



# TRUTH ON TOUGH TEXTS

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## THE SECURITY OF THE BELIEVER

### SELECTED TEXTS

**T**HERE ARE FEW DOCTRINAL ABERRATIONS THAT ARE AS distressing, disastrous, and defeating as is the anomaly that a true born again Christian can lose that salvation and again be under the condemnation and wrath of God. I use the word “anomaly” deliberately simply because such error demonstrably deviates from the biblical standard.

One of Satan’s most effective assaults on the Christian (cf. Eph. 6:13) is his attack on the believer’s security and assurance of salvation. His primary weapon here is the attitude of *doubt*. I am convinced more every day that one of the most damaging doctrines taught in some Christian circles is the one that says that a Christian can lose his salvation. I do not say that lightly or because of some arbitrary doctrinal opinion. This teaching is at the very core of much of the defeat that characterizes many Christians, and it does a horrendous amount of destruction.

Some dear, misguided Christians actually call the doctrine of “eternal security” a “damnable doctrine” because it supposedly gives us a “license to sin.” We’ll come back to that accusation, but let’s stop for a moment and consider which teaching is actually the “damnable doctrine.” Think about this very carefully: Not one place in all of Scripture do we find that *assurance* of anything is the work of Satan; one of Satan’s hallmarks is his persistent habit of planting *doubt*; not one place does he ever plant *assurance*. Just one example of many is today’s Relativism, which is founded on the idea of doubt, that we can be sure of nothing, that everything is up for grabs and Truth is different for each person. Think about it: Satan planted doubt in Eve’s mind, in Job’s mind, and even tried to plant doubt in Jesus’ mind. *No!* Satan *never* plants assurance; he *always* plants doubt. He is the author of doubt, the propagator of lies, and the spreader of questions. Which doctrine, then, is really damnable, one that says we can be *sure* of our salvation or one that says we can *never* be sure?

Mark it down: if Satan can successfully plant *doubt*, he will reap our *defeat*. If there is doubt, productivity is impossible. If there is doubt, there can be no joy or peace. It’s fascinating that during the first part of the construction of the Golden Gate Bridge, no safety devices were used, and 23 men fell to their deaths. For the last part of the project, however, a large net, which cost \$100,000, was employed. At least ten men fell into it and were saved. But in one sense it was even more sig-

nificant that 25 percent more work was accomplished when the men were assured of their safety!<sup>1</sup> What a profound truth! No one can labor to the their fullest potential unless they have assurance and security.

Doubt, therefore, if I may be so bold, comes from Satan himself. Please do not misunderstand; I am *not* saying those who believe we can lose our salvation are demon possessed; I do not for a moment question that they are born again and love the Lord. Rather, I am saying that Satan uses this doctrine to defeat unsuspecting Christians. If he can keep us busy doubting our salvation, or if he can keep us busy trying to “keep our salvation,” he has won a huge battle because we will be far too busy for anything else, such as deeper Christian growth and effective service.

*It is absolutely essential that Christians recognize that God’s Word teaches the security of the believer with no ambiguity whatsoever.* God tells us that when we are *truly* saved, we will never be lost again. This is crucial because the weakest Christians are the ones who reject this doctrine. It is a fact that those who reject the security of the believer are the most “up and down” and inconsistent Christians in the Body of Christ, ones whose lives are usually driven by emotion. I say this not out of criticism but rather deep concern. There is simply no way someone can grow deeper *in* Christ if they don’t know from one moment to the next if they *are* in Christ.

One of the most fascinating things to me on this issue is that immediately following both of the two greatest passages on the Doctrines of Grace (Rom. 8:29–30; Eph. 1:4–12) is a follow-up passage on security and assurance (Rom. 8:31–39; Eph. 1:13–14).<sup>2</sup> With that in mind, let us turn to no less than 12 clear scriptural proofs for the security of the believer.

