

ETERNAL SECURITY

John H. Smith

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(with others)

Eternal Bible Truths
Scottsdale, Arizona

The writers of this booklet believe the Bible to be the Self-revelation of the one true eternal God. Fallen mankind worships many different gods and holds many different beliefs concerning what is truth. Therefore, absolute truth must come from outside of man. Without an absolute standard of truth, mankind has no solid basis from which to reason and arrive at valid conclusions concerning why he exists and what his purpose is on the earth. We believe the Bible is that absolute truth. The Bible alone reveals the only true and living God and shows us how to know Him personally—one God Who is triune as Father, Son, and Spirit. God’s Word, the Bible, did not originate from man, as stated in 2 Peter 1:21, “No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” This writing seeks to present only what God says in His Word. It is the sole authority for faith resulting in salvation, practical Christian living, and full maturity in Christ.

A simple outline of Bible truth:

From eternity to eternity God’s kingdom rules over all (Ps. 90:2; 103:19). God is “the King of the Ages” (1 Tim. 1:17) and “He will reign unto the ages of the ages” (Rev. 11:15). Mankind was created in God’s image for dominion according to God’s purpose and His heart’s desire. God loved the man that He created and could never be defeated in His purpose. Therefore, Christ came to redeem fallen mankind and creation so that God’s image could be perfected in him, thus qualifying him to rule on God’s behalf. The first stage of God’s purpose for man is fulfilled when, at the close of this present age, Christ will reign with His overcoming saints for 1,000 years on the earth (Rev. 20:4, 6). Following this is His eternal reign from the eternal city, the New Jerusalem, where all of His redeemed will reign with Him forever and ever (Rev. 22:4-5).

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To the beloved brothers and sisters who are in Christ, that they may stand firmly and joyously on the assurance of their salvation.

Eternal security is a vast subject that is integrated in biblical truth as a whole. This makes it imperative that we understand the great themes and principles of God's purposes and working that run throughout the whole Bible. Obviously, we can't cover all of these great themes and principles in one little booklet; however, we will note certain governing principles of Bible interpretation.

To begin with, we must understand that the Bible is a unity of truth. Passages of Scripture must be interpreted (1) taking note of their cultural context, (2) according to their historical context, (3) according to their immediate context, (4) according to the context of the entire Bible, and (5) in light of other Scriptures that are very plain and clear in their bearing on the issue, especially where hard-to-understand passages are concerned. The divinely inspired, God-breathed Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21) never contradicts itself. If one passage seems to contradict another, there is a problem with our understanding rather than the text itself. If one verse seems to contradict a large number of references that are unmistakably clear, then this one verse is not being interpreted correctly. Also, we must realize that we are dealing with the Word of the infinite, all-knowing eternal God Who is not limited to time and space as we are.

God's wisdom in a mystery, that was predetermined before the ages of time for our glory, can only be understood as the spirit of the believer communes with the Spirit of God Who indwells his human spirit. The Spirit of God alone searches and knows all the deep things of God. The things God has prepared for those who love Him are spiritually discerned and taught by the Spirit. The thoughts of our natural man are not the thoughts of God. God's thoughts are much higher than our thoughts, even as the heavens are much higher than the earth (Isa. 55:8-9). Therefore, we must always approach the Word of God with prayer for a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. Only by revelation will we understand the deep things of God (1 Cor. 2:10-13; Eph. 1:17-23; Col. 1:9-13).

Please meditate on and carefully consider all the verses given in this booklet. Praise our God, that the Holy Spirit in our spirit will give revelation increasingly if we seek for it. (Remember that the Old Testament was first written in Hebrew, the language of the Israelites, and almost all of the New

Testament was first written in the Greek language that was commonly spoken in Jesus' time. Since then, it has been translated into numerous languages.)

There are a very large number of Scriptures that speak plainly of the eternal security of the believer. Scriptures that are said to teach otherwise are being misinterpreted. Some of the reasons for this are (1) lack of understanding concerning the kingdom which involves the matter of reward or loss of reward regarding the believer's life and service to the Lord which has nothing to do with being eternally lost (explained later in this article), (2) mixing law and grace in the matter of salvation so that salvation by grace alone is actually denied, (3) confusing Israel with the Church, (4) lack of sight concerning God's eternal purposes in the creation of man in God's image for dominion which run from Genesis 1:26-27 through the entire Bible and without which the Bible cannot be clearly understood, (5) not understanding that eternal life is the free gift of God's grace, but at the judgment seat of Christ where only believers appear, there are positive and negative rewards regarding their works, (6) the need to see more deeply the believer's relationship to God as that of a new creation child born of Him as Father and predestined to be conformed to the image of the Son, and (7) the need to thoroughly understand the great provisions for our salvation in the finished work of Christ. When on the cross our Lord Jesus Christ said, "It is finished," He had completed the work the Father gave Him to do for the salvation and redemption of mankind and the universe. As far as God is concerned, from His eternal viewpoint, His work is all done and only remains to be worked out in man on the earth and in the heavens. As long as Christians do not understand the items mentioned in this paragraph, they would tend to believe that a truly born again Christian can be lost for eternity.

There is little doubt that every born again child of God has at some time been attacked with regard to the assurance of their salvation. Satan is the accuser of the brothers (Job 1:9, 2:5; Zech. 3:1-2; Luke 22:31; Rev. 12:10). God's purpose in creation is to have humanity (mankind) in His image to express Him and to rule on His behalf (Gen. 1:26-27). Satan's desire is to interfere with and destabilize our relationship with God in order to prevent our maturing into the full image of Christ that is necessary for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose of image and dominion. When this image is fully reached, believers will be qualified to rule and reign with Him (Rev. 20:4, 6), and Satan will be cast down (Rev. 12:9-11). Therefore, he fights fiercely to occupy believers with the possibility of becoming lost and the consideration of what works they must do to keep themselves saved. This interferes with the Father-child relationship and stunts the believers' growth to maturity. In view

of these crucial matters, let us consider some great indisputable passages that testify to the eternally secure salvation of every true believer.

