a dumb post!

Let’s understand, once and for all! There are indeed **WORKS** required for salvation! We are **NOT** “once saved, always saved,” from the moment we accept Christ as our Saviour and Redeemer! There is far more to it than that! We will not possess “eternal security” **UNTIL** we are in the Kingdom of God, and our bodies have been **CHANGED, GLORIFIED, AND MADE IMMORTAL!**

We must lead our lives OBEDIENT to the laws of God and Jesus Christ! Christ Himself said to a young rich man, who desired eternal life, “If you would enter into the Life, you must continually keep the commandments” (Matt.19:17). He then mentioned the Torah, and the Ten Commandments of God, and to be willing to give up all and to follow Christ (Matt.19:16-26).

OBEDIENCE is required for salvation!

As Christ told His disciples, “Do not think that I have come to ABOLISH the law or the prophets; I have not come to abolish but to FULFILL. *For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, NOT ONE LETTER, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the LAW until all is accomplished*” (Matt.5:17-18).

Have heaven and earth passed away?

No, I look outside my window and see mountains, grasslands, prairie, trees, shrubs, houses, gravel, roads, dirt, flowers, clouds, and the sun, moon and stars at night!

Heaven and earth are still here. Abundantly so!

THEREFORE THE LAWS OF GOD ARE STILL IN EFFECT AND IN FULL FORCE, showing us the WAY to live our lives, the way of righteousness and holiness, the way that is pleasing in God’s sight!

Even though we cannot “earn” salvation, nevertheless, we must OBEY GOD TO THE BEST OF OUR ABILITY, and strive to enter the Kingdom of God, with the help of His Holy Spirit! As Peter said, “we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who OBEY HIM” (Acts 5:32).

As Peter said on the day of Pentecost, “Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out” (Acts 3:19). Turn away from a sin-filled life; repudiate the way of disobedience. And begin to work out your own salvation, with the help of God and of Christ, and of the indwelling power of the HOLY SPIRIT of God!

He Himself said, “Whoever does not persevere and carry his own cross and come after (follow) Me cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:27). He said, “Which of you, wishing to build a farm building, does not first sit down and calculate the cost [to see] whether or not he has sufficient means to finish it? . . . So then, any of you who does not forsake (renounce, surrender claim to, give up, say good-bye to) all that he has cannot be My disciple. Salt is good [an excellent thing], but if salt has lost its strength and has become saltless (insipid, flat), how shall its saltiness be restored? It is fit for neither the land nor for the manure heap; men throw it away. He who has ears to hear, let him listen and consider and comprehend by hearing!” (Luke 14:28-35).

What about you? Are you willing to lay down your life, and pick up your cross, and to follow Christ? Think about it!