#### 1. The Term “Eternal Life”

Such familiar verses as John 3:15–16, 36; 4:14; 5:24; 6:27 and others all use the term “eternal life” (or “everlasting life”). The Greek behind both terms is *aiōnios*. Greek authority A. T. Robertson perhaps says it best: “The word *aiōnios* (from *aiōn*, age) means either without beginning or without end or both. It comes as near to the idea of eternal as the Greek can put it in one word. It is a difficult idea to put into language. Sometimes we have ‘ages of ages’ (*aiōnes tōn aiōnōn*).”<sup>3</sup> The point to ponder, then, is that when we receive Christ as Savior, we

have *eternal* life. If life is eternal, it is *really* eternal. If you can lose something that is eternal, then it was not eternal in the first place. Some argue, of course, that “eternal life” doesn’t begin until we die so we can lose it now. But that is not what the text *says* in John 3:16: “Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” “Have” is present tense, indicating that the believer has eternal life right now and will continue to have it forever.

## 2. Salvation is By Grace, Not By Works

Ephesians 2:8–9, Titus 3:5, and other verses tell us that we can’t earn salvation. Salvation is by God’s grace alone, His unmerited, unearned, and undeserved favor. How, then, can we lose unmerited favor? How can we lose what is not deserved?

Of course, it is argued that we get saved by grace but to keep it we must “walk the straight and narrow.” That is part of what the Judaizers in the Galatian churches were teaching and thereby misleading those believers. Paul asked them, “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you . . . ? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect [i.e., mature] by the flesh?” (Gal. 3:1, 3). “Bewitched” (*baskainō*) appears only here in the NT. In Classical Greek it is used of the superstition that people could be harmed by what we would call “giving them the evil eye,” that is, casting a magic spell on them with a malicious look. Indeed, the Galatians had been “spell-bound” by those false teachers and their supposedly “deeper teaching” of adding law to grace. By a “magic spell,” so to speak, of the Judaizers’ teaching, they became convinced that mixing law with grace was beneficial, when in reality they are *mutually exclusive*.

Incredulously, those who teach that one can lose salvation actually go to Galatians 5:4 as a “proof text”: “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.” But such teaching violently rips the verse out of its context. “Fallen from” is *ekpiptō*, a compound comprised of *piptō*, “to fall” and *ek*, “from.” Jesus used this term in Mark 13:25, where He declares that in the last days “the stars of heaven shall fall” (cf. Matt. 24:29, where “fall” is *piptō*). The term was also used in ancient times for a ship that fell off or was driven off course, that deviated from the correct bearing (e.g., Acts 27:29). The passage, however, has nothing to do with the security of the believer. Paul is contrasting law and grace and is clearly saying that to mix grace with law is to fall off course, *to deviate from the whole concept of grace*.

We should also note here that *most (if not all) false doctrine has at its root a misunderstanding of grace*. Those who add any kind of works, those who try to hold on to some ceremony, those who want to follow some system of legalism are clueless of what grace means and what it has accomplished through Christ. To mix law with grace is to deviate from the correct course. A misunderstanding of grace, in fact, affects every aspect of one’s Theology. That is one reason I love Ephesians; nowhere else in Scripture is grace made so clear. As James Montgomery Boice put, it is “A mini-course on theology.” And what is at the very heart and soul of that “mini-theology”? *Grace*. There is more about grace in Ephesians, in fact, than in any other book, even Romans. If we do not understand grace, we can understand nothing else.

## 3. God’s Power Keeps What He Saves

Because of the Scripture’s unity, four different authors teach us the exact same truth. Note first Peter’s encouragement in 1 Peter 1:3–5. He tells us in verses 3–4 of the inheritance that we have in Christ, which will not fade away nor wither, but rather is “reserved,” that is, “set aside, guarded,” for us. No problem there, right? Our inheritance couldn’t be in a safer place. Peter then goes on, however, to tell us that we right now are “kept by the power of God” (v. 5). “Kept” is *phroureō*, a military term meaning “to guard or protect.” It is also a present participle showing continuous action that never ends.