We Were Transferred Out of Adam Where All Die and Placed in Christ Where All Are Made Alive

We were born positioned in Adam, being sons in his image with a fallen nature (Gen. 5:3). We were completely lost and without any hope (Eph. 2:12). In our natural birth position we were dead in trespasses and sins, but “in the Christ, all shall be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22, YLT; Eph. 2:1; Rom. 5:12, 19).

Beloved brothers and sisters who make up the Body of Christ, in the counsels of God in eternity (the timeless realm where God exists with no beginning or ending), the blessed God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us with the power and reality of every spiritual blessing in Christ (Eph. 1:3). The language of the original Greek text is indisputable, that although the fulfillment of these blessings is a process in our individual experience, in God’s timeless sight all are already accomplished. Consider the blessings that will follow!

God our Father placed us eternally in Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 1:30). Our Father chose us “in Him” before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). As a lost and helpless child of the streets is often rescued and placed as a son in a loving home, so He marked us out beforehand (predestined us) to arrive at sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself (Eph. 1:5). Full sonship means spiritual maturity through transformation into the image of Christ in Whose image we were created (Gen. 1:26-27; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3). Think of it! In eternity past, before the foundation of the world, God took pleasure in choosing you to be His son! Praise Him! We are viewing here the God of the universe doing what pleases Him (Eph. 1:5). In Isaiah 46:10, God says, “My counsel will stand and I will do all my pleasure” (lit.). And in verse 11, “I will work and who shall hinder it?” (lit.). Is it not unbelief if one dares to stand before God and declare that our Almighty God will lose one that He chose before the foundation of the world? (See John 6:38-40.)

Some have asked the question: “Does God then also predestinate some to destruction?” For an answer, hear with a hearing ear the infallible Word of God. God is love, and He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16). God is also righteous (Rom. 3:26; Deut. 32:4; etc.). He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11). Therefore, He does not predestinate to destruction. His choosing and predestination are in accordance with His perfect foreknowledge of what use every child of Adam will make of his life on the earth (Rom. 8:29;

1 Peter 1:2). With regard to these matters, Satan will both accuse us and slander God just as he did to Eve in the garden. Let us, as finite beings, bow before our infinite God in wonder, awe, humility, and worship, and let us stand upon the unmistakable statements of His holy, infallible Word.

Now chosen and placed in Christ, our Father has taken us into His grace and favor (Eph. 1:6). Please see this picture dear brothers and sisters! You are in Christ Who is in the presence of the Father; therefore, *you* are in the presence of the Father. So the Father accepts you just as He accepts Christ! God has put us in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30). Christ ascended to the Father with us in Him (Eph. 2:6). Now our life is hidden there, with Christ, in God (Col. 3:3). God accepts us because He is satisfied with Christ and the salvation He has wrought on the cross and through resurrection.

Positioned by God in the Beloved (Christ), in living union with Him, we continually have the completed redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offences (Eph. 1:7). In Him also we were *chosen* as His inheritance, those marked out beforehand to participate in God's plan to bring all things in the heavens and the earth (i.e. the whole universe) under the headship of Christ. Thus we are predestined according to His purpose that, transformed and transfigured, we shall be to the praise of His glory. As Israel was chosen of old to be an elect nation, believers were chosen beforehand to be an eternal gift to God the Father. This predestination is according to God's eternal purpose and will absolutely be accomplished by the will and power of God (Eph. 1:10-12).

Furthermore, having believed, we were *sealed* with the Holy Spirit of promise Who is now indwelling us as the down payment, the pledge, the *guarantee* of our inheritance, unto the full redemption (that is the full transformation of our souls and the resurrection of the body) of God's own purchased possession (Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30). We are that possession purchased by the price of Jesus' blood (1 Cor. 6:20). In ancient times, a seal gave legality to a document and marked its ownership. A king stamped his seal on certain possessions indicating they belonged to him (Esther 3:2; 8:8; Jer. 32:11). So the Christian is confirmed as God's child by the seal of the indwelling God, the Holy Spirit Who never leaves us (John 14:16; Rom. 8:16, 23; 2 Cor. 1:22; 1 John 3:24). We are one spirit with Him (1 Cor. 6:17). The Holy Spirit in us is God's seal signifying that He owns us (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

To summarize, in this glorious portion of the Word (Eph. 1:3-23) we find ourselves (1) *blessed* with every spiritual blessing in Christ, (2) *chosen* in Him before the foundation of the world, (3) *predestined to sonship* (becoming mature sons), (4) *taken into favor* (accepted) in the Beloved, (5) *forgiven* of our sins, (6) *predestined to an inheritance* when all things are headed up in Christ, (7) *sealed* with the Holy Spirit of promise, and (8) in verses 22-23 *a part of His*

body that fills all in all (the universe). What grace, what mercy, what love, what safety in the eternal arms! All these unspeakable blessings are the acts of our eternal God Who says, “I act and who can reverse it?” (Isa. 43:13, NASB). None can reverse it! The true believer in Christ will never be lost.

Brothers and sisters, God is your real Father. When you received Christ by believing on His Name, you were born of God. This birth was neither of man’s will nor the will of the flesh. God gave birth to you by the exercise of His own will (John 1:12-13; James 1:18). We were chosen according to the foreknowledge of God (1 Peter 1:2). Peter then uses a strong expression: “God caused us to be born again” (1 Peter 1:3, NASB). It is an obvious truth that one born to natural parents cannot be unborn! Due to irresponsible or wicked behavior, the father may withhold that son’s inheritance, but he will never cease to be a child of his father. (We will explain this further in the last section of this booklet.) God’s work in giving birth to us according to His will cannot be undone by man (Isa. 43:13). Man’s will is not the initiating cause of the new birth, nor does man have the power to produce the new birth, but man is responsible to exercise his will to receive by faith the gift offered by the Holy Spirit. It is also true that God knows who will receive and who will reject this free gift (1 Peter 1:2), and that man has free will to do either (1 Thess. 1:6-9; 2:13; Matt. 23:37; John 5:39-40). Man’s responsibility to receive, together with God’s will and choice, is easily seen in John 1:12-13; those who “received” were “born of the will of God.” Whosoever (literally “every one who”) believes on Him will not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16). Jesus commanded all men to repent and believe the good news (Mark 1:15).

