



# MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

A BIBLICAL ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS & SECULAR MEDIA

SPECIAL REPORT

## ETERNAL SECURITY WHAT HATH CALVIN WROUGHT?

By Albert James Dager

The doctrine of eternal security is one of the most difficult and divisive issues with which to deal. There are on both sides of the issue those who are genuine in their faith and desirous of serving God in truth. Yet the question remains how those so diametrically opposed on any doctrinal issue of such importance can both be led by the Spirit of God. It would seem that one side must be utterly wrong and the other side utterly right. Would not those who are wrong be proven unfaithful to God's truth, thus incurring His wrath?

In truth, this is the accusation made by some on both sides of the issue. Some who believe in eternal security accuse those who do not so believe of having denied the very grace of God which is shed upon the elect; therefore, they cannot be saved. Some also lump all their opponents together under the accusation of believing that a Christian loses his salvation every time he sins and must be saved all over again. This is patently false except for some extreme positions held by certain sects and Roman Catholicism in its classification of mortal sins.

On the other side, some who do not believe in eternal security accuse those who do believe in it of "easy believism"—that they think they can sin with impunity and rely upon their confession of faith to save them.

Those on both sides who accuse the other in these manners are oversimplifying their opponents' positions and are refusing to hear their hearts.

Is it necessarily true that one side must be utterly right and the other utterly wrong, the former enjoying the favor of God and the latter risking His wrath? This might be true if it were as simplistic as each side would have us believe.

The biggest problem with the issue of eternal security—no matter which side one takes—is that it is a doctrine that has been systematized by men, learned over the centuries through the teachings of those who learned it from others who came before them. This does not mean it is not true; it means that the true nature of security in Jesus has been clouded by theologians who have not always dealt honestly with Scripture. Only an honest assessment of any teaching, predicated upon an unbiased approach to God's Word on all matters that pertain to salvation in Jesus Christ can determine its validity or lack thereof.



JOHN CALVIN

Before we begin our journey to decipher the truth about eternal security, we must look at its origins. Who first posited the doctrine (or at least was the first person of any great stature in the Reformation to promote it); what did he believe; what was his character?

The person most credited with the doctrine in its present form is the 16th-century Reformer John Calvin.

### JOHN CALVIN

Any religious source of information on John Calvin would, by its nature, be somewhat biased either for him or against him. But the fact remains that Calvin's teachings formed the basis of belief for the vast majority of Protestant religions, principally Presbyterianism.

This in itself does not mean that Calvinism is God's truth. The Reformation was comprised of many and diverse theological systems, all of which were formed in opposition to the abuses of the papacy. But the central doctrine upon which most of Protestantism—including Calvinism—was based is that of salvation by grace. The difference between Calvinism and the rest of Protestantism is the definition of grace and how it is applied by God.

There are some who divorce themselves from Calvin while laying claim to the doctrine of eternal security. Yet the Scriptures upon which they base their position are the same used by the Calvinists. We will look at non-Calvinistic eternal security in a separate chapter. For now, it is important that, in view of the fact that this doctrine originated with Calvinism in its most detailed form, we consider that source.

Calvin, more than any other man, formulated the doctrines of the Reformed churches. Yet the opinions on predestination and election called "Calvinistic" are in many cases those of his disciples rather than his own. We may be hard-pressed to prove that Calvin was himself a five-point Calvinist.

John Calvin was Born at Nôyon, in Picardy, France, July 10, 1509. He was educated at the colleges of La Marche and Montaigu in Paris. His father at first wanted him to pursue the Roman priesthood, but eventually preferred that Calvin study law for the better re-

muneration that it afforded. Eventually Calvin did become a respected lawyer. While studying law at Bourges he learned Greek. This led to his studying the writings of the Apostles, which produced in him a repulsion of Romanism. Thus, he became a Protestant after the order of Zwingli.

Calvin moved to Paris but, forced by persecution to leave Catholic France, he fled to Basel, Switzerland. His apologetics, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, appeared in 1536. In conjunction with Farel, Calvin attempted to establish a theocracy at Geneva, but they were expelled by the council in 1538 and retired to Zurich. Passing on to Strasbourg, Calvin became pastor to the French refugees and married. In 1541, he was invited back to Geneva. The theocratic government was resumed, and here he labored until his death.

### **Calvin's Geneva**

The people of Geneva, though having thrown off the yoke of Rome, were still influenced in many ways by their former religion. To restrain the evils of the Romish influences, Calvin, in concert with Farel, drew up a condensed statement of Christian doctrine consisting of twenty-one articles. The citizens of Geneva were compelled to come, in groups of ten, to profess and swear their allegiance to this statement. This act laid the groundwork for the theocratic system which subsequently became the peculiar mark of the Genevan polity. Following upon this requirement for Geneva's citizens to forswear their allegiance to Calvin and Farel's doctrines, Calvin and his colleagues established schools throughout their constituencies to which parents were forced to send their children. Having no faith in education apart from religious training, Calvin drew up an elementary catechism of what he called Christian doctrine which the children had to learn while receiving secular instruction.

Over a short time, Calvin and Farel had introduced a severe system of morality to which all the citizens had to conform. They also sought to strictly enforce not only the laws of morality, but certain regulations involving the dress and mode of living of the citizens. These and their determination not to submit to the least dictation from the civil power in spiritual matters, led to such violent dissension that Calvin and his colleagues refused to administer their "sacraments" to the people.

For this they were banished from the city and went to Bern, then to Zurich, where a synod of the Swiss pastors had been convened, and to whom they appealed. Reaching some compromises on form and custom, the synod intervened on behalf of Calvin and his colleagues. This attempt at reconciliation was rebuffed by the Genevese, and a second edict of banishment resulted.

During his absence, he met and married Idelette de Bures or van Buren, the widow of a person named Störder, whom he had converted from Anabaptism. Also during his absence, disorder and an irreligious attitude began to prevail in Geneva. An attempt was made by Sadolet, Catholic bishop of Carpentras, to take advantage of this and to restore papal supremacy there. In response, Calvin, though still in exile, wrote such a reply to the letter which the bishop had addressed to the city, that the bishop was constrained to desist from further efforts.

In the summer of 1541, the decree of his banishment was revoked. The following September he yielded to the impassioned entreaties of his now penitent flock and returned to Geneva where he was enthusiastically received. He was now the sole authority in the church there. Using that authority he set about establishing a theocratic government. In a short time the underdog became the overlord. Now persecution of the nature that the Protestants suffered under the papacy would be exacted against those who found disfavor with Calvin, albeit on a smaller scale.

One of the most important controversies that arose under Calvin, and that he defended most passionately, was that which arose from his doctrines concerning predestination and election. His first antagonist on this was Pighius, a Romanist, who, resuming the controversy between Erasmus and Luther on the freedom of the will, vociferously attacked Calvin for the views he had expressed on that subject. Calvin replied to him in a work published in 1543, in which he defends his own opinions by general reasoning and by an appeal to both Scripture and the so-called "Church Fathers," especially Augustine. So potent were his reasonings that his opponent was led to embrace his views.

Many opponents of Calvin were deprived of property and exiled from Geneva. The most infamous of Calvin's attempts to control the thoughts and

beliefs of the people came with his dispute against Michael Servetus, a Spaniard who challenged the Roman Catholic concept of the Trinity and infant baptism. Having fled Vienna under threat of death, Servetus arrived in Geneva in July 1553, where he dwelt quietly for awhile. As he was about to leave for Zurich, Calvin had him arrested and imprisoned on the charge of blasphemy.

At Servetus' trial, Calvin acted as accuser and prosecutor, urging for the death penalty. After a protracted trial, Servetus was condemned to be burnt to death, and was accordingly burned at Champel near Geneva, on October 27, 1553. On the day of his execution he met with Calvin, asking for his forgiveness. Lacking any repentance on the part of Servetus, however, Calvin was disposed to consent to his death.

Servetus' followers were dealt with harshly, being banished from Geneva with the loss of any lands they owned.

Calvin's adherents excuse his treatment of Servetus on several counts. We will address these in order.

- Calvin was merely acting in the capacity of a prosecutor just as any civil prosecutor does. Thus, he is not directly responsible for Servetus' death.

This was not merely a civil trial for a capital crime against society, but a religious trial for heresy. Calvin had Servetus arrested with the intent to prosecute him to the death. Knowing Servetus was about to leave Geneva, Calvin could have allowed him to leave while denouncing his theology. So Calvin was directly responsible for his death. As the one to whom everyone looked for judgment in virtually all matters, Calvin could have used his influence to spare Servetus' life. Instead he prosecuted and approved the sentence which led to Servetus' cruel death. The most Scripture allows against heretics is disfellowship. There is no place for retribution of any kind, let alone death.

- Calvin did not approve of death by burning, but it was out of his hands.

The manner of death is irrelevant. Calvin would have preferred that Servetus be put to the sword, but the issue is still the same: his approval of death upon a man who taught against the Catholic doctrines of the Trinity and infant baptism, yet was counted among the Protestants of his day.

- Calvin's actions were vindicated by other Protestant "divines" of his day and even a century after.