Second, Jude (v. 1) used a similar word for the same idea when he wrote that we are “preserved in Jesus Christ.” This is *tēreō*, which is derived from *tēros* (a warden or guard) and, therefore, means to keep an eye on, watch over, observe attentively, and guard protectively. While our inheritance is being guarded in *heaven*, we are being guarded on *earth* so that we will be able to receive the inheritance. The guard is *never* absent, for the guard is God and He is always “on duty.” To say we can lose what God is guarding is to say He is not powerful enough to keep what belongs to Him.

Third, the Apostle John then encourages us in John 10:27–28 that we are God’s sheep and He “knows” us. We again see the verb in the present tense, action that is continuous, never ending. He continually knows us. He has given us *eternal* life and we shall “by no means” perish (literal translation). Once we are in the watchful care of the Shepherd, *nothing* can destroy us or snatch us from His care.

Fourth, in that classic passage in Romans, Paul declares that *absolutely nothing* can “separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:35–39). There are, of course, those who argue that nothing can separate us from God *except* ourselves. When we sin, they insist, we “sever ourselves” from God. But that is precisely the point Paul is making, that no created thing (v. 39), which includes ourselves, can separate us from God’s love. That is why “we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us” (v. 37). Additionally, anyone who would say, “I want to be severed from Christ” (as I have heard some argue), was *never* saved. How could a *true* child of God say or even think such a thing?

Again, the truth to grasp is that it is *God’s* power that keeps us, not our power. Those who deny the security of the believer simply do not understand that truth. It is not what we do, but what *God* does.

## 4. The Doctrine of Justification

Justification is the declarative act of God, as the Judge, whereby He declares that the demands of justice have been satisfied so that the sinner is no longer condemned. It is a declaration, not of *innocence*, but of *satisfaction*.<sup>4</sup> We are righteous not because we are not guilty. On the contrary, we who were once under condemnation are now declared to be righteous because the penalty of our sin has been paid by Jesus. It’s extremely significant to notice that in the majority of texts where the word “justified” appears (Rom. 5:1, 9; Gal. 2:12, second usage; 3:24; Titus 3:7) the verb is in the aorist tense, showing a once-for-all “declaring righteous.” In a couple of texts, however, the verb is in a present tense (Rom. 3:24, 28)

showing a continuous “declaring righteous.” This is not a contradiction, rather a wondrous truth. Not only does God do the work once-for-all, but He also continues doing the work. The thought is not that we are in a “process” of being justified, but rather we are constantly in the “state” of being justified. God has justified us and keeps us justified.

### 5. The Principle of Eternal Redemption

Here is a great blessing and an absolutely inarguable proof of the believer’s security in Christ. The clear teaching of Scripture is that *Christ died only once for each individual*: “By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all . . . this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; . . . For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:10, 12, 14). We emphasize this so strongly because since Christ died only once for each person, each, therefore, can only be saved once. Since Christ died only once for our sin, if we could lose *that* salvation, it would then be impossible to be saved again.

It is distressing that many teach that we can be saved one moment and lost the next and that we can get saved over-and-over again, for “they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame” (Heb. 6:6). To say, therefore, that we can have salvation one moment, not have it the next, and then have it again the next is guilty of exactly the same “re-crucifying” of our Lord.

### 6. The Doctrine of Sanctification

This point is akin to the above. Look again at Hebrews 10:10: “By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” “Sanctified” is *hagiazō*, “to set apart to God.” It is essential to recognize that the verb here is in the perfect tense, which indicates action in the past with an emphasis on the result. For example, when one gets married, there is a once-for-all action, but the emphasis now is that he is still married. The action itself doesn’t continue, but the result does.