The new birth of every believer, which is 100 percent by the power of the Holy Spirit, is a new creation that had not existed before (2 Cor. 5:17). Every believer’s human spirit is now a new creation, having been regenerated and created anew by being born of the Spirit of God (John 3:6). Many other verses explain this further. You were born again by the Spirit of God entering your human spirit as the Seed, the sperm of God (1 John 3:9). Sperm (Greek, *sperma*) is the actual word translated as Seed. Surely it is easy to understand that a father’s human sperm brought his life into his children. In the same manner, the Sperm of God brings the life of God into the spirit of man. Stated in a stronger way, in our salvation the Sperm of God brings in God Himself.

The Person of all three of the Godhead (Father, Son, and Spirit) is eternal life. In 1 John 1:1-2, John clearly tells us that the Person Who came from the Father, the One Who he and others had heard, had seen with their eyes, and had handled with their hands, was eternal life manifested on the earth. Jesus Himself said, “I Am the Life” (John 14:6, NASB). Again John writes in 1 John 5:20: “He (Jesus Christ) is the true God and eternal life.” The book of Hebrews

speaks of the Spirit as an eternal Person (Heb. 9:14). The gospel of John says that eternal life is to know the only true God and the One Who He sent, Jesus Christ (John 17:3). So it is clear from all these verses that the Person of God is eternal life.

As an example, if the person of John H. Smith could become a spirit and enter your body, then you would have John's life come into you. Just so, the entrance of the Person of the Holy Spirit into your human spirit was the entrance of eternal life. By this vital, living union of the Holy Spirit with your spirit, you were joined to the Lord as one spirit with Him (1 Cor. 6:17). So this Seed of God that came into you is incorruptible, and therefore it is imperishable. Its source and cause is the constantly living and constantly abiding Word of God (1 Peter 1:23). If a truly saved person can be lost, then you are found saying that the Seed of God, which is the very life of God, is perishable.

When a child is born into a human family, he quickly recognizes his father and begins to call him "Daddy!" In the same way, as a son born of God, Who is your Heavenly Father, you have received the spirit of sonship in your spirit in which you cry, "Abba, Father!" (Rom. 8:14-15). Yes, even Christ within you cries, "Abba, Father!" (Gal. 4:6). The Indwelling Spirit of God within you bears witness with your spirit that you are a child of God (Rom. 8:16).

Salvation Is by Grace Through Faith

According to Ephesians 2:8-10, salvation is by grace through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works that no one may boast. Verse 8 specifically says, "By grace you have been saved through faith." This phrase "have been saved" is a Greek perfect tense that emphasizes the continuing, eternal effect of our initial salvation. Our fallen self with its works has no part in our regeneration into a new creation. Christ alone is the means of our salvation. It is impossible to earn it by our works (Rom. 4:4-5). Otherwise, grace would no longer be grace (Rom. 11:6). We are exclusively His workmanship. This workmanship is a completed action of creation in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:10). We are a new creation that God alone can create (2 Cor. 5:17).

However, the works *following* our becoming a new creation are not to *obtain* eternal life; they are works that follow *after* we have received eternal life. They are works that God prepared beforehand for each one of us to walk in *after* we are saved. They are works that we do in the power of God's gift to us, which is His new creation life (2 Cor. 5:17), and His all-powerful all-sufficient grace (1 Cor. 15:10).

So it is clear that we cannot obtain or keep eternal life by any works or any righteousness of our own. There is no way to obtain salvation other than by receiving it as a gift on the basis of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, followed by His victorious resurrection and ascension. His righteousness is imputed to us as a gift when we believe. The word "imputed" means that Christ's righteousness is put to our account. God, the righteous Judge, accepts it. As Isaiah said long ago, "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6, DARBY). It is as if you owed a debt that you could not pay, and then someone came along and totally freed you from that debt by putting their money to your account.

We lack space to further explain imputed righteousness, but for your study consider the following: (1) It is of necessity a righteousness apart from law-keeping because no one could keep the law to obtain it (Rom. 3:19-21); (2) It is a righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:22-23); (3) On the basis of Christ's work this righteousness is put to our account as a gift when we believe (Rom. 4:5-6, 13; 5:17); (4) Christ Himself is made this righteousness to us by an act of God when He put us in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30). Paul also tells us in Romans 10:3-4 that Israel did not obtain righteousness because they were seeking their own righteousness through keeping the law and refusing to submit to the righteousness of God, which is the only righteousness acceptable to Him. Verse 4 tells us that Christ is the end of the law (the termination of the law [law-keeping] as a means of righteousness) for righteousness to every believer. There is no more law-keeping in order to obtain righteousness. He fulfilled all the demands of the law (Matt. 5:17), and now by faith we receive Him as our righteousness. "Knowing that a man is not justified on the principle of the works of the law, but by faith, therefore we believe on Christ Jesus that we might be justified (placed in a right standing with God) on the principle of faith" (Gal 2:16, lit.). Galatians 2:21 says emphatically that if anyone insists that he must gain righteousness by his own works through the law, then he sets aside the grace of God and treats Christ as if He died for nothing. This, brothers and sisters, is an awful thing in God's sight because His free grace and the finished work of Christ are despised. To insist on establishing your own righteousness by your own works actually perverts the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:7). Paul terms it as "another gospel" and pronounces a curse upon anyone who teaches so (Gal. 1:6-9).