It doesn't matter what theologians and religious leaders—so called "divines"—think. If they consent to things unbiblical and think they are doing God a service by putting to death those who do not agree with them (even if much of their doctrine is correct), they are the greater heretics for their ungodly, unloving attitudes.

Who is the greater heretic, the one who disagrees with a particular understanding of the Godhead (which is only partially revealed to us in Scripture), or the one who burns him to death for the sake of "truth"? At the least they are equally guilty before God.

- Calvin only worked in accordance with the accepted standards of the Christendom of his day.

All this proves is that the Christendom of Calvin's persuasion—Protestantism—was steeped in the Romish apostasy. Although the Reformers challenged Rome on some vital issues, they carried much of the apostasy into their own camp via the clergy-laity systems and their traditions, and it remains to this day among virtually all churches. The history of Protestantism is less severe in its destruction of perceived heretics, but it is still guilty. Many true believers as well as unbelievers have been put to death or persecuted in other ways by Protestant civil magistrates in Europe acting with the favor of, and sometimes under the control of, their religious leaders.

Are God's children mandated or even encouraged to seek the death of those they perceive as heretics? What was Jesus' reaction to His disciples' desire to call fire down from heaven and consume the Samaritans who did not receive Him?

But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. (Luke 9:51-56)

It was the great apostasy that led to the false church's intervention into civil affairs that spawned terrible persecution and death upon its enemies. Calvin was a product of that false church and, though he understood certain truths which led him from its direct control, he was nevertheless tainted with its bloodlust for civil do-

minion due to his admiration and study of Augustine.

- Calvin did much good for the city of Geneva, introducing sanitary regulations, founding a college which still flourishes, and contributing in the way of counsel to its increase in material wealth. Surely God must have been blessing him and the city for its obedience to him.

Such an argument demonstrates a woeful ignorance of God and His blessings. The same could be said about Hitler's Germany prior to World War II. All of Western Civilization has enjoyed material wealth far above that of all other nations. Yet much of it has been built upon the ungodly encroachment upon the lesser nations for the benefit of the crowned heads of Europe.

Let's not ignore truth for the sake of earthly loyalties. The whole world lies in wickedness (1 John 5:19). That includes Western Civilization, as much as we love being a part of it for the sake of our material comfort.

## **Any religious system is evil if it incorporates ungodly and unscriptural practices**

No, there is no excuse for Calvin's heresy. He was an evil man who was part of an evil religious system known as Protestantism.

Does this shock you? Then understand that any religious system is evil if it incorporates ungodly and unscriptural practices, even if its doctrine is pure, or relatively pure, compared to that of another evil religious system—in this case Romanism. How often do we hear even Calvinists say that truth is negated by even a modicum of serious error? Is this not true of Calvinism? Or are we to negate 1 Corinthians 13 which demands that love supercede all?

### **Calvinist Doctrine**

Overall, Calvin's beliefs were sound, his having rejected much of Romanism with the rest of the Reformers. But his systematic theology was slightly different than most of the earlier Reformers in that he stressed God's grace beyond that originally held by them.

Space does not allow for an in-depth treatment of his doctrine of grace. It is expertly dealt with by Dave Hunt in

his book, *What Love is This? Calvinism's Misrepresentation of God*, (Sisters, OR: Loyal Publishing, Inc., 2002). While we disagree with Hunt's position on non-Calvinistic eternal security, we highly recommend this book for those who wish to know the full extent of Calvinism's heresy. For this writing we will give an overview of Calvinism's various doctrines related to grace. In the process, we address them as Calvinism's doctrines rather than Calvin's doctrines since they have been systematized more by his followers over the centuries than by Calvin himself.

Calvinism's doctrines related to Grace have been conveniently categorized into the English acronym, TULIP. These letters stand for the pillars of Calvinism's theology of man's relation to God:

### **Total Depravity of Man**

It would be more correct to head the acronym with a "D" since "depravity" is the primary noun, and "total" is an adjective that describes the noun. This applies to almost all the elements of this acronym which would be more accurately stated as DEAGP. But religious men, being what they are, like to make things neat for us so that we unlearned can more easily understand, and thus embrace, their theological systems. Be that as it may, this doctrine posits that man is so depraved that he doesn't even have the ability to believe truth except that God first regenerate his spirit and then infuse the truth into him. This, Calvin got from Augustine, the most revered theologian of Romanism. But what does Scripture say?

In His parable of the sower, Jesus alluded to the possibility that some men may have good hearts:

But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. (Luke 8:15)

Who is right, Jesus or Calvinism?

It is true that all men are born in sin. But that does not mean that man, created in the image of God, does not retain a sense of right and wrong. Certainly there are Scriptures that allude to the evilness of man. But there are some that appeal to man's conscience. And there are none which state categorically that fallen men cannot choose right when convicted by the Holy Spirit.

## **Unconditional Election**

This is a term not found in Scripture, but coined as a means to explain Calvinism's belief that no man can choose God; God chooses every man who will be saved and determines all others to be damned. Dave Hunt, in exposing Calvinism's true nature, quotes the Canons of Dort, which explains this tenet as "the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, he hath out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of his own will, chosen, from the whole human race...a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ...."<sup>1</sup>

This doctrine flies in the face of God's nature as that of love, and in the face of all Scripture that reveals God's love for all of humanity (John 3:16). The Calvinist explains away John 3:16 by saying that God only loves the whole world of the elect. We'll look at this error later.

## **Limited Atonement**

This tenet posits that Jesus' shed blood is efficacious only for those whom God has chosen; it was not shed for the sins of the whole world. This is contrary to 1 John 2:2:

And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

The Calvinist says this means only the whole world of believers. I will deal with this also later. Suffice it to say that John distinguishes between "us" (including himself) and "the whole world."

## **Irresistible Grace**

Again, Augustine's influence is seen in this aspect of Calvin's TULIP. It posits that God's grace is irresistible to those who are the elect. They cannot refuse to believe and to act with purity of motive and practice. But if this were absolutely true, then it would be impossible for the elect to sin. This, Calvinists will not go so far to say, but they will say that it is impossible for the elect to continue in sin. God's grace won't allow it. Yet if God won't allow His elect to continue in sin, why would He allow us to sin at all? The Calvinist concept of God's sovereignty negates man's will, thus making God the author of sin. And this leads to the final part of Calvinism's salvation equation.

## **Perseverance of the Saints**

This doctrine states that the elect will persevere in the Faith until they die. There is absolutely no chance that they will turn away from the Faith (apostatize) or that they will fall into

sin without the desire to repent. They have no choice in the matter; their wills are not a factor in any Calvinistic proposition. God's sovereignty means absolute control.

## **The Implications of TULIP**

What this set of tenets proposes is that man has no will of his own; God determines all things, good and evil, according to His sovereign will. Even man's sins are preordained by God, and it is not up to us to question His wisdom in the matter. What this is really saying is that we are not to question Calvinism's perverted understanding of God's wisdom. This, too, will be addressed presently.

It is also saying that God is the author of sin, contrary to James 1:13-15:

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

## **All who identify themselves with the theological systems of men are carnal**

It may be safely stated that Calvinism's TULIP was an overreaction to the errors of Rome regarding salvation—errors that pronounced the damnation of anyone who committed a sin classified by Rome as "mortal," or deadly. These mortal sins are not merely sins clearly defined in Scripture, but sins defined by the papacy, which are often no sins at all. The idea that God would arbitrarily condemn someone who missed mass on Sunday and died without confessing (or intending to confess) to a priest is ludicrous. It vilifies the entire concept of God's nature being that of love.

The idea of grace (as long as one did not cross Calvin) was one which appealed to the Reformers, and rightly so. While erring on the side of inflating the concept of grace to mean man has no will may be preferable to salvation by works, one erroneous concept of grace does no more favor to truth than any other erroneous concept. This is true of all theological presuppositions.

## **Calvin's Character**

The followers of Calvin throughout the past few centuries write nothing but glowing reports of his character and life. They see no problems with how he handled the power he attained. They see his intractable approach to his religious views as a strong defense of biblical truth rather than obstinacy on his own theological beliefs.

I do not suppose to convince the die-hard Calvinist, or many who are passionately convinced of eternal security, of its error. My hope is that those who are seeking the truth may find it, and put to rest their questioning. Any honest person would search for the truth himself. That is all I ask of both the Calvinist and the anti-Calvinist. Our sole objective is to drive all to Scripture.

When we consider the life of John Calvin we are justified in asking if the man himself was even a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. While we leave final judgment to God, we are obliged to judge the character and the actions of all who claim faith in Jesus. We must ask the following questions:

Would a true believer in Jesus persecute other believers who do not agree with, or even might question, some of his doctrines and practices?

For that matter would a true believer in Jesus persecute heretics or unbelievers for their errors or refusal to live their lives in conformity to what he deems acceptable behavior within his secular sphere of influence?

Would a true believer in Jesus pronounce spiritual condemnation upon believers in Christ who do not see everything his way?