With that understood, let us realize that we are totally and completely set apart from sin and unto God once-for-all and are forever in that state. That is called “positional sanctification.” There is then another aspect of sanctification called “practical sanctification,” which is the day-to-day holy living that is the *result* of our position. The truth we must understand is that our *position* is that we are completely holy *now*. This does *not* mean we are sinless, for we still sin when we allow the flesh to rule (Rom. 7), but we do not have to sin. God has set us apart from sin and unto Himself, so we are no holier today than yesterday. Our *practice* then is that we live *out* what God has done *within*. As I heard J. Sidlow Baxter express it: “We do not have the inability to sin, but we do have the ability not to sin.”

This is brought home to us in the story that is told of an older lady who though she had received Christ as her Savior was plagued by doubts. After quoting several Scriptures on assurance to her, one of the men counseling her asked, “Grandma, if you saw one group of people drinking and cursing, and right next door a gathering of joyful believers was singing Gospel hymns and testifying of God’s saving grace, which company would attract you?” Without hesitation she

answered, “Oh, I’d only feel at home with the saints of God. I love to fellowship with them!” He then showed her 1 John 3:14: “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.”<sup>5</sup> A true evidence of our continuing sanctification is a desire to be with God’s people.

### 7. The Sealing of the Holy Spirit

As we studied at length in TOTT issues 39 and 40, Paul tells us that we have been “sealed with that holy Spirit of promise . . . unto the day of redemption.”<sup>6</sup> As mentioned there, the sealing of the Holy Spirit at our conversion is one of the most (if not *the* most) comforting and irrefutable doctrines in Scripture when it comes the believer’s security in Christ. No other doctrine makes this security so vivid and undeniable, and no other doctrine brings as much peace and assurance. In both verses the aorist tense is used to show a once-for-all action. As we learned, it pictures the sealing of a letter by an official stamp so that no one will tamper with it until it gets to the one to whom it is addressed. The word “sealed,” in fact, is *sphragizō*, from the noun *sphragis*, which refers to a nobleman’s signet ring that held his official seal. We are, therefore, sealed *permanently* until we are presented to Christ as His chaste bride (2 Cor. 11:2). Moreover, the Holy Spirit is actually the seal itself! When we receive Christ as Savior, the Holy Spirit comes into us to indwell us (1 Cor. 6:19, Rom. 8:9–15) and “place us into” (*baptizō*) the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13 and context). Think of it! We are permanently sealed by the Spirit’s presence in us!

### 8. Christ’s Intercessory Work

The *finished* work of Christ was His death and resurrection, but His *unfinished* (or *continuing*) work is His intercession between us and the Father. This work is that of Christ coming to our defense when we commit acts of sin (see Heb. 9:24; 10:21–22; 1 Jn. 1:9; 2:1).

We must here carefully distinguish “habitual sin” from “acts of sin.” This one contrast is why many people do not grasp this truth of the believer’s security. The phrase, “If any man sin” (1 Jn. 2:1) is in the aorist subjunctive. The aorist tense is once-for-all action and the subjunctive mood is action that can possibly happen. The best way to express the subjunctive mood is with the word “if.” Therefore, this phrase can be translated, “if any man commit an act of sin.” It speaks of an act of sin, not continuous sin. John is showing us that sin in the believer’s life is infrequent, not habitual; it is the exception, not the rule.

Coupled with that is 1 John 3:6. Because of the present tense of the verb, indicating continuous action, this literally reads, “Whosoever abides in Him does not habitually practice sin.” The man who is truly in Christ, truly born again, does not live in sin. Literally translated again, the rest of the verse tells us, “Whosoever habitually sins hath not seen Him, neither known Him.” The man who willfully sins continually, who sins over and over, and who has no remorse for his sin shows that *he is not born again*.

Note one more verse, 1 John 3:9. Again, literally rendered, it tells us that “whosoever has been born of God does not habitually commit sin, for His seed continually remains in him and he cannot habitually sin, because he has been born of

God.” One who has been truly “born of God” (once for-all act) cannot habitually commit sin. The words “his seed” refer to the divine life the believer possesses. This seed of divine life remains in us continually and makes it impossible for us to habitually sin. We say again: the child of God simply does not live in sin—*period!* God’s seed causes us to hate sin and to love righteousness.