John 10:27-30

In the gospels, the Jewish leaders had refused Christ's claims to be the Messiah and rejected the miracles that proved His claims. He had plainly told

them Who He was, but they did not believe because they were not of His sheep (John 10:24-27). Surrounded by a crowd of Jews in the porch of Solomon, Jesus then spoke words of eternal assurance and comfort to those there who were His true sheep, and to all believers until He comes again (vv. 27-30).

I give to My sheep right now (present tense, not future) eternal life and they shall never, no never (a strong double negative) perish (v. 28). In John 5:24 Jesus said, “He that hears my word and believes on Him Who sent Me has eternal life (right now as a present possession) and does not come into judgment (eternal death), but has passed out of the death into the life” (lit.). Notice the use of the article “the.” *The* death means the realm or sphere of death into which we were born as children of fallen Adam (Rom. 5:12, 14; 1 Cor. 15:22; Eph. 2:1). *The* life is the realm or sphere of life into which we pass immediately when we believe in Christ. That sphere is “in Christ” where we will be eternally. God is eternal life, and Christ personally is eternal life (John 17:3; 1 John 1:1-2; John 14:6). As is God Himself, this life has no beginning or ending. By the very definition of the word “eternal”, if a person could lose it, then he never had it. This is because it is God’s life which has no beginning or ending. The phrase “has passed” is a Greek perfect tense, which means this life continues unendingly in our experience. So the sheep can joyfully shout, “We have passed out of the realm of spiritual death in Adam into the realm of eternal life in Christ!”

Our Lord continues by saying that no one can seize one of His sheep out of His hand. Furthermore, the Father, Who is greater than all, gave us to Christ and no one can seize us out of the Father’s hand. Rejoice, believer, that the Father gave you to Christ, and neither man nor devil can seize you out of Their hand! Praise the Lord, the impossibility of true believers being lost does not depend upon any strength of their own, but rests upon the finished work of Christ and the mighty power of God (vv. 28-30).

Romans 8:28-39

All true believers are called according to and for the fulfillment of the eternal purpose of God (Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:9-11; 3:9-11). We were called before the ages of time (2 Tim. 1:9). It was a call into the fellowship of the Son (1 Cor. 1:9). The One Who called us is the eternal God “of Whom and through Whom and to Whom are all things” (Rom. 11:36, lit.). This is to say that (1) God is the source of all things, (2) He brings everything to pass that He planned in His eternal counsels, and (3) all things ultimately return to Him for His satisfaction and eternal glory. Therefore, we are confident that nothing will stop Him from accomplishing His purpose. He will cause all things to work

together for good to believers whom He has called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28).

We were *foreknown*, in eternity past, by God (Rom. 8:29). We were chosen according to the foreknowledge of God on the basis of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus and the sanctifying work of the Spirit (1 Peter 1:1-2). The true believers whom God foreknew He predestined to be conformed to the image of the Son. This confirmation to the image of the Son is mature sonship (Eph. 1:5) that is also described as the measure of the stature of Christ (Eph. 4:13). Can someone say that those foreknown, chosen, and predestined to be conformed to the image of the Son could ever be lost? Never! To say such a thing contradicts the plain Word and is an affront to the very character of our God Who foreknew, predestined, and will see us conformed according to His unalterable purpose for which we were called.

In Romans 8:30 we have four terms: *predestinated*, *called*, *justified*, and *glorified*. In the original language all four of these verbs are action words, which are in what is called the aorist tense. This means that these four actions of God on behalf of His eternal purpose and us, His children, are viewed in their entirety. You may say they are timeless. As far as our sovereign God is concerned, they are already accomplished. Therefore, all is viewed as one entire, eternally completed salvation described in these five timeless (eternal in character) words: foreknown, predestinated, called, justified, and glorified.

All of this takes place in Christ where God put us (1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1). We the true believers were eternally foreknown, called, justified, predestinated to be conformed to Christ's image, and glorified. We, living in time, are in the process of transformation and glorification that God sees as already done. It is impossible that God would fail. It is therefore impossible that a truly saved person could be lost and end up in the lake of fire. To believe this would be questioning the character of God.

As Paul continues his triumphant praise we hear the language of heaven that is beyond human thought. Meditate on it, brothers and sisters, with a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. If God be for us, who can be against us? (Rom. 8:31). The answer, of course, is NO ONE! Neither man nor devil can defeat our Father God. Our enemies are His enemies. The irrefutable argument continues. Since God did not spare the greatest possible gift, His own Son, God manifest in the flesh, He will surely give us all things. The "all things" are gifts immeasurably less than the supreme gift of the Son and are actually included in Him (Rom. 8:32).

The next verses in Romans 8 speak of our clearance from guilt and condemnation (vv. 33-34). God is the judge before Whose court we have been justified. Anyone who would bring a charge against God's chosen ones must

face the Judge (God) Who has justified them, that is, set them in right standing with Him (Rom. 3:21-31). Neither man nor Satan, the Accuser of the brethren, is able to bring a charge against them (Rev. 12:10-11). Neither can anyone condemn God's elect because Christ has already condemned sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:3) and now stands as our Advocate, Representative in God's court, having fully satisfied God's just requirements for our sins and those of the whole world (1 John 2:1-2). All who would bring false accusations against God's chosen and justified ones will be turned away in defeat.

And finally, our glorious risen Lord at God's right hand is constantly interceding for us (v. 34). He is there ever living to intercede and complete the process of our full salvation (Heb. 7:25). This begins with the regeneration of our spirit, proceeds through the transformation of our soul, and is consummated with the resurrection and glorification of our body. In Jesus Christ's matchless prayer in John 17, He wills to have us kept in the Father's Name (v. 11), kept from evil (v. 15), sanctified by the truth (v. 17), and to be with Him where He is (v. 24). The only lost one, Judas Iscariot, was never a child of God; he was never saved. He was the son of perdition, the son of destruction. His spiritual parentage was of the Devil, not God. This is the very phrase used for Antichrist in 2 Thess. 2:3. Jesus said plainly that of the twelve He chose, Judas Iscariot was a devil (John 6:70-71). In John 8, Jesus told the Pharisees that they did the works of their father (v. 41) and that their father, their spiritual parentage, was the Devil (v. 44).