According to God's Word, which demands that we love our enemies and that we especially bear with those who are weaker in the faith (whether we merely perceive them to be, or whether they truly are weaker), the answers to the above questions are self evident. No true believer in Jesus Christ may act in an unloving manner toward others, even if they are blatant enemies of the Gospel, let alone fellow believers.

The best that can be said about John Calvin is that he was a believer who was deluded into thinking he had God's mandate to institute a theocratic (some say "theonomic") government wherever he could—in this case, Geneva, Switzerland—perhaps sincerely thinking he was God's instrument to bring His creation under dominion to Christ.

The worst that can be said about John Calvin is that he was a false teacher who made merchandise of the brethren, even consenting unto their death in order to maintain his power base over the secular government under his thumb.

Perhaps the truth lies somewhere between these extremes.

In any case, we must conclude that Calvin was hardly the man to shed any light on biblical truth—or on any issue with which Christians must grapple in their attempt to ascertain truth. Can an evil tree bring forth good fruit? The implied answer to Jesus' question is, of course, no.

Thus it stands to reason that, judging by Calvin's very character and questionable practices, any theology he devised must be suspect.

Does that mean that the idea of eternal security is erroneous on the face of it? Not necessarily. But it should give us pause to think that this man was the major proponent of this doctrine, and to see how he used it in concert with the other aspects of the TULIP theology to devise all sorts of evil against Christ's brethren. Had he been given the opportunity to spread his influence throughout the world in the same manner as in Geneva, the entire world would have become enslaved to his religious philosophy. In a real sense, Calvin was the pope of Geneva.

No doubt this offends many of his followers today—those who call themselves by his name.

To those who insist on calling themselves Calvinists (or Arminianists, or Lutherans, or any other appellation by which they distinguish themselves from the rest of the Body of Christ, whether by name of men or institutions) I would point you to 1 Corinthians 1:12-13; 3:4:

Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ."

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?...

for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?

If God's Word be true, then all who identify themselves with the theologi-

cal systems of men are carnal; it matters not how eloquent or learned they are in their systems, or how much closer to truth their system is than others. In this the Baptist is as guilty of carnality as the Catholic. One's allegiance to institutional religion, no matter how much truth it contains, is carnality. Those who disagree do not argue with me, but with God's Word.

Carnality is evident in Calvin's theology in that it essentially created a privileged class that justified the mistreatment of others who were not deemed "of the elect."

The first step to determining the truth of any doctrine, including eternal security, is to divorce oneself from all theological systems and cleave only to the true shepherd of one's soul, Jesus Christ, and His Word.

In the process, it is necessary to examine the teachings of those who promote this doctrine in order to see if they are handling the Word of God truthfully.

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Any doctrine that requires volumes to explain it, or which must read into Scripture what it does not clearly say, is at best suspect. Certainly it is nothing upon which our eternal salvation rests, no matter how passionately its proponents argue its case. Such is the nature of eternal security.

I implore the reader to bear with me in patience. God's truth is often lost to those who are too quick to accept what sounds feasible; this, unfortunately, has been the case with those on both sides of the eternal security question.

**PROponents**

Many perceived "giants" in the realm of Christian teaching have voiced their belief in eternal security, whether of the strictly Calvinist nature or of some other form. These include Arthur W. Pink, H.A. Ironside, C.H. Spurgeon, A.C. Dixon, J.I. Packer, Charles Stanley, John

MacArthur, and others too numerous to mention. This impressive list might be used by some to justify their own stand for the doctrine. But we cannot assume that because such men have proposed a doctrine it is then true. There are many of equal stature who have proposed the opposite, most of whom have fallen into the classification of dispensationalist, another error in its purest form. Yet not all who disagree with Reformed theology are dispensationalists. Frankly, it matters not who has proposed anything; the only criterion by which an honest heart may judge a teaching is whether or not it is in total conformity to God's Word rightly divided.

It is necessary that we first consider the teachings of the proponents of eternal security since they come from the positive side of the issue. Opposition is always secondary to the proposition since no one can object to something that has not first been proposed. But before we engage in examining the teachings of the eternal security proponents it might do us well to address a false allegation that has been charged against them.

**Easy Believism**

It has been charged that those who hold to eternal security believe that once a person makes a profession of faith in Jesus he may live his life any way he chooses; he is eternally secure because of his faith. This is simply not true of those who hold the doctrine without abuse. It is true that some proponents of eternal security, especially those who prefer the label, "once saved, always saved," take a cavalier approach to sin. While they may balk at openly professing that a person can continue in willful sin and still be saved, they do not stress the need for holy living. But this does not reflect the attitude or belief of many proponents of eternal security. Staunch Calvinist Arthur W. Pink says it best:

...we are far from allowing that Calvinists have always presented this doctrine in its scriptural proportions; yea it is our firm conviction that during the last two or three generations especially it has been dealt with by many novices in such a manner as to do far more evil than good. Large numbers of men have contended for the "Security of the Saints" in such a crude and lopsided way that not a few godly souls were stumbled, and in their revolt against

such extremism supposed their only safeguard was to reject the whole subject in toto. Such a course was wrong....

We have no sympathy whatever with the bald and unqualified declaration "Once saved always saved."<sup>2</sup>

What Pink was saying is that there are those who abuse the doctrine to the point of causing people to either believe that it allows them to sin with impunity or to reject it altogether.

Pink continues:

The Savior is the Holy One of God, who saves His people "from their sins" (Matt. 1:21) and not in their sins: who saves them from the love and dominion of their sins. How different was the preaching of Spurgeon from that of the cheapjack "evangelists" who have followed him. Said he, "Go not to God and ask for mercy with sin in thy hand. What would you think of the rebel who appeared before the face of his sovereign and asked for pardon with the dagger sticking in his belt and with the declaration of his rebellion on his breast? Surely he would deserve double doom for thus mocking his monarch while he pretended to be seeking mercy. If a wife has forsaken her husband do you think she would have the impudence, with brazen forehead, to come back and ask his pardon leaning on the arm of her paramour? Yet so it is with you—perhaps asking for mercy and going on in sin—praying to be reconciled to God and yet harboring and indulging your lusts....Cast away your sin or He cannot hear you. If you lift up unholy hands with a lie in your right hand, prayer is worthless on your lips"(C.H.S., 18690).<sup>3</sup>

Pink and Spurgeon had no regard for those who merely profess faith in Jesus while continuing in sin, expecting that they have been pardoned merely by saying a "sinner's prayer." This position held by Pink and Spurgeon must be contrasted with those whom Pink calls "cheapjack evangelists" who stress God's love and mercy while ignoring the conditions necessary to enter into His love and mercy. H.A. Ironside concurs:

When we speak of the eternal security of the believer, what do we mean? We mean that once a poor sinner has been regenerated by the Word and the Spirit of God, once he has received a new life and a new nature and has been made partaker of the divine nature, once he has been

justified from every charge before the throne of God, it is absolutely im-possible that that man should ever again be a lost soul. Having said that, let me say what we do not mean when we speak of the eternal security of the believer. We do not mean that it necessarily follows that if one professes to be saved, if he comes out to the front in a meeting, shakes the preacher's hand, and says he accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior, that that person is eternally safe. It does not mean that if one joins a church or makes a profession of faith, is baptized, becomes a communicant, and takes an interest in Christian work, that that person is forever secure. It does not mean that because one manifests certain gifts and exercises these gifts in Christian testimony, that that person is necessarily secure.<sup>4</sup>

Interestingly, Pink, while claiming to be a Calvinist, spoke as if Calvinism's doctrine of the total depravity of man were not true. Calvinist hardliners would insist that regeneration of the spirit (and thus, receiving Christ as Savior) must

### **Calvin's theology created a privileged class that justified the mistreatment of others who were not deemed "of the elect."**

come before repentance, based on the belief that unregenerated men are incapable of responding to the Gospel without first being regenerated by a sovereign act of God. Yet Pink says:

But before any soul can receive Christ as Savior, he must first throw down the weapons of his rebellion, repent of his sins, and surrender to Christ as Lord.<sup>5</sup>

An examination of Calvinistic writings reveals many such contradictions which negate their stated beliefs.

Ironside, though he was not a Calvinist, is claimed by some Calvinists as one of their own. And he does seem to have believed similarly to the Calvinist model by some of his statements. Yet he seems to contradict himself by first denying that man is a free moral agent (as do Calvinists) while at the

same time saying that man has the power to decide whether or not to respond to the Gospel:

...Is man an absolutely free moral agent? He was when God created him, but is he now? Is the sinner a free moral agent? What does Scripture say? "Ye are led by the devil captive at his will." What? A man led by the devil captive at his will is a free agent? "Know ye not, that he to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his slaves ye are?" (Romans 6:16). Man is a slave to sin and Satan; he is not free. But now the gospel comes to the man, and he does have the power of decision, and when he decides for Christ he gets eternal life and all that that implies, and that life is the same life that is in the blessed Son of God. It is communicated to him, and now he is led captive in the chains of love to the Savior's feet, and he does not want to be a free agent. He is glad to be a bondman, as Paul puts it, of Jesus Christ.<sup>6</sup> (Emphasis ours)

### **MISUSE OF SCRIPTURE**

In his dissertation, Ironside first referenced 2 Timothy 2:24-26 to support his contention that unbelievers are controlled by Satan:

And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

Calvinists use this Scripture to support their doctrine of spiritual regeneration prior to repentance. But it proves no such thing. Rather, it places repentance as the foundation upon which men "may come to their senses." The proclaiming of the Gospel convicts the heart which must respond to that conviction by repenting of sin. It is at that point that the spirit is regenerated. Yet even if one insists that regeneration comes before repentance, this Scripture does not prove that position.