Not only do such verses demonstrate the security we have in Christ, since His seed is in us continually, but they also expose the error that Christians can have a “license to sin” and answers the accusation of those who argue, “‘Once saved always saved’ means you can live any way you want to.” But such an idea is foreign to Scripture. John tells us that a man who habitually commits sin is lost; such a person was never a believer. In contrast, a man who has truly been born again no longer lives in sin and abhors the very thought of such living.

Another question many ask on this subject is, “Well, how about the man who was saved but then ‘backslid’ for many years by going back to the old life?” Again, according to Scripture, that man was never saved. Habitual sin demonstrates a lost condition. That is the very point Paul made on several occasions. To the Romans he declared: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? (Rom. 6:1-2). Sin is no longer our lifestyle, no longer our practice. To the Corinthians he wrote, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). And again to Titus he declared, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:11-12). When a man comes to Christ there is a change. There *must* be a change. If not, the man did not come to Christ.

We are also reminded again of 1 John 2:1, where we see that if we do commit an *act* of sin—not habitual but an act—we then have “an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” How often do we have a wrong attitude, a wrong motive, a selfish desire, say a hateful word, or do something else displeasing to God. These are the realities in the life of every believer and are not habitual, continuous sin, but single acts of sin that occur when the Holy Spirit does not have control of our minds and bodies.

Dear Christian, when you sin, and it grieves your heart, or when you read God’s Word or hear it preached and realize there is something in your life that does not belong there, it is because you are “born of God.” When there’s sin in your life, it grieves your heart because the Spirit of God is in you. This does not happen to the “habitual sinner,” because he’s lost, but it *does* happen to the true believer and is one of the greatest evidences that one *is* a believer. It is then that we are to apply 1 John 1:9. “Confess” is *homologeō*, *homo* meaning same” and *logeō* meaning “to say.” “Confess,” therefore, means to say the same words about sin that God does. In other words, to call sin *sin*. Don’t water it down. Call it what it is. It is only when we sincerely and sorrowfully confess our sin that God then forgives us.

It is at this time, when the believer commits an act of sin, that he has an “Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” “Advocate” is *parakletos*, (English “paraclete”),

“one who is called alongside to aid.” It is Jesus who is our paraclete, our “defense attorney,” Who comes to our aid when we commit an act of sin. It was Jesus who, through His work on Calvary, provided forgiveness of sin. It was Jesus, who by His death, burial and resurrection, gave us victory over the *penalty* and *power* of sin.

If we, therefore, reject the security of the believer, we make all of what we have just seen of no value. If we reject this doctrine, we make Christ’s intercession pointless and powerless. In fact, if this doctrine of the believer’s security is not true, there really is no intercessory work of Christ.

## 9. God’s Children are *Never* Condemned

In John 3:18, we are told that those who believe in Christ are “not condemned,” but those who do not believe are “condemned already.” The contrast in the verbs is most amazing. Those who believe in Christ are “continually not condemned,” as the *present* tense indicates. This continuous action shows we will *never* be condemned; we will never again be in the state of condemnation. On the other hand, those who do not believe are once-for-all condemned and that condemned state will continue, as the *perfect* tense indicates. In other words, they were already condemned by their unbelief, and they are still in that state. Therefore, since the believer is *never* condemned, he can *never* lose his salvation because to do so would mean he was condemned again, which is impossible. One song writer captured it well when he wrote: “Enough for me that Jesus saves; / This ends my fear and doubt; / A sinful soul I come to Him, / He’ll never cast me out.”

## 10. The Words of Christ to the Lost

This principle struck me quite profoundly when I first recognized it. Those who reject the security of the believer are unaware that their belief carries a very simple and glaring inconsistency. When the lost of this world stand before the Lord, He will say to them, “I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt. 7:23). Note carefully that He will *not* say to them, “I used to know you, but you fell away,” or, “I knew you at one time but because of sin I no longer do,” but rather “I *never* knew you.” In other words, “I didn’t know you from the foundation of the world [cf. Eph. 1:4]. You have never belonged to me.” The believer, therefore, has always been known by Christ and will never be “unknown.”