In the closing verses of Romans 8, Paul triumphantly states that no circumstance and no created thing can separate the chosen and called believers from Christ because of His love for them (vv. 35-39). Christ's love, from which we cannot be separated, is perfect (John 13:1; 15:9; 1 John 4:8). And now our love is being developed toward maturity and completeness as His love is being perfected in us (1 John 4:12). So regardless of what is happening to us, we may abide in His love continually.

The terms in Romans 8:35 describe pressure from the outside, inner distress and anxiety, persecution from any antichrist source, deprivation of food, deprivation of normal things of life such as clothing, and even danger by the sword that brings physical death. Suffering and even death has been and presently is the lot of many of God's people (v. 36). But such cannot separate us from the love of Christ. Rather, we are more than conquerors, super-conquerors, through Him that loves us. From the blood of the martyrs recorded in the Bible, through the multitudes who suffered persecution and death through the centuries, to the present day when a minimum of 150,000 yearly shed their blood for Christ's sake, the triumphant shout goes up: "More than conquerors through Him Who loves us!" "It has been granted to us on behalf of

Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake” (Phil.1:29, lit.). Paul himself gloried in his tribulations (Rom. 5:3; 2 Cor. 12:9-10).

What marvelous words close this chapter: neither death, life, angels, evil principalities, human or supernatural powers, things present in this world now, things to come, height, depth, nor any created thing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord! The Holy Spirit, speaking through Paul, traverses the universe and finds nothing that can separate the chosen, called, and justified believer from His Lord.

1 John 5:6-13

Although there is some repetition of previous statements, it is profitable to look into this passage by itself. Near the end of his gospel (glad tidings), John tells us that the signs in his gospel were written “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His Name” (John 20:31, NASB). And in his first epistle he says, “These things I have written to you who believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:13, NKJV) and be filled with joy in fellowship with the Father and the Son (1 John 1:4).

Now let us notice carefully the apostle’s language. The Spirit Who is Truth bears witness to Jesus, the Christ (1 John 5:6). The testimony of the Spirit is the testimony of God. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater, for this is the witness of God which He testified of His Son (v. 9). He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son (v. 10; Rom. 8:16; Gal. 4:6, NASB). And this is the testimony: that God has [once for all] given us eternal life and this life is in His Son (v. 11). Then verse 12 concludes, “He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life” (NASB). “These things (in verses 9-12) I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you (those who believe in the Name) may know that you have eternal life” (v. 13, NASB). The stress here is upon believing God’s testimony about His Son, that the eternal life is in Him. Therefore, we who believe in and have the Son may be assured that we have eternal life. Our assurance is based upon God’s testimony concerning His Son, not on our condition! And as stated above, we have the witness in ourselves that what God has said about His Son is true.

We feel that we must again strongly emphasize the Person of Christ. Notice that the original text and the NASB use the article “the” in verse 12 and read “the life”, emphasizing that the Person of Christ is *the* eternal life. If you are

given a bag with several items in it, you receive not only the bag, but also the items contained in the bag. Just so, when you receive “the Son” you get “the life.” In his gospel, John wrote, “In Him was life” (John 1:4). Jesus said, “I (personally) Am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25, JS). In John 14:6 He said, “I (as distinct from any other source) Am the life.” (JS) The word “Am” means that His very being is Life. In Colossians 3:4, Paul declares that Christ is our life. By this he means that the Person of Christ is our life. Then we come to that matchless passage (1 John 1:1-2). Here, John tells us that the disciples heard, saw, and handled the Word of Life that was from the beginning. The first verse of John’s gospel states, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). This is Jesus Christ Who became flesh and dwelt (tabernacled) among us (John 1:14). The Eternal Life that was with the Father was manifested! When they heard, fixed their gaze upon, and handled Jesus Christ, they were hearing, seeing, and handling Eternal Life (1 John 1:1-2). We all believe that Christ came into us when we were born again. How glorious is the fact that Eternal Life is one of the names of Christ! When our spirit was born of the Holy Spirit (John 3:6), Christ Who is our life came into us. Christ dying for us on the cross became Christ in us to be our life. So John says, “He that has the Son has the life” (1 John 5:12; John 14:20; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27).

Now John assures us that he wrote these things, the epistle of 1 John, in order that we who believe on the Name of the Son of God might *know* that we have eternal life (5:13). The Greek language has several different words that define different aspects of knowledge. All are usually translated by the English word “know.” The word “know” used in verse 13 means a settled inner knowledge, a conscious absolute knowledge that we possess Eternal Life in the Person of Jesus Christ Who indwells us. We shall never be separated from Him. We have seen this already from many references in the Word. Beloved brothers and sisters, rejoice! Stand upon this mighty truth and grow in Him.

In closing, John sums up the whole epistle, “And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding (through our spirit) so that we may know Him Who is true; and we are in Him Who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. He IS the true God and eternal life” (5:20, JS).

Thus far, we have shown that eternal life is a gift received by grace through faith with no works of man’s fallen self involved in gaining it (Eph. 2:8). Now, in the closing sections of this booklet, we will briefly consider some crucial misunderstandings that lead dear believers to doubt the security of their salvation.

Two Great Principles of Truth

Often there is confusion regarding two great principles in the Bible. The *first principle* is that eternal life is a free gift of God by grace through faith totally apart from works. The *second principle* is that there will be positive or negative rewards for the works of a believer during his Christian life *after* his new birth. These two great principles of truth concerning God's salvation and God's righteous government run throughout the Bible. Many Scriptures relate to one of them or the other, but not to both of them.