In defense of eternal security, Ironside also misapplies Romans 6:16 to unbelievers. But this Scripture is an appeal for believers who continue in sin to correct themselves lest they be counted as servants of Satan:

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?

But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. (Romans 6:12-18)

Context is imperative to understanding truth. 2 Timothy 2:24-26 is an appeal to believers. Ironside misused Scripture to prove his point, demonstrating that even a generally godly man can fail in treating the Scriptures properly.

Yet his contradictory statement that "when the gospel comes to the man, and he does have the power of decision, and when he decides for Christ he gets eternal life," is true. (In his parable of the sower Jesus even stated that unregenerated men may have honest hearts [Luke 8:15]). And this in direct contradiction of Calvinism's doctrine of Total Depravity.

In any case, Ironside's rejection of easy believism was identical to that of Pink and other godly men whose teachings espouse eternal security:

People say, "If you preach this doctrine of eternal security of the believer, men will say, 'Well, then it doesn't make any difference what I do, I will get to heaven anyway.'" It makes a tremendous difference what you do. If you do not behave yourself, it shows that you are not a real Christian.<sup>7</sup>

The idea that true believers behave themselves and those who do not behave themselves are not true believers opens a Pandora's box of controversy over just how many and what degree of sins believers may commit and still be counted as believers. For even the most staunch Calvinist will admit that

true believers continue to sin after coming to Christ.

So what is the answer? I believe both the believer and the non-believer in eternal security would agree that those who practice sin as a lifestyle—who show no remorse, or attempt no discipline over their flesh—are not truly regenerated in their spirits. Scripture gives ample reason to believe that the Holy Spirit convicts the heart of sin which, ideally, should lead to repentance and confession to God. How one responds to the conviction of the Holy Spirit is at the crux of the argument.

It is a sad commentary on the theological systems which plague us that even the most virtuous men will sometimes resort to overstating their pet theories. Sadly, this is sometimes accomplished by applying erroneous interpretations of Scripture. Those who insist on purity in hermeneutics and exegesis do not always obey their own consciences on the matter. This we find to be true regarding the proponents of eternal security no less than those of other theological persuasions.

#### **NON-CALVINIST ETERNAL SECURITY**

There are those who do not believe in Calvinism but do believe in eternal security. Dave Hunt summarizes the difference:

Biblical assurance of salvation does not depend upon one's performance but upon the gospel's declaration that Christ died for the sins of the world and upon His promise that whosoever believes in Him receives the gift of eternal life. In contrast, the Calvinist's assurance is in God having predestined him to eternal life as one of the elect—and his performance plays a large part in helping him to know whether or not he is among that select group....

Christ guaranteed, "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). I came to Him by faith in His Word and He will never cast me out—i.e., I can never be lost. My assurance is in His promise and keeping power, not in my efforts or performance. He said, "I give unto them [my sheep] eternal life; and they shall never perish" (John 10:28). It would be strange "eternal life" indeed if it were here today and gone tomorrow.<sup>8</sup>

There are basically three streams of thought within the body of believers who hold to the belief of eternal security in Christ: Calvinist, Anabaptist,

and Antinomian. There are others who would not identify with any of these and I do not wish to give the impression that all flow from John Calvin. Menno Simons and other Anabaptists, for example, taught the security of the believer in the 1600's; they held that the believer's security is a natural consequence of saving faith as opposed to the Calvinist position that the believer's security is a natural consequence of his predestination.

Calvinism insists that one's works prove one's election. If one's works abide the test of time and one dies having lived in conformity to the good works mandated by God, he will have proven his election. In this case, no Calvinist can be absolutely sure of his salvation, because he must wait to see if his life proves his election; essentially one's salvation is dependent upon one's works, the objections of the Calvinists notwithstanding. So while Calvinists insist on eternal security, they have no real assurance of salvation.

Calvinists say one cannot choose to turn from the Faith; the non-Calvinist eternal security proponent says no true believer would want to turn from the Faith. Yet neither position is supported by Scripture.

I cannot fathom anyone wanting to turn from the Faith. Yet many—believers who have evidenced God's Spirit at work in their lives—have done so. To suggest that they were never truly saved is a simplistic argument offered from both camps, but it not supported by Scripture.

However, it is argued by some that if one might depart from the Lord in this life, what is to prevent him from departing from the Lord in eternity? And if no one would depart from the Lord in eternity, why would they want to do so in this life? If one is possible, then so is the other, because the principle is the same.

But is it? We are still in our sinful flesh. Our spirits war against our flesh and we are prone to sin when we do not walk in the Spirit. Should we give in to the flesh and not repent, we risk weakening ourselves to the point of turning from the Lord.

That will not be the case in eternity because we will no longer be warring against our flesh. Our bodies will have been redeemed just as our spirits have been.

## **ETERNAL SECURITY PROOF TEXTS**

Rather than exhaust every statement of every proponent of eternal security, we will cull from among their diverse writings certain Scriptures which they use as proof texts. We will then put those Scriptures in their proper context to see if, in truth, they are being faithful to the text. We will be dealing primarily with the writings of the apostles. This is because, while many (though not all) proponents of eternal security offer "Old Testament" Scriptures as proof texts, such use is contradictory since they would also say that nothing in the "Old Testament" is relevant to "the Church." We will not allow them to have it both ways. Most of the same Scriptures are cited by both Calvinist and non-Calvinist proponents of eternal security.

The following Scriptures are misused to support the doctrine of eternal security:

1 Peter 1:5: Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

This Scripture may or may not be interpreted to mean what the eternal security proponents ascribe to it. However, it does not of itself prove that the power of God which keeps us is an immutable gift. On the face of it, one cannot say that to refuse the gift proves the refuser was never a true believer. For if one is in the position to be preserved for salvation, then he must have been saved in the first place. Now the question is whether or not God forces his gifts upon us, or if we are free to either receive them or reject them.

Given that narrow but accurate position, the eternal security proponent must affirm that God forces the gift of preservation upon the few whom He has chosen as his elect; we have no choice but to accept it. Thus, we are forced to repent when we sin (though strangely, we are never forced not to sin). Yet nowhere in Scripture are the gifts of God forced upon anyone, but offered through the instruments of His grace, love and mercy to powerless men.

And many Scriptures exhort us to hold fast to our salvation and to what God has done in our lives (Colossians 2:8; Hebrews 3:6; 4:14, etc.). That, by

itself, affirms the activity of man's will working in concert with God's will.

Philippians 2:12-13: Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

The Calvinist focuses on the idea that God works in the believer both the desire and performance to do God's will, so that all ground for boasting is removed from man. But if God is performing our working out of salvation without our cooperation, then why are we told to work it out with fear and trembling? Let's put these verses in their proper context:

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain. (Philippians 2:12-16)

Paul is exhorting the Philippian believers to continue in perseverance by their own volition lest they fail and his labor be in vain. How could his labor be in vain if they could not fail? No, the first part of the proof text demonstrates that fear and trembling are the result of realizing that one can fail. Thus the continual encouragement and exhortation throughout Scripture that believers make the effort to continue in the Faith.

So how does God work in us both to will and to do for His good pleasure? By convicting us of our sins and guiding us by His Holy Spirit into the works He would have us perform. He does not force us to repent, but convicts us and even chastises us if necessary to lead us to repentance. Nor does He force us to work for Him, but He opens the door for ministry into which we may enter by our own choice.

Philippians 2:12-13 must be taken out of context to support the eternal security position.

Colossians 3:3: For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

It is said that being hidden with Christ in God means that we are inseparably tied to Christ and that we cannot be severed from Him even by our own willfulness. But what is the context of this verse? It accompanies a dire warning:

Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,

in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. (Colossians 3:2-7)

Paul continues by exhorting holiness in many aspects of life, then concludes with the following:

And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,

knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality. (Col 3:23-25)

Understand that Paul is speaking to believers whom he says once walked in these sins, warning them to not be ensnared by them again, for the consequences will be to incur the wrath of God and "be repaid for what he has done."

Even if one wishes to discount the possibility of falling away in this manner, the warning sufficiently calls into question the validity of using Colossians 3:3 to prove eternal security. The eternal security proponent must search elsewhere for his proof texts.

2 Timothy 2:19: Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.

This verse (the first part of it) is used to assure us that the seal of God upon our lives keeps us from ever falling. But, again, let's look at the context:

Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also



obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him:

If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus;

Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.

Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. (2 Timothy 2:10-19)

This is clearly a warning to believers to depart from iniquity lest they suffer the consequences that befell Philetus and Hymenaeus. Paul begins by saying he endures hardship for the elect's sakes to instruct them in obtaining the salvation that was begun (not finished) when they first believed in Jesus. He warns that if they deny Christ, Christ will deny them. He is not speaking to unbelievers here, but is warning believers to persevere in the Faith in a manner that suggests it is not a given that they will do so without effort on their part. Yet, he says, even if we deny the Lord (apostatize), He is faithful to Himself (not to us); He cannot deny Himself.

2 Timothy 2:19 also must be taken out of context to support eternal security.

Philippians 1:6: Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

This certainly sounds as if the Lord is guaranteeing that He will cause us to finish the course in good faith. Let us look at the context:

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,

For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: (Philippians 1:3-6)

Paul is merely expressing his confidence that the Philippian believers will not fail. He was encouraging them. His words were to a specific people at a specific time; they are not necessarily to be construed to apply to all believers for all time. We would all like to believe that we would remain faithful, and I am confident that I will do so because my heart is receptive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit's conviction. But Scripture is fraught with warnings that we all (myself included) do not become lax in our attitude and begin to take our salvation lightly lest our love for Christ grow cold:

And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. (Matt 24:11-13)

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## Many Scriptures exhort us to hold fast to our salvation

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Who loves the Lord but the true believer? Certainly unbelievers do not love the Lord. So whose love can wax cold, but that of the true believer?

Philippians 1:6 also cannot be applied arbitrarily to prove the doctrine of eternal security.

Romans 11:29: For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

Of what gifts and calling is Paul speaking? Again, what is the context?

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.

For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief:

Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.

For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. (Romans 11:25-32)

The context is God's calling of Israel, with the promise that, although the Jews are now blinded in part, He will again restore the nation as His elect in the New Earth, having gathered them in belief into the Land during the Millennium. Yet although God called Israel His elect, many in Israel have perished in their sins because they did not remain faithful, and rejected their Messiah. Even so, His calling of Israel is without repentance; He never changed His mind about them, or rejected them as His elect. That is the context of Romans 11:29. All of God's people are His elect and remain so unless, and until, they turn from the Faith. To be elect doesn't mean one will faithfully remain in the company of the elect.

There are those who say Israel will never be restored; the Church is God's people now. This is ignorance of a fundamental truth of the Gospel: that God has made of two diverse men—Jew and Gentile—one new man in Christ Jesus. How? Not by instituting something called "the Church" in place of Israel, but by grafting the Gentiles into Israel by faith in Jesus Christ.

When Jesus' disciples asked him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6) Jesus did not say to them, "Israel will never be restored as a kingdom; I am starting a new thing called 'the Church' which will replace Israel." Rather:

And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1:7-8)

So the context of Romans 11:29 is not the eternal security of the believer, but

God's unfailing promise to restore the kingdom to Israel by grafting back into the olive tree its natural branches. If we back up slightly from the eternal security proof text of Romans 11:29 to its immediately preceding verses we see another dire warning to believers in Christ:

And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;

Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:

For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.

Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. (Romans 11:17-22)

To use Romans 11:29 to support eternal security is not correct in view of the warning that the unfaithful believer could be cut off if he does not continue in the goodness (grace) of God.

Hebrews 6:17-20: Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Of what was the writer speaking when he wrote these words? Let us look at the overall context by backing up a few verses:

For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself,

Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.

And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath of confirmation is to them an end of all strife. (Hebrews 6:13-16)

The context is not the individual's "eternal security," but God's promise to Abraham. We who believe in Jesus Christ by faith in His atonement for our sins are entered into the covenant of promise to Abraham. This is the surety, that we are entered into the Abrahamic covenant, not that we will be kept in it against our wills. A few verses before these carry another warning for believers:

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

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## **If we deny the Lord (apostatize), He is faithful to Himself (not to us); He cannot deny Himself.**

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For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God:

But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. (Hebrews 6:4-12)

Although the writer said he was persuaded better things of those to whom he was writing, this was another form of encouragement, not a promise that they could never lose their salvation.

Now, some proponents of eternal security say these verses are hypothetical; these are things that would happen if they could happen, but they can't. This infers that the Lord inspired a lot of hypotheses, but for what reason? Is He just wasting our time?

Apart from the hypothetical argument, others who believe in eternal security insist that these verses are addressing mere professors of faith in Jesus who were never truly saved. They say these were "enlightened" by hearing the Gospel, have tasted the heavenly gift by hearing of the rewards awaiting the faithful, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost by the Holy Ghost's conviction upon them through the Gospel.

Of course they would say this. To do otherwise would greatly hinder their doctrine of eternal security.

But at the start of his discourse (verses 1-3) the writer is addressing his comments to believers whom he exhorts to go beyond the elementary doctrines of the faith, the implication being that unless one grows in knowledge and understanding he risks falling away. In which case it would be impossible to renew him again unto repentance; he would be crucifying the Lord all over again.

The unbeliever or the professing believer who is not truly regenerate always has the opportunity to repent and be saved, even if he rejects the Gospel several times over. Many will testify to that in their own lives. These verses cannot apply to unbelievers. Since they never repented to begin with they cannot be "renewed unto repentance," which suggests a prior repenting.

We will address this more later, lest we lose track of our issue which is dealing with the verses misused to support the eternal security doctrine.

We will turn for once to a so-called "Old Testament" proof text because it is a prophecy which was fulfilled through Jesus:

Jeremiah 32:40: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.

With whom did God make this covenant? The "Church"? No. It was with Israel into which all believers are grafted:

And now therefore thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city, whereof ye say, It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence;

Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely:

And they shall be my people, and I will be their God:

And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them:

And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.

Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.

For thus saith the LORD; Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them. (Jeremiah 32:36-42)

The context of Jeremiah 32:40 is the regathering of Israel into their Land during the Millennium and their eternal inheritance; it is not proof for eternal security of the individual.

Hebrews 8:10: For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.

Let us again consider the context:

For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away. (Hebrews 8:7-13)

The writer was again contrasting the Old Covenant under Moses with the New Covenant in Christ. And, again, with whom was the New Covenant made? Look at verse 8. It is with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It is the fulfillment of God's promise made through Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:31). It has to do with the regathering of Israel into the Land during the Millennium, and their remaining in the restored kingdom of Israel throughout eternity in the New Earth.

2 Corinthians 1:20-22: For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God;

Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

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

These are among the more powerful Scriptures one may use to bolster one's belief in eternal security. The language incorporates the idea of the believer being sealed—and not only sealed, but sealed "unto the day of redemption." The "earnest of the Holy Spirit in our hearts" is strong wording. What does this mean?

The word translated "sealed" is sphragizamenos, which means having been stamped for security or preservation, by implication, to keep secret. It is similar to the sealing of an envelope in the days when a wax seal was placed over the opening to keep the contents

secret. The wax was stamped with the signet or seal of the sender.

The earnest of the Spirit in our hearts speaks of a down payment or earnest money placed to ensure that a contract will be completed. In the case of the believer, we have entered into the New Covenant in Christ (the contract) by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which is the earnest or surety for our faith.

Since we know that no man (or anything else) can pluck us out of God's hand, we know that the seal of God cannot be broken by anyone other than God Himself—or by the person whom he has sealed (hidden in Christ).

But what about being sealed unto the day of redemption? The same principle applies. We are sealed until the redemption of our bodies provided we do not break the seal by breaking the contract. The terms of the contract (New Covenant) require that we remain in Christ if we are to see the completion of our salvation through the resurrection to eternal life. This is borne out by Colossians 1:21-23:

And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled

In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprieveable in his sight:

If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister.

Sound exegesis insists that Scripture interprets Scripture. "If ye continue" places a strong burden upon the believer to remain in the Faith. One cannot continue in the Faith if one is not in the Faith to begin with. That big word "if" rears its head too often throughout Scripture in relation to salvation to be ignored. While we are hidden in Christ (sealed), and have the indwelling Holy Spirit (the earnest of the Spirit), we are still admonished to remain in the Faith. And why would we be so admonished if it were not possible to be removed from the Faith by our turning away? Such words would be worthless. Yet no word of God is worthless. It is there for a purpose.

2 Peter 1:3-4: According as his divine power hath given unto us all

things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

In order to keep this verse in context, let's first back up to verse 1, then see what verses 8-11 say.

Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:1)

Peter is speaking to true believers—those who “have obtained like precious faith” with the apostles. What does he continue to say?

For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:8-11)

Some say that these verses have to do with unfruitfulness rather than with salvation. I might agree. But the reason I am addressing them is that others use them to support eternal security.

Peter is warning that we believers—those of like precious faith—must strive to make our calling and election sure (election then is not sure, is it?). If we do that we shall never fall. The context of the prior verse (9) implies that if we do not make our election sure we are blind, forgetting that we have been purged from our old sins.

That these to whom Peter was writing were purged from their old sins is proof that they were true believers in Jesus. Yet they had to make their election sure. If they did, they would enter into the everlasting kingdom. Conversely, if they did not make their election sure, they would not enter into the everlasting kingdom. Again, why such

language if it is not possible for the true believer to fall away?