## 11. God Gives Us the Way to *Know* We Are Saved

We do not make that statement lightly. We need to see the force behind it. In addition to what we’ve seen in 1 John, there is another essential principle there. More than 30 times John refers to *knowing* we are saved, and he speaks of two kinds of knowledge: *ginōskō*, “to know by experience,” and *oida*, “to know by learned facts.” Using both of these, John says we can know beyond a shadow of a doubt that we are saved.

To understand John’s first epistle, one must understand its relationship to his Gospel. His Gospel records seven miracles that are signs of Christ’s incarnation and therefore prove He is the Son of God, God in the flesh. By reading John 20:30-31, we find that the purpose of the Gospel was so we can believe in Christ and have eternal life: “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe

that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." In dramatic contrast, the reason John wrote his first epistle was so we might not just *have* eternal life by believing, but rather that we can *know* we have eternal life. The epistle supplements the Gospel. It is the personal application of the Gospel. God not only wants us to *have* eternal life, but He also wants us to *know* we have it! What use (or good) is there in having something if you don't know you have it? Indeed, it is absolutely useless to possess it if you don't know you possess it. Let us consider just a few instances here in 1 John.

First, we note 2:3: "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." *Ginōskō* is used here, which means that we know because we have personally experienced it. The first instance is in the *present* tense, to continually know. The second instance is in the *perfect* tense, past action with the emphasis on the result. Here is a wonderful blessing! "We continually, progressively know by experience that we came to know Him by experience in the past and are in that state right now." We must also add that "continuing in His commandments" doesn't "keep us saved." Rather John says that keeping God's commands is an *evidence* that we are indeed continuing in Christ.

Second, now note 3:24: "And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." What a verse! Again, this is *ginōskō* in the present tense. Additionally, "abideth" is present tense and "given" is aorist tense. Putting it all together, "we continually know that He continually remains in us because of the Spirit that He gave us once-for-all." Why does anyone wish to argue with that?

Third, in 4:13 we then read: "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." While that is very similar to 3:24, the word "give" (referring to the Holy Spirit) is this time in the perfect tense. Therefore, "we continually know by experience that He continually remains in us because He gave us His Spirit once-for-all to remain in us permanently."

Fourth, the capstone, then, is 5:13: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." Here we have action that is *possible*. It is possible that we might keep on knowing (present tense). The reason this action is only possible, not definite, is because it is based upon our decision. Indeed, there are those who reject this truth, but we *can* continually know, if we *want* to continually know. Note also that we can know *we have* (present tense again), so "we can continually know that we continually have salvation."

It's also significant that the knowledge spoken of here is *oida*, knowledge gained, not by experience, but by someone teaching it to us or through other study. "The things (referring to the things concerning Christ) have been written." We can therefore read them and see God prove to us that we have eternal life.

The wonderful story is told of a preacher who was staying with a couple whose son was deaf and mute. The man prayed for God to use him to reach this little guy for the Lord. Since the boy was learning to read, the preacher thought he would write each of the first five words of Psalm 23 on the boy's five fingers. He would then go over the words by pointing to each

finger. After repeating this for several days, he wrote a short note telling the boy in simple words that if he trusted Christ as Savior, the fourth word, "my," would become real to him and he could then be confident of going to heaven. The preacher's meetings ended and he had to leave town before he was sure the boy truly understood the Gospel message. Years later, however, he returned to that town and learned that the little boy had become ill and died shortly after that first visit. Just before he lapsed into unconsciousness, however, he pointed to each of his five fingers. With a smile, he then gripped the fourth one. The preacher rejoiced in hearing that the little guy testified in the only way he could of his trust in Christ.<sup>7</sup>

How, then, do we have assurance of salvation? *Because God says so*. Salvation is truly ours. Again, that is why John wrote his first epistle! If Christians would simply stop living in emotion and begin thinking with the mind, they would see what John is saying. John wrote this letter not so Christians would *wallow in doubt* but so they would *rejoice in certainty*.