As an illustration, suppose there are two shelves in a home. On one shelf the family keeps all of the utensils they use for eating and drinking. But, on the other shelf, only the pots used for cooking are kept. These two shelves are similar to the two principles we are talking about. All of the items on each individual shelf have a common purpose, but confusion results if eating utensils and cooking pots are mixed on the same shelf. One is for the principal of eating, while the other is for the principle of cooking. This illustrates how confusion arises over the matter of our eternal security. If verses that teach reward according to the works of a born again believer are viewed as referring to eternal life, then confusion will result. If verses that teach eternal life is the gift of God through grace are viewed as reward for works, this also will result in confusion. We will refer to these two principles as "*Gift Principle*" and "*Reward Principle*." (Please note that the two original Greek words usually translated in our Bibles as "reward" or "recompense" have the varied shades of meaning, as translated in their various contexts, of pay, wages, reward, recompense, gain, retribution, punishment, repay, and return. You can easily understand how all these terms fit in with the two terms, reward or recompense.)

Concerning the *Gift Principle*, we have established that man's eternal salvation (eternal life) is a gift of God. A gift is something prepared by the giver. God prepared our eternal salvation for us through the finished work of Jesus Christ (John 17:1-4). The person receiving the gift does nothing to earn it by any of his own works; he simply takes the gift by faith. "It is God's gift, not on the principle of works" (Eph. 2:8-9, lit.). Paul was very careful to explain to us that eternal life is by grace alone and cannot be gained by any works of our own (Rom. 11:6; Gal. 2:16, 21).

A large number of Scriptures teach us that positive or negative reward for our life and service to the Lord is according to works. Jesus said: "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done" (Rev. 22:12, NASB). The works of all men who are not saved by grace will be judged, and their reward (their recompense) will be the

lake of fire (Rev. 20:12-15). The only possible escape from this judgment is for one's name to be in the Book of Life by virtue of the *Gift Principle* (Rev. 20:15). The question is sometimes asked, "Does this mean that a Christian can freely sin and live a fleshly life with no consequences?" The answer is, "No, he cannot!" Because Jesus promises to reward every man, both unbeliever and believer, the believer will also be rewarded according to his works, and this will take place at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10; Matt. 16:27; 1 Peter 1:17; Rev. 11:18).

Because he has both the old "flesh principle" and the new life resident within him, the believer's works may be good or bad. The intense warfare between the two, Spirit and flesh, is described in Galatians 5:16-23. The reward, or recompense, from Christ may be positive or negative (Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:23-24). Christ will judge only those works committed *after* we become Christians (1 Cor. 3:8-15). Please rest assured, however, that sins we commit after becoming Christians will not be held against us at the judgment seat of Christ *if* we sincerely confess these sins (1 John 1:9). Notice carefully that this verse says "If we confess our sins," *then* God is faithful—and on the basis of the blood (1 John 1:7) is righteous—to forgive the confessing Christian and cleanse him from all unrighteousness.

The timing of the application of these two principles in the life of a Christian is important and helpful to us. The *Gift Principle* applies to us the very minute we place our trust in Christ for forgiveness. As stated earlier, at that moment we are eternally forgiven, we pass from death to life, we are born again by the Spirit of God, we become a child of God, and we are sealed with the Holy Spirit unto the day of our future completed redemption when our body is transfigured. We are eternally saved! (Acts 13:38-39; Eph. 1:7; John 5:24; 1 Peter 1:23; John 1:12; Gal. 3:26; Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30; Phil. 3:21).

As shown previously, it is by the gift of righteousness put to our account that we receive eternal life. But having received the gift of righteousness and thereby the gift of eternal life, we must now pay attention to the *Reward Principle*, especially in light of the fact that our entire Christian life will be evaluated by Christ at His judgment seat.

Paul likened our whole Christian life to that of an Olympic race, all with the goal of winning the prize (1 Cor. 9:24-27). He was racing for the prize of an imperishable crown, the positive reward given at the judgment seat for those who run victoriously. This crown, like other crowns gained by believers, points to the reward of ruling with Christ in His coming 1,000 year kingdom (1 Thess. 2:19; 2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:2-4; Rev. 2:10; 2:26-27; 3:21; 20:4-6). Other writings will explain this more fully. These overcoming believers bear His image and rule with Him over the earth in the millennial kingdom, the first

stage of the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose for the creation of mankind (Gen. 1:26; Ps. 8:4-6). This will be followed by the eternal day seen in the last two chapters of the whole Bible (Revelation 21 and 22). With such a great calling, it is little wonder that Moses, who could have had power and riches in Pharaoh's court, considered "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward" (Heb. 11:24-26, NASB). In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Paul wrote that he might be disqualified (rejected or disapproved) if he did not maintain strict self-control over his body. Christians, who take this to mean that Paul could lose his salvation, put these verses on the wrong "shelf." Paul's buffeting and leading captive his body was with the view of gaining the reward of the crown according to works. It was *not* with the view of gaining eternal salvation (which he already possessed). So by reading these verses carefully, you will see that Paul was not racing for eternal life, which he already possessed as a born again believer; rather, he was racing for a prize, which was a reward for how he ran the race.

The coming kingdom was prophesied in the Old Testament and was portrayed as a time of great blessing. The earth would be gloriously renewed from much of the curse and the Messiah would rule (Isa. 2:1-4; 11:1-10; 24:23). The Jews understood that participation in that blessed era was determined by God's judgment upon one's works after the resurrection, and *life in that age* was designated "eternal life" (literally, *age-lasting life*) (Dan. 12:2). Here we need to point out that the term "eternal life" can have various meanings in the Scriptures, even as terms tend to have in any language. There is no word in either Hebrew or Greek that explicitly means endless or eternal. A literal translation of the term would be "age-lasting life" or "life belonging to the age." Both the Hebrew word (*olam*) and the Greek word (*aionios*), which are sometimes translated as "eternal" or "everlasting," mean a long period of time (perhaps indefinite) or an age. *The context of the term must determine the exact meaning.* When the Greek word *aionios* is used in conjunction with God's life, it clearly means eternal, because God is eternal and His life is eternal (Gen. 21:33; John 1:1-4; Rom. 16:26; 1 Tim. 6:15-16, Heb. 1:10-12; 7:3, 15-17; 1 John 1:1-2). As we have received God's eternal life as a gift, we have an eternal relationship with Him and an eternal salvation (John 3:14-16; 5:24; Rom. 6:23).