Yes, as verse 3 says, God has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness. His grace makes sure that we have those things necessary to sustain us. But we must take hold of them by our own volition; God does not force us to obey, else it would not be obedience but merely an automatic response to His Spirit pulling the strings. The fact that we still sin proves that He does not control us to that degree, else He would never allow us to sin. Our will must be consciously submitted to God's will for any idea of obedience to be valid.

1 John 2:18-19: Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

It is argued that this proves that anyone who apostatizes was never of the Faith to begin with. But does it?

First, John was not speaking of apostatizing, but of certain people leaving the fellowship.

Second, he was speaking of specific people at a specific time. He did not infer, nor can it be taken as a given, that this refers to all apostatizers for all time. Why? Because of a second point: not all apostatizers leave our fellowships. To insist that this means those who leave are never really saved to begin with, one would also have to say it means that anyone who apostatizes will leave, or that no unsaved people would be in our assemblies. We know this isn't true; even many pastors are unbelievers.

Hebrews 13:5: ...for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

I have heard some say, “Do you know why I believe in eternal security? Because Jesus said, ‘I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.’”

Fine. Except that Jesus never said that.

The writer of Hebrews was exhorting his readers to continue in good works and sinlessness as a process of growth. He was referencing YHWH's promise to Joshua (Joshua 1:5), and

David's exhortation to Solomon (1 Chronicles 28:20).

Let us see the context of these verses:

Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying,

Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.

Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.

There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. (Joshua 1:1-5)

This was a specific promise that God would complete His covenant with Israel to bring the people into the Land as He promised.

1 Chronicles records David's words to Solomon regarding the building of the temple:

And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD. (1 Chronicles 28:20)

The context of Hebrews 13:5, then, has to do with being content with what we have since the Lord is our helper, just as He was the helper of Joshua and Solomon. He guaranteed to supply all their needs for the specific task set before them. Yet they had to remain faithful—be strong and of good courage—in order to be held up.

Does this mean that we cannot rely upon the Lord? That He may one day leave us and forsake us? Of course not—not as long as we continue in the goodness of God. But if we do not continue in His goodness (grace), why should we expect Him to remain with us? He will only forsake us if we have first forsaken Him.

John 10:27-29: My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

John 6:27: Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

John 6:37-40: All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

All three of these verses are also among the most powerful in defense of eternal security. The Lord certainly did not qualify His statement with any "ifs" here. But they are qualified by many other Scriptures which put them in proper perspective.

These verses are used by the non-Calvinist believer in eternal security even though they suggest that this is a promise of the Lord, without reliance upon man's will. Yet the non-Calvinist proponent of eternal security retains belief in man's will regarding salvation and rejects the Calvinist tenet of the perseverance of the saints, which insists that God keeps the believer without regard to the believer's will.

Now, if man's will has any part in his desire to remain in the Faith, then these verses must be placed in context with all other verses of Scripture which suggest there are conditions to remaining in the security of Christ. They cannot stand alone.

John's Gospel, which records the words of our Savior, as cited above, also records these words:

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. (John 15:1-10)

## **Nowhere in Scripture do we find man's will forced into conformity to God's will.**

John's Gospel must be taken in total for understanding of the proof texts used for eternal security. Jesus said, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away. Only true believers are in Jesus. This does not refer to mere professors of faith in Him.

He then warns us that we must abide in Him—continue in the Faith—lest we be cast forth as a branch to be burned. This burning does not refer to works, but to the branches themselves. So it cannot be argued that this merely means that our works will be burned up if we do not remain in Christ. To not remain in Christ means to leave Him. It does not mean to sin, but to apostatize or fall from the Faith. We do not leave Him every time we sin.

As we consider other Scriptures which place conditions upon remaining in the Faith, we will see that the doctrine of eternal security rests upon this: that we are secure in our salva-

tion—and may remain secure in our minds of that salvation—as long as we continue to abide in Christ. Abiding in Christ means living in obedience to His Word and not denying the Faith.

This does not mean we will lose our salvation if we sin. Abiding in Christ means trusting Him that, if we do sin, He is our advocate with the Father, and if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Abiding in Christ means not losing our faith—no turning from the Faith through apostasy, rejecting the truths that have saved us in the first place.

Of course, when the Lord said that we are to labor for that meat which endures unto everlasting life (6:27), He negates the idea of unconditional election. But there are many Scriptures which must be addressed if we are to understand these as they relate to eternal life and what God requires of us.

But what of the strong emphasis that "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"? Certainly that cements the case for eternal security.

All who respond to the Gospel in faith are given to Jesus by the Father, true. But this refers to initial grace for salvation; it does not speak of persevering in the Faith. That Jesus would in no wise cast out does not necessarily preclude the possibility that men with free wills will not walk out on their own.

I know, this sounds as if I'm trying to explain away eternal security because that isn't clearly stated here. But in view of the other verses in John, cited above, there must be room left for man's volition in turning away from the Faith.

Okay, but what about it being the Father's will that Jesus should lose none of those whom He has given Him (6:39)?

Not everything the Father wills in relation to man's obedience is fulfilled. Does He not also say that He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance? Yet more men perish than come to repentance.

Nowhere in Scripture do we find man's will forced into conformity to God's will. Our Father did not create a race of automatons, but men with spirits whom He desires to love Him of our own volition.

## **ARMINIANISM**

It has become common among Christians to think that if one is not a Calvinist he must be an Arminianist. Calvinists, especially, brand those who do not agree with them with this appellation, often with a sneer or haughtiness. John Wesley wrote:

To say, "This man is an Arminian," has the same effect on many hearers, as to say, "This is a mad dog." It puts them into a fright at once: They run away from him with all speed and diligence; and will hardly stop, unless it be to throw a stone at the dreadful and mischievous animal.

The more unintelligible the word is, the better it answers the purpose. Those on whom it is fixed know not what to do: Not understanding what it means, they cannot tell what defence to make, or how to clear themselves from the charge. And it is not easy to remove the prejudice which others have imbibed, who know no more of it, than that it is "something very bad," if not "all that is bad!"<sup>9</sup>

If one were to ask those who identify with Calvin to explain what is Arminianism, more often than not they would not receive a proper answer. Many confuse Arminians with Arians. But neither has any resemblance to the other. Arians deny the deity of Jesus Christ. Arminians strongly affirmed belief in Jesus' deity.

Arminianism is named after James Harmens, in Latin, Jacobes Arminius, who was one of the Ministers of Amsterdam, and afterwards Professor of Divinity at Leyden. He was educated at Geneva, but in 1591 began to doubt the tenets of Calvin. He publicly taught against Calvin's doctrine until in he died in peace in 1609.

A few years after his death, some zealous men headed by the Prince of Orange furiously assaulted all who held what these men thought to be Arminius' opinions. These were condemned in the infamous Synod of Dort. Some were put to death, some banished, some imprisoned for life, all losing their livelihoods. They were forbidden from holding any office, either in the churches or the state.

The accusations charged against opponents of Calvinism (usually termed Arminians) were five: 1) That they deny original sin; 2) That they deny justification by faith; 3) That they deny absolute predestination; 4) That they

deny the grace of God to be irresistible; and, 5) That they affirm, a believer may fall from grace.

With regard to the first two of these charges, they were not guilty. The charges were entirely false. As Wesley said, "No man that ever lived, not John Calvin himself, ever asserted either original sin, or justification by faith, in more strong, more clear and express terms, than Arminius has done."

But there is an undeniable division over the next three issues. The Calvinists hold that God has absolutely decreed, from all eternity, to save only some persons, and to condemn all others; and that Christ died for these, and none else. The Arminians hold that God has decreed, from all eternity, touching all that have the written word, "He that believeth shall be saved: He that believeth not, shall be condemned." This resting on the truth that, "Christ died for all that were dead in trespasses and sins;" that is, for every child of Adam, since "in Adam all died."

### **Our Father did not create automatons, but men with spirits whom He desires to love Him of our own volition.**

The Calvinists hold, secondly, that the saving grace of God is absolutely irresistible; that no man is any more able to resist it than to resist the stroke of lightning. The Arminians hold that, although there may be some moments wherein the grace of God acts irresistibly, in general any man may resist the grace whereby it was the will of God he should have been eternally saved, and that to his eternal ruin.

The Calvinists hold, thirdly, that a true believer in Christ cannot possibly fall from grace. The Arminians hold that a true believer may "make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience;" that he may fall, not only foully, but finally, so as to perish for ever.

Regarding predestination, Arminians believe it is conditional; the Calvinists believe that it is absolute.

The reason Arminianism is spoken of as evil by ignorant people is that Calvinism, having gained ascendancy

of the Protestant ethic through coercion and persecution, has largely influenced the major portion of evangelical Christianity to be predisposed against Arminius. In short, the victor writes the history.

Sadly, most who follow the doctrines of men, whether Calvin or Arminius are lemmings, following blindly rather than turning aside to see for themselves if they might find the truth. Those who denigrate Arminius, for the most part, don't even know what the man taught. They assume, because of the negative connotation attached to his name, that he denied the grace of God. This is not true.

It is not my intention to defend Arminianism, but to challenge the Calvinist error that places virtually all their opponents in the Arminianist camp. It is wrong (carnal) to identify with any theological system. We must be students of God's Word without regard to what other men believe.