## 12. The Doctrine of Adoption

This wonderful doctrine of adoption is presented in Romans 8:15–17, Ephesians 1:5, and Galatians 4:5. "Adoption" translates the Greek *huiothesia*, which simply means "son-placing." It, therefore, speaks of our position as a child of God. Adoption can be defined as: "The placing of a son, who is not a son by birth, and giving him the place and inheritance of a son by birth." A simple comparison between regeneration and adoption is that in regeneration a Christian receives the *nature* of a child of God, while in adoption he receives the *position* of a son of God. We see then that we are in the family of God through the merits of Jesus Christ, our Elder Brother (Rom. 8:29). We, who were once "of our father the devil" (Jn. 8:44), are now members of God's family.

To reject the security of the believer, then, would mean that when we sin we're "kicked out of the family," disowned, disinherited. What an appalling, unthinkable idea! That is no more true in the spiritual sense than it is in the earthly. When we were children we did not cease being our parent's children when we disobeyed them. On the contrary, we were disciplined, but we were still their children. And, as we have seen, this fact doesn't give us a "license to sin," for we know that as erring children we will be disciplined.

There are some who fear this doctrine of security; others just hate it. The latter was dramatically brought home to me when I was preaching a week of meetings in a certain church many years ago. After very briefly mentioning the security of the believer in the opening Sunday morning message, I was told after the service by the church leadership, "We want you off the property by the end of day because we don't believe in that teaching." But why would anyone hate a doctrine that says, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12)? This doctrine should neither be dreaded nor despised. It should be *dearly loved*, for it protects the true child of God, while at the same time it exposes and condemns those who are not truly born again.

Before closing, I must interject that the doctrine of the security of the believer is not a minor issue, and its rejection is extremely serious error. This security is a central doctrine. To

reject it is to reject the very essence of salvation and is even an attack upon the integrity of God. The rejection of the security of the believer does untold damage to biblical Theology.

I would finally interject that to deny this wondrous principle is to invite defeat. It is to think that you must keep salvation by works and personal effort, but sooner or later you will grow weary and be defeated. In his eye-opening book, *Holiness: The False and the True*, the beloved Harry Ironside recounts his own days in the Holiness Movement, which not only rejects the security of the believer, but teaches that by holy living one can eradicate all sin in their life. The pressures of such teaching and his own effort eventually wore him down so far that he, like many others in that movement, had a breakdown and spent some time in a rest home. Is a teaching that brings that kind of result truly of God?

Oh, dear Christian, let us never give in to doubt. To doubt our salvation, or anything else God has said, is to actually doubt His promises, His veracity, and His integrity. And all that is simple unbelief.

Dr. J. D. Watson  
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Director, Sola Scriptura Publications, a ministry of GBC

**NOTES**

- <sup>1</sup> Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7,770 Illustrations*.
- <sup>2</sup> For a deeper study of the security of the believer, see the author's, *Salvation Is of the Lord: An Exposition of the Doctrines of Grace By a Former Arminian* (Sola Scriptura Publications, 2015), 230-59.
- <sup>3</sup> A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures In the New Testament* (public domain, electronic edition), comment on Matt. 25:46.
- <sup>4</sup> See the author's, *Salvation Is of the Lord*, 120-122.
- <sup>5</sup> Dennis DeHaan, *Windows on the Word* (Radio Bible Class, 1984), 13.
- <sup>6</sup> This material also appears in chapter 22 of the book, *Truth On Tough Texts: Expositions of Challenging Scripture Passages* (Sola Scriptura Publications, 2012), 220-33.
- <sup>7</sup> *Windows on the Word*, 13.

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