However, for proper interpretation of many Scriptures we must realize that *the Jews of Jesus' day had no concept of eternal life as God's life inwardly experienced in the new birth.* Nicodemus, for example, was waiting for Messiah's coming kingdom, which was prophesied repeatedly in the Old Testament. But his question about returning to his mother's womb and coming out again shows that he had no idea of the new birth (John 3:3-10). The rich

young ruler also had no idea of the new birth. It was Messiah's kingdom, *life in the age to come*, that the rich young ruler sought for, and Jesus confirmed that entry into life in that age was to be gained through obedience to God—not just to His commandments, but by following Him (Jesus) (Matt. 19:16-21; Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-30). The young man asked Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" (literally, "life for the age" or "age-abiding life")." The correct literal translation is, "What must I do to inherit life for the age or age-abiding life?" He was clearly asking, "What must I do to inherit a place in the kingdom of the next age?" (See the same thought in Jesus' conversation with a lawyer in Luke 10:25-28.) Jesus defined the issue in their meeting as having "treasure in heaven." The word *treasure* carries the meaning of a deposit. How the young man followed Jesus would determine his deposit of treasure (reward) in the coming kingdom age. Eternal life, God's life, is a gift, not an inheritance or anything earned by man's effort. Here again we mention that at birth a child receives the irreversible free gift of life and a place in the family, but receiving an inheritance will depend upon his conduct of life. In Colossians 3:23-25, verse 24 shows us that the reward (recompense) consists of the inheritance and is based on service to our Lord Christ. In the passage concerning the rich young ruler, Jesus was speaking of His coming 1,000 year kingdom as being realized in "the age to come," which would also be the "regeneration"—the era of the earth's renewal (Matt. 19:28-29; Luke 18:29-30). The "age to come" (singular) cannot speak of eternity because there are "ages to come" (Eph. 2:7; 3:21; 1 Tim. 1:17).

Eternal life is realized in our spirits now, through the new birth, as a gift of God (John 3:6; 17:3; Rom. 6:23). But *life for the age* is viewed as a reward for our obedience as a believer, and this reward is in the 1,000 year kingdom age to come. Conditions in that age will be wonderfully blessed, "for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9b). The reward in that age for the obedient disciple, "life for that age," will entail a greatly magnified and perfected experience of our fellowship with God and our experience of His life (Luke 18:28-30). This reward in the coming kingdom is only for those believers who forsake all to follow Him (Luke 18:28-30).

The Bible has warnings about believers missing the blessings of the kingdom. If, as some Corinthian believers, we persist in fleshly living, we will not possess the kingdom (1 Cor. 6:7-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-5). Also, in Matthew 10:38-39, 16:24-27, Mark 8:34-38, Luke 9:23-26, and John 12:25, Jesus teaches us that we must lose our life (soul life) now in order to find it at the time when He returns to reward men according to their deeds. This means that if we will deny our soul the fulfillment of its desires, pleasures, and satisfaction in this life today, and take up our cross to do God's will (Matt.

26:39), then, in the future when Christ returns, we will find the true satisfaction of our soul which has been transformed into the image of Christ. This passage refers to reward, as mentioned in Matthew 16:27. Discipleship here involves works of obedience. When the Lord returns, a believer can lose the satisfaction of his soul by missing the kingdom joy, or he can gain it in the kingdom by denying himself now and following Jesus in obedience.

The faithfulness of our Christian life will determine our participation in Christ's coming 1,000 year kingdom. We must live according to the highest standard of practical righteousness in order to enter the kingdom (Matt. 5:20). We must do the will of the Father in order to enter the future kingdom (Matt. 7:21). If we are faithful in our service to Christ, He will reward us with entry into the joy of the kingdom and the privilege of ruling with Him (Matt. 25:14-23; Luke. 19:11-19). But, if we fail to serve Him, we will forfeit this reward (Matt. 25:24-30; Luke. 19:20-26). Thus, we shall be cast into "outer darkness," a picture of exclusion from the glory of the kingdom (Matt. 25:30). This will cause the weeping of sorrow and regret. All of the Lord's judgments of His slaves (believers) are based upon works of service, so "outer darkness" *cannot mean loss of eternal salvation. These passages all have to do with positive or negative recompense at the judgment seat of Christ* (Matt. 25:19; Luke 19:15).

The book of Hebrews speaks of the inhabitable earth to come in the next age and that man, not angels, will co-rule with Christ (Heb. 2:5-6). Jesus, as the captain of our salvation, is bringing (leading) many sons to glory (Heb. 2:10) in the progressive transformation of their being and their service to Him for entrance into the glory of His kingdom. Remember that mankind was created for God's purpose of manifesting His image and ruling on His behalf (Gen. 1:26-27). God's purpose will be fulfilled in its initial stage (before the advent of the New Jerusalem when all evil will be put away) in the next age when Christ with the overcoming believers rules on earth for one thousand years (Rev. 20:4, 6). Therefore, the various warnings in the book of Hebrews have nothing to do with the loss of eternal salvation. Rather, they clearly set forth the danger of missing entrance into the land (the kingdom in type) through unbelief, disobedience, hardening of the heart (Heb. 3:18-19, 4:6-7), not going on to spiritual maturity (Heb. 5:11—6:8), not holding fast the confession of their hope based on the complete sufficiency of Christ and His work (Heb. 10), neglect in running the race looking to Jesus while under the Father's child-training (Heb. 12:1-11), and selling one's birthright as Esau did (Heb. 12:12-17). Space forbids detailed explanation of these passages, but rest assured that the principle we stated above applies. Christ is presented in many aspects as the complete solution for entrance into the kingdom (Sacrifice, High Priest, Intercessor, etc.).