## **OTHER FACTORS**

There are three primary issues that relate to the subject of eternal security, at least the Calvinistic concept which is in the majority: election, predestination and apostasy. As we look at these issues we will of necessity be somewhat redundant in stating things that have already been stated in response to the various Scriptures used as proof texts by eternal security proponents.

Please bear with us in this, as it is necessary to solidify the biblical position in challenging them. Let us look upon the following as a summation with additional commentary.

### **Election**

The doctrine of election (including eternal security) is becoming a major controversy among today's Christians. The doctrine grew out of Calvin's five-point theology. While much of Calvinism is true, the five-point theology is erroneous.

First, Christ's death was propitious for the sins of the whole world:

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:1-2).

The Calvinist would say that this means Christ died for the sins of those He chose from the whole world—"the whole world of believers." But that's not what it says. John makes a distinction between "our sins" (the sins of the believer) and "the sins of the whole world," which proves that Christ's death is efficacious for all mankind. By efficacious I do not mean that it is imputed to all men, but that it is sufficient to cover all men's sins, and that it is available to all men. It is imputed only to whomever believes in Him.

John 3:14-18 is even more definite:

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:14-18)

Most Christians focus on 3:16 while avoiding the other verses. The whole of the matter is as follows:

When Scripture speaks of the world (kosmos), it does not mean the believers; it means God's creation as a whole, including mankind. It may also mean the world system, but we know that the world system is under Satan's control for now. Therefore, in this instance it must mean his whole creation including mankind, both of which are included in His redemption plan.

All men are condemned because none believe in Jesus initially. But Jesus came so that all men would have the opportunity to be saved (vs. 17). Those who believe in Jesus are no longer condemned, but those who do not believe in Him remain in the previous state of condemnation (vs. 18). Those who never hear the Gospel God will deal with in a just and merciful manner (Romans 2:14). Just how He will do so is not clearly stated, so we will not attempt to be dogmatic on the subject. Suffice it to say that His Word concerns those who do hear the truth and

our obligation to that truth. Many cite Ephesians 2:8-9 to argue that men have no capacity for faith unless it is given to them by God:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Faith indeed does come from God. But He gives all men a measure of faith to believe initially:

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. (Romans 12:3)

It may be argued that "every man" is "every believer." But that's not what it says, at least not clearly. If that is what is meant, then we have to ask what is a believer? A believer is one who believes, in this context, in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

So Romans 12:5 refers to every man who hears the Gospel. All are given a measure of faith to believe the Gospel when they hear it; they know it is the truth. But not everyone will believe it; they reject the faith given to them and, in the process, reject Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

So Ephesians 2:8-9 has to do with attempting to gain salvation by works alone. Exercising our wills in response to the Gospel is not works; it is required of us if we are to be saved.

This is what James means when he says:

Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. (James 2:21-24)

The Calvinist does not like James because he doesn't want to deal with this passage which suggests works are necessary for salvation. But is James not Scripture?

Be careful! What James says is in perfect accord with Jesus' teaching

that we must continue to abide in Him by keeping His commandments.

It is also in perfect accord with the rest of Scripture which consistently warns us not to be careless in our walk.

Our works prove our faith or negate it. Even though our works come after our faith, they must still be in conformity to God's Word. And there is often a difference between works and sin.

Works of outward righteousness may or may not be in conformity to God's will. This is why Paul tells us that our works may be burned up even if they are founded upon Jesus:

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. (1 Cor 3:11-18)

It is often stated by those who believe in eternal security that this Scripture means that, even though we sin, we will be saved. One dear brother, who was caught up in a sin of the flesh told me, as I exhorted him to repent lest he be lost, "I'll just lose my rewards; I won't lose my salvation."

He insisted that his eternal security protected him from being lost.

For this I chided him for looking with contempt upon the rewards of God. I also took him systematically through Scripture, until he finally admitted that he had better rethink his position. I'm blessed to report that, whether or not my words had any impact, he is today living free from the sin that plagued him. But sadly, his initial response is not uncommon among those who have bought into eternal security.

So what do the above Scriptures mean? Paul is speaking about works built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. We do not build our sins upon Jesus, do we? Of course not. But we build our good works upon Him.

It is not our sins that will be burned up, for if we have repented of them, they are covered by the blood of Jesus. But the works we do will be assayed as either gold, silver and precious stones, or as wood, hay and stubble.

The lasting works are those done in obedience to the Lord; the works to be burned are those done in the flesh. They are both outwardly good works, but the latter are not authorized by God.

Sin, however, is disobedience to God; it always carries with it the potential for being lost. The Lord offers us the opportunity to repent if we sin, in which case He is faithful and just to forgive us (1 John 1:9). But there is the big "if."

This does not negate God's grace, which is evident in the Holy Spirit convicting us of sin in the first place. God does not make our choices for us. Otherwise we cannot say we love Him. We would be robots, not loving men.

The eternal security proponent believes that any decision on man's part to respond to the Gospel or to God's conviction impugns God's sovereignty. But sovereignty is not based upon forcing anyone to respond to "irresistible grace." Rather, God's sovereignty establishes the benefits for those who respond to His grace, and the consequences for those who do not respond to His grace. Sovereignty is rulership apart from any other authority. Those who attempt to be their own authority will suffer under the rules established by the Sovereign.

This law of sovereignty extends to those who enter into the Covenant of Grace established in Christ's blood. If we remain in Christ, if we faint not, if we endure to the end, we will be saved. The Scriptures that warn believers of the need to remain faithful warn of dire consequences if we should fall from the Faith.

We can break the Covenant in Jesus' blood by choosing to willfully disobey and cast aside our faith, just as Israel did regarding the Old Covenant. This is what Hebrews 10:26-29 means:

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

Has a non-believer been sanctified by the blood of the covenant? The Calvinist must say no, because he doesn't believe that Christ's blood was shed for the unbeliever.

Yet the Calvinist says that this applies to unbelievers or to those who merely profess Jesus without having been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. H.A. Ironside explains his position:

The whole nation of Israel was sanctified by the blood of the covenant; in a certain sense the whole world has been sanctified by the blood of the cross. If it were not for that blood shed on Calvary's cross the whole world would be doomed to eternal judgment, but because Jesus died for the entire world God says, "Now, I can deal with all men on the ground of the blood of the cross," and, as we often put it, the great question between God and man today is not primarily the sin question. Why? Because the blood of Christ answers for sin. What is the great question? It is the Son question: How are you treating God's Son who died to save you? Christ has died for all men, His blood is shed for the salvation of all men, and it will avail for every sinner in the world if they trust Him.<sup>10</sup>

Ironside's commentary addressed only verses 27-29, conveniently omitting verse 26 which says if "we" sin wilfully (that is, with an attitude of rebellion and no desire to repent). Even so, Ironside's statements that "Jesus died for the entire world," and "His blood is shed for the salvation of all men," do not fit the Calvinist position. Ironside is claimed by many Calvinists to have been one of them, but evidently he did not believe in total depravity or unconditional election. It may be argued that he was a one- or two-point Calvinist. But no one point can stand without all the others. The true Calvinist does not believe that

Jesus' blood was shed for all men, but for only the elect. Yet such statements are found throughout Calvinist literature as if the writers forgot what they are supposed to believe.

The eternal security position on Hebrews 10:26-29 is patently false. It is a feeble attempt to justify the presupposition that a true believer in Jesus cannot lose his salvation.

So who is being warned? The eternal security proponent overlooks an important point. The writer of Hebrews includes himself when he says, "For if we sin wilfully. . . ."

Hebrews 6:4-12 expands on this:

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God:

But that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Believers in eternal security tell us that Hebrews 6 and Hebrews 10 do not apply to believers—that those people were never saved in the first place. This argument is not based on sound exegesis, but on circular reasoning founded upon an erroneous presupposition: One cannot lose one's salvation, no matter what. Therefore, these verses are not speaking of believers. Since they are not speaking of believers, they



must be speaking of unbelievers; since they are speaking of unbelievers, it proves that one cannot lose one's salvation.

As intelligent as many proponents of eternal security are, they fail to see the error of such reasoning. Then to whom is this warning given? Eternal security proponents would say it is speaking of unbelievers who reject the Gospel. If they reject the Gospel it is impossible to what—"renew them again unto repentance"? They were never repentant in the first place. How can they be renewed unto repentance?

Just as importantly, if they cannot repent after having rejected the Gospel, what about those many who reject the Gospel for years only to one day surrender to it?

Are unbelievers made partakers of the Holy Ghost? Can unbelievers crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh? Not if they had never received forgiveness through the Cross in the first place.

These are all warnings to believers; and there are many, many more throughout the Scriptures. The writer does say that he is persuaded that those to whom he was writing would remain firm until the end, even though he was writing these things. In other words, "I am warning you what will happen if you fail, but I believe you won't fail."

But what of those who do fail? Obviously he is speaking to believers.

We cannot neglect Paul's warning to the Gentiles who were grafted into Israel through faith in Christ:

Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:

For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.

Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. (Romans 11:18-22)

Paul is not speaking to unbelievers. He is speaking to the believers at Rome.

Election comes through our response to the Gospel and obedience to God's Word. Else why would Peter say,

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:10-11)

If the Calvinists are correct, how is it possible for us to make our calling and election sure? They would say there is nothing we can do about our election. Election is election; there is no need to make it secure.

### **Predestination**

Some raise the issue of predestination, suggesting that man has no will in the matter, but that we are predestined either to be saved or damned. This is partly based on an erroneous understanding of Romans 9:18-25:

Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.

Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?

Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?

Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.

It seems at first glance that God arbitrarily chooses whom He will save and whom He will damn. But the context of this passage is God's exacting His wrath upon the Israelites who have rejected Christ, and showing His grace toward the Gentiles who believe

in Christ. The preceding verses reveal this to be true:

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,

That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.

For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;

Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:

Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.

That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.

And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac;

(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)

It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.

As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. (Romans 9:1-17)

While this principle may be applied to individuals it is not at some whim of caprice on God's part. He is just and merciful, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2

Peter 3:9). If He is not willing that any should perish, why does the vast majority of mankind perish? Because God does not override their wills.

We agree with the Calvinists that God's reasons for dealing as He chooses with men is His business. But Scripture indicates strongly, in many places, that His pleasure is bestowed upon those who obey Him, and His wrath falls upon those who disobey Him. To assume that man is predestined to salvation or damnation is similar to the Hellenistic belief in Fate.

There is only one scriptural passage where the word "predestinate" is found:

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. (Romans 8:29-30)

This predestination is not for salvation, but for conformity to the image of Jesus for those whom God foreknew. The foreknowledge comes before the predestination to conformity. Those He foreknew and thus predestined to conformity to Christ, He justified and glorified.

The Scriptures say further:

The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.

As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.

And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. (1 Corinthians 15:47-50)

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

While we will not be totally conformed to the image of Christ until the resurrection, it is the will of the Father that we submit to the authority of His Word under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in order that we become like Jesus while still in our flesh—not perfected, but perfect in our beliefs and ac-

tions. This is why He has told us to be perfect as He is perfect: perfect in relationship with the Father and in our walk with Him. This takes an act of will on our part, responding to the guidance of the Holy Spirit who leads us into all truth through the Word of God.

Here, I must address the issue of God's hatred for His enemies, which is an often-stated reason for the erroneous concepts related to election. We must remember that, before coming to Christ, we were all counted as His enemies:

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

God sees our sinfulness which covers even the little good that comes naturally to man. But He gave us the opportunity to become His sons by adoption. All we need do is enter through Jesus Christ.

If God hates His enemies He must have hated us as well, since we were all at one time His enemies. But we know that He loves us. Would He command us to love our enemies if He did not love His enemies? He takes no pleasure in the destruction of the wicked:

Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? (Ezekiel 33:11)

God desires that the wicked turn from their sins. But many Calvinists smugly desire the destruction of the wicked. In this the Calvinist is more "godly" than God. This motivated Calvin in his ungodly persecutions. Just as Muslims cannot escape the stigma of Mohammed's terrorism, regardless of their protests of Islam being a "religion of peace," so Calvinists cannot escape the stigma of Calvin's terrorism.

Yes, Scripture speaks harshly about God's enemies. But the enemies of which it speaks are not non-believers in

general. They are willful unbelievers. They reject Christ; they are full of malice toward the true God. In the writings of the Prophets they were the enemies of Israel whom they knew worshipped the true God, YHWH. In the writings of the Apostles they are the rejecters of Christ. For these there is a punishment far more severe than for those who lack belief for other reasons than rejection of the truth. We must be careful not to assign to all men either salvation or the severest condemnation. All are condemned who are not in Christ, but there is a greater condemnation for those who reject the truth. And only those in Christ have salvation.

### Apostasy

Hebrews 6 speaks of those who have fallen away (Gr. *parapipto*). Vine's says, "*parapipto* ^3895^, akin to A, No. 2, properly, 'to fall in one's way' (para, 'by'), signifies 'to fall away' (from adherence to the realities and facts of the faith), <Heb. 6:6>." (From Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words.)

It is not the same as *parapto*, which means to stumble, fall or sin. Strong's interprets *parapipto* as another word for apostatize or "fall aside."

Theologically apostasy means to fall from one's position in Christ. This is not to say that one may lose one's salvation easily. One will not lose one's salvation by committing any particular sin other than the willful turning away from the faith. Apostasy is a creeping illness upon the soul and spirit of man. It begins with justification of one's sin and leads to carelessness in repentance. First, conviction by the Holy Spirit is employed to bring him back to repentance (we not only can be, but must be, renewed unto repentance). That failing, chastisement from God may be the next step to bring him to his senses. If he resists the chastisement, he then risks searing his conscience and hardening his heart. Should he continue in that mode, the Spirit of God will not continue to strive with him. At that point it will be impossible to renew him unto repentance, seeing that he has crucified the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame (Hebrews 6: 6). He will have apostatized (fallen aside) fully, rejecting the faith and, often, justifying a new "faith" that is akin to "easy-believism."

This is explained in Hebrews 10:22-31, which in context is also clearly speaking to the brethren in Christ:

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised:)

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Many who believe in eternal security ridicule those who do not, implying that we think one can lose one's salvation too easily. They insist that we believe a true Christian who sins has to be saved all over again. But the only way one may lose one's salvation is by apostatizing, not by committing sin per se. One foolish statement I received in response to this argument was, "apostasy is sin." The poor man didn't understand, even after I explained to him the distinction between sins of the flesh and apostasy, which is a sin of the spirit. Apostasy is the sin unto death:

If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. (1 John 5:16)

The sin unto death is not suicide, as some speculate. Suicide is a sin of the flesh, and is in God's hands. Its mitigating circumstances are under His

judgment. But apostasy is unable to be repented of because it is spiritual sin—sin that kills the spirit. It is willful disobedience of the nature of Satan's sin committed in defiance of God. This is why Satan had no provision for redemption. He knew and partook of God's glory and still rebelled. Since non-believers' spirits are already dead, they cannot commit this sin. Thus John says that if we see a brother commit this sin we are not to pray for it.

When Scripture speaks of our brothers it is not referring to our siblings in the flesh; it is referring to our spiritual brethren in Christ. Why would John tell us not to pray for a brother caught in sin if it were not possible for that brother to be lost?

Sins of the flesh are not sins unto death, but they can lead to the sin unto death. God has not taken away our wills (something the Calvinist does not believe in). God may strive hard to convince us to repent, but we may strive hard not to repent, resisting the grace of God.

This does not negate salvation by grace. God's grace that leads us to the Cross is offered without merit on anyone's part. All we can do is respond to the Holy Spirit's call. Scripture tells us that no man can come to God except the Spirit draw him. But how does the Spirit draw one to God? Through the Word of God—the proclaiming of the Gospel. Everyone who hears the Gospel is called by God. Yet while many are called, few are chosen (Matthew 22:14). We are chosen on the basis of our response to the Gospel. God does not negate man's will in choosing to accept or reject Christ. This is why we are told that whoever believes in Him will be saved. Romans 10:13-17 also says:

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (lit. "a word about Christ").

God has commissioned us to proclaim the Gospel to all men, giving them opportunity to exercise their wills in response. This is how the Spirit draws "all men" ("If I be lifted up I shall draw all men to me"). Yet while many are called, few are chosen. And we are chosen on the basis of our response to the Gospel. By the same token, we may choose to reject the truth at any time, should our hearts become hardened due to sin. Thus the warnings in Scripture for the believer to examine himself to see if he is in the Faith (at that moment). He may be sliding away. This is also why we are told to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

The Calvinist would have us believe that we have no will—that God does everything, we do nothing. Yes, God did provide the means for our salvation freely, without cost. His condition is that we repent, believe and be baptized in Christ. Those who refuse (an act of one's will) will not enter into His salvation.

This does not negate God's grace; it brings us face to face with the majesty and holiness of God. Because of the doctrine of eternal security too many are living lives of delusion, thinking that the only thing they risk by resisting the Spirit of Grace upon their conscience when they sin is their rewards. This leaves them weak, lacking diligence for their souls, and in great danger of apostatizing.v

## NOTES

1. Dave Hunt, *What Love is This? Calvinism's Misrepresentation of God* (Sisters, OR: Loyal Publishing, Inc., 2002), p. 189.
2. Arthur W. Pink, *Eternal Security* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1974), [www.pbministries.org/Books/pink/security/sec\\_01.htm](http://www.pbministries.org/Books/pink/security/sec_01.htm), Introduction, p. 1.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
4. H.A. Ironside, *Eternal Security of the Believer*, Revised Edition (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Bros., Inc., <http://bob.vandyke.net/saved.htm>), p. 3.
5. Arthur W. Pink, *op. cit.*, p. 2.
6. H.A. Ironside, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
8. Dave Hunt, *op. cit.*, p. 377.
9. From the Thomas Jackson edition of *The Works of John Wesley*, 1872.
10. H.A. Ironside, *op. cit.*, p. 37.



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