The children of Israel were delivered from Egypt and into the wilderness, from which only a few entered the reward of the land, which is a type of entering the millennial kingdom (Deuteronomy, chapters 1-10 and many other passages). This is probably the clearest, simplest, and best-known example concerned with the free gift of salvation and positive or negative reward. As noted already, it is the significant example in Hebrews and in 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 that is clearly set forth as instruction and warning to those of us upon whom the completion of the ages has come. We will now briefly retell the story that many of you already know.

As God's people, they were *all* redeemed by the blood and passed out of Egypt through the sea into the wilderness (1 Cor. 10:1-2). They *all* ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink. The manna represented Christ as their food and the water from the Rock represented Christ as their drink (vv. 3-4). But because of their repeated disobedience (Num. 14:22), most of them did not please God and died in the wilderness (vv. 5-11). *All* of them were redeemed from Egypt and could never go back even though they proposed such a thing (Num. 14:1-4). As their journey continued, it is clear that they remained the children of God. They were fed with miracle food and drink, and their clothes did not wear out. Nowhere in the account of their journey or in the whole Old Testament does it say they ceased to be the people of God. Yet it's also clear that most of them missed out on the reward of entering the good land, which was not entering God's promised rest—a type of the reward of the 1,000 year millenium kingdom (Heb. 3:12-19, 4:1-9).

James 2:14-24

Now that we understand the two principles of *gift* and *reward*, James 2:14-24 becomes clear. If the gift of eternal salvation is truly by faith alone, why does James speak of being justified by faith plus works? Many Bible readers have not been able to reconcile this passage with Romans 3:26—4:6. It is apparent that James is trying to motivate his Christian readers to proper living and good works. In verses 12 and 13 he begins with speaking about the coming judgment of believers: "So speak and so act as those who are to be judged" (James 2:12, NASB). Verse 13 follows with a continuation of the theme of the coming judgment seat of Christ where only Christians appear to be judged for their service, not with respect to eternal life. Immediately following is James' question: "What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith, but he has no works?" Can that faith save him? (v. 14, NASB)." The key to understanding this passage is the meaning of the word "save." The verb "to save" in Greek simply means to keep from loss, danger or ruin, or to make whole (see uses in

Mark 5:23; Luke 8:36; Acts 27:20). The meaning of the word “save” *must be determined by the context*. Only in some cases does it mean to deliver from eternal condemnation to eternal life (Acts 16:31; Eph. 2:8). Here in James it is salvation from a negative judgment regarding a Christian’s life and service at the judgment seat of Christ that would prevent him from entering the kingdom as a reward. Those without good works are pictured by the unprofitable servant, who is negatively judged and loses his reward (Matt. 25:24-30). When Paul was assured that he had victoriously finished his course (2 Tim. 4:7), he could say, “The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom: to Whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.” (2 Tim. 4:18, ASV). (For another example of being saved for the kingdom, compare Matthew 24:12-13 with 2 Timothy 2:12.)

So there are two justifications in the New Testament. According to the *Gift Principle*, “justification is a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24, lit.). As shown earlier, this means that God declares us righteous as a legal act because of our faith in Jesus, apart from works (Rom. 3:26-28; 4:5-6). Because of this justification we can never be eternally condemned (Rom. 8:30-34), and we have new life in Christ (John 5:24; Rom. 4:25; 5:18). According to the *Reward Principle*, there is also a justification by works mentioned by James (James 2:21-24). This is justification for satisfactory service as a believer that brings reward. All believers must appear before Christ, Who will judge our works (1 Cor. 3:12-14; 4:4-5; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Peter 1:17). We may be disqualified from receiving a positive reward (1 Cor. 9:27) or we may be approved (James 1:12). There is justification through faith alone unto eternal life and justification through works bringing millennial reward. When, at the end of his life, God revealed to Paul that he had run victoriously, he was then confident that the righteous Judge would approve him to receive the crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:7-8). Paul’s possession of eternal life was never in question.

Conclusion

We now trust that each reader can apply the two principles of *gift* and *reward* to the many passages that were once confusing. May all be confident that the God Who chose us for Himself and predestined us to be His sons will also keep us for eternity (Eph. 1:3-5; Rom. 8:29-39). None of the threatening passages speak of the loss of eternal salvation, because God has delivered us from eternal punishment by the work of the cross. However, God, as a loving Father, may chastise us in this life, or according to His righteous governance may have some dealing with us in the kingdom age. The penalties thus incurred

may be severe, but not eternal (1 Cor. 5:1-5; 11:29-32; Luke 12:41-48). In the unending ages of the ages “there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying or pain; the first things have passed away” (Rev. 21:4b, NASB). By his astonishing mercy and grace the days of discipline unto transformation will be over, there will be no more curse, we will serve Him, we will see His face, His name will be on our foreheads, and we will live in His light and reign to the ages of the ages (Rev. 22:3-5).

Imagine a father who runs a great business enterprise. His heart longs that his children mature and prove themselves responsible so that they may run the family business with him. In the same way, God now longs that we would grow up in all things in Christ (Eph. 4:15) and be responsible servants, willingly serving Him now and ruling with Him in the ages to come. Let us grow to maturity, standing upon the firm foundation of our eternal security in Christ. Let us count the sufferings of this present and strategic time not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed in us and unto us (Rom. 8:18). Let us then fulfill our responsibility to the cursed creation that is waiting with anxious longing to be liberated from the bondage of the curse at the revealing of the sons of God (Rom. 8:18-23). So, let us “run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1, NASB).

May the Lord bless every reader with a “spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened” (Eph. 1:17-18) that each may stand on a firm foundation of truth and walk in a way pleasing to his Lord.

John Smith
(with others)