

***99 Reasons
I Believe in
Eternal
Security***

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- 1. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. -I John 5:13**

This verse gives us John's purpose for writing the letter known as First John – he wants the believers he is writing to know that they have eternal life. He wanted then to be sure they that they were sinners saved by God's grace! This verse indicates that such knowledge is not only possible, but should be sought! This verse is often put at the back of a gospel booklet to assure someone who has just prayed to receive Jesus that they are now saved based on what Jesus did for them on the cross. Every true believer will only be in Heaven because of what Jesus has done for them, not their good deeds before or after salvation. We do need to remember, however, that when God really does save someone, God the Holy Spirit takes up residence in their heart. And if God is really in someone, over time it will show in a life characterized by growth and some measure of fruitfulness. I John 5:13 is written after five chapters of some basics that will characterize the life of true believers, especially belief in Christ and love for God and others. If you are trusting in Christ alone for salvation, continuing to turn from sinful ways, and growing in love for God and others, you should have assurance of salvation.

- 2. Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and *understands it* (emphasis mine), who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Matthew 13:18-23**

Jesus here tells the parable of the sower. He speaks of four different kinds of people who hear the word of the kingdom. The first one clearly does not understand the gospel and clearly does not become a Christian. The next two seem to understand for a while, and even express great joy in what they have found. But we can't say for sure that they are saved because we are not told that they truly understood. There are people who profess Christ who don't truly possess Christ. The second one had no root in himself. The third one had become unfruitful (Luke 8:14 explains that this one "brought no fruit to maturity"). Perhaps these folks accepted the Lord on their terms but never understood what it means to repent and fully turn their life over to the Lord to now live according to His truth. The final person Jesus referred to did "understand the

word” and went on to bear fruit. I believe we should encourage this fourth kind of person that they should have assurance of salvation. I believe we should encourage the second and third kind of person to truly look at Christ’s claim of Lordship on their life. As a Pastor I have done funerals for all four of these kinds of people. I do believe a few people in the second category and many people in the third category did truly know the Lord, but my joy is doing the homegoing service for that fourth kind of person who understood and bore fruit. “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints” -Psalm 116:15.

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

Verse 12 is often quoted by those who think you can lose your salvation. “See,” they say, “we must work out our salvation because it is not sure that we have it!” But verse 12 not only comes after a brilliant discourse on who Jesus is and his place in our lives, but is combined with verse 13 that clearly teaches that God is at work in the believer to accomplish what He wants to. The motive for “working out our salvation,” or letting our salvation apply to every area of our lives, is that God is working in us already to bring about His work in our lives, for His good pleasure! The British sometimes say that they have things they need to sort out. Here God is telling us to sort it out, or let our faith apply to every area of our lives because Jesus is to be crowned King in every area of our life.

4. Being confident of this very thing, that He who begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. -Philippians 1:6

Ultimately salvation comes from the mighty hand of God. Here the apostle Paul says that what God began at salvation He will see through in your life! What a precious promise from God! If the apostle Paul is confident that God will finish what He started, I’ll take his (and God’s) word for it!

5. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Here we are told that if we receive Christ, we become God's children! The Greek word translated right is *exousia*, which can also be translated authority or power. When you receive Jesus, you have the right to become a child of God, the authority to become a child of God, and the power to become a child of God! In verse 13 we are told that in a wonderful yet mysterious way, this is the result of a new birth, not initiated by man but by God! This reference to God's initiative in salvation reminds us of the concept of adoption. Adoptive parents choose a child that is not biologically theirs and commit to love that child the same way they would love a biological child. When those children get older, there may come times when they speak in anger and hostility toward their adoptive parents. But loving parents will not throw off their relationship with their children because of hard times. Those who believe you can lose your salvation ask you to accept a view of God that has Him "unadopting" rebellious children. You were saved by God's grace through faith, they say, but you only keep being the object of His love if you measure up enough after salvation. But dear friend, we can't measure up after salvation any more than we could before salvation. I've sinned enough since becoming a Christian to send myself to Hell a million times over. I'm saved because God made me His child through the new birth, and is patiently helping me grow to maturity despite my many shortcomings. Praise the name of Jesus!

6. Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Most assuredly I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. That which is born of flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Jesus here tells Nicodemus that unless a person is born again, they won't see God's Kingdom. Nicodemus' answer clearly shows his inability to understand the spiritual nature of salvation. When Jesus tells him he needs to be born again, Nic states incredulously, "Can a man get back into his mother's belly and be born a second time?" Jesus' reference to being born of water refers to our physical birth, like when a lady's "water breaks" and gushes out. But the second birth Jesus calls for is a spiritual birth, the result of God the Holy Spirit's drawing a sinner unto salvation. It's a bit of a mystery, one you feel the effects of but can't fully comprehend, like the

wind blowing. As Jesus says here, everyone who is born again has been born of the Spirit, something impossible with man but another day at the office for the Holy Spirit.

7. In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. -Ephesians 1:13-14

Beloved, it really is laid out clearly for us here. When we became believers, we were sealed with the Holy Spirit. This is the baptism of the Holy Spirit – at the moment of salvation the Holy Spirit takes up residence inside of the believer, and from that moment on guides the believer from the inside out. Next he tells us that we are now guaranteed our inheritance until the redemption of the possession that He has purchased with His blood. This means that on the day of your salvation, God sealed you with the Spirit in His love, and “mailed” your reserved place in Heaven first class from the cross to Heaven! What part of guarantee do you not understand? What the Spirit is doing in our lives now is God’s down-payment on all we are guaranteed to experience one day in His presence! That’s why we don’t want to grieve the Holy Spirit in our current living. Instead, we want to be flushed of sin and continually filled with the Holy Spirit who is already inside of us. We want to experience more and more now what will be forever ours.

8. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the beloved. -Ephesians 1:3-6

Here we see the great mystery again! God has blessed the believer with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. He’s reserved the blessings for you. He chose to do this for you before time even began! You are part of something bigger than yourself, something you and I can’t possibly fully comprehend! And there’s that word again – adoption – we’ve been adopted by God – it was our destiny! That makes our entire lives, even the days before we were Christians, take on new meaning. I’m not only glad I was born again, I’m glad I was born! And all this is to praise not our ability to earn salvation or keep it based on what we do, but because we’re accepted in Jesus, our Beloved! God accepts us because of Jesus, period! WOW! Won’t you stop trying to be accepted on your own efforts and rest in His grace? That’s why we talk about eternal security, because your soul is safer with Jesus than your money is in the bank!

9. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself... -Ephesians 1:7-9

Note Paul says that you have redemption, not that you might have redemption. He says you have forgiveness of sins, not that you might be forgiven. All of this was accomplished "In Him," not in your own ability to gain or keep it! Thank You Jesus, that You did for me what I am unable to do for myself. Thank You that all of this was part of Your plan from before time even began. It is awesome that You take pleasure in Your plan for our lives!

10. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted Christ should be to the praise of His glory. -Ephesians 1:11-12

Note here Paul links our trusting Christ with our receiving an inheritance that was predestined for us according to God's plan. Some people picture God coming back to a believer after salvation and saying, "give the blessings back, give the inheritance back – I gave them to you based on Christ's righteousness but now I want them back based on your lack of righteousness - you aren't worthy of my gift." Friend, God doesn't work like that! I have been through many birthdays and Christmases with my on children now. Sometimes they get a gift and don't show all the gratitude they could. Sometimes their countenance shows some displeasure in the gift. As a parent I have been tempted to rip the gift away from them and say something to them about their ingratitude, but I haven't. Why? Because I've already decided to love my children, no matter what, for a lifetime. Verses like this show us that God has decided to love His children, no matter what, for an eternity! Praise His name!

11. For He made Him who knew no sin to become sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. -2 Corinthians 5:21

This is a verse that shows our righteous standing before God does not come through our own efforts, but by Christ's righteousness becoming ours *in Him!* At the moment of your salvation a cosmic trade happened, your sin for Christ's righteousness. When God the Father looks at a believer, He sees them clothed forever in Christ's righteousness!

12. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in Heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. -1 Peter 1:3-5

Peter preached what Paul did, and both under the influence of God the Holy Spirit! Note that he says here that God is responsible for our being “begotten” again, and now has given us an inheritance that will not fade away, that is RESERVED in Heaven for us! And what power keeps us on track for these blessings – our ability to obey? No, we are kept on track for our reserved Heavenly inheritance by the power of God! The same God that saved us here promises to see us through, as Paul wrote in Philippians 1:6.

13. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. -John 3:16

Praise God for His salvation! Here the apostle John speaks of everlasting life for the believer in Christ. It is absurd for anyone to suggest that on one day you can have everlasting life, and then a few weeks, months, or years later lose or reject your salvation and no longer have everlasting life. Think about it – everlasting means EVER-LASTING, or lasting forever! If you can lose it, it didn't last forever, and what John says here is wrong. I choose to take John 3:16 at its face value! Thank you, Lord, for everlasting life that comes to those who have believed in Jesus and been born again.

14. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. -John 3:17-18

Once the believer trusts Christ, he or she is no longer condemned! As we have already seen, this is not on the basis of his or her own work but because of Christ's work on his or her's behalf! Thank God for this amazing rescue mission! I like to think of sinful humanity apart from Christ as being like a man who is drowning. The gospel of Jesus Christ comes to them like a life preserver from Heaven, and they take hold of it. God then lifts them to eternal life! Sinners are already “drowning” because of their sins, but Jesus came on the ultimate rescue to save

“whoever” will grab hold of Him! Behind this is a grace from Heaven holding on to the new believer, assuring they will be lifted to Heaven!

15. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.

-John 3:19-21

These key verses show us that true believers are those who do the truth and come to the light, and that it is clearly seen that the deeds the believer now does have been done as the result of the difference God has made. A theme we will return to over and over again is that true believers bear fruit (as we saw in Matthew 13:23). This happens because they are now God’s adopted children, and over time they do the things their Daddy does! When there is no fruit, we have reason to question whether conversion has really taken place. But this does not mean we jump to the conclusion that someone has lost their salvation. More likely is that they never truly had it in the first place and need to truly turn to Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

16. He must increase, but I must decrease. -John 3:30

Believing in the eternal security of the believer should not lead to passivity in the believer. It’s not, “I’m saved so it doesn’t matter what I do,” but “I’m saved so everything I do matters!” It’s not, “I’m saved so I can do whatever I want,” but “I’m saved so I can do whatever God wants!” The true believer will be characterized by a heart that wants more of Christ to be seen in their lives, and less of self!

17. The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; but he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. -John 3:35-36

The verb translated as “has” is in the present tense in the Greek. Those who have been born again by trusting in Jesus as their Lord and Savior currently possess everlasting life, It is nonsense to suggest that one day you have everlasting life and the next say you could lose it. Days are not like dollars. You can lose a thousand dollars. You can’t lose a thousand days unless

you've been allowed to live all of those days. If God promises that today you as a believer have everlasting life and then tomorrow takes it away, then this promise of everlasting life made here is not true. I choose to take the Bible at face value: As a believer, I have everlasting life! YAHOO!!! But also, note the sobering end of verse 36 – if you don't turn to Jesus for salvation, the wrath of God due sins is not transferred to Jesus for you. As an unbeliever, you still have God's wrath on you, and you will go to Hell if you don't turn to Jesus. All sin gets dealt with one of two places: the believer's sin has been dealt with at the cross; the unbeliever will have their sin judged at the Great White Throne Judgment, and then go to the Lake of Fire (See Revelation 20:11-15). Please, unbeliever, settle out of court – turn to Jesus now and let Him be your sin-bearer and Savior of your soul!

18. Jesus answered and said to her, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.” -Jn 4:13-14

Again we refer to the way Jesus' argument is worded. It would be nonsense for Jesus to use this argument if a person could lose their salvation. Every day the lady had to settle the issue of getting water to take care of her physical thirst. Against that backdrop Jesus speaks about a fountain that will never run dry that would stay with the partaker thereof always. He is speaking of the presence of the Spirit of God that will constantly be flowing with nourishment for the believer once they are converted. If you can lose your salvation, then you have a cycle of thirst-nourishment-thirst nourishment-thirst going on in your life. How would that be different than what the lady already had? It would not be! Salvation is forever for those who turn to Jesus!

**19. “Most assuredly I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”
-John 5:24-25**

Jesus speaks directly here as if everlasting life is a done deal in the life of a true believer. I'll take Jesus' word for it! At the moment a sinner turns to Christ and receives salvation, they are free forever from the penalty of sin – they won't go to Hell when they die. That's salvation in the past tense – they have been saved, justified freely because of what Jesus has done for them. They are also experiencing salvation in the present tense – they are being saved, and sin only

has the power they give it through poor choices. That's why new Christians want to grow by reading their Bible and developing a life of prayer and praise, connecting with other believers for mutual growth, and finding ways to serve the Lord and witness for Him. This is the whole process we call sanctification, the ongoing growth true believers experience that involves applying their faith to every area of their life. All true believers will be saved in the future tense also – one day when they are in Heaven they will be free from the very presence of sin! We call that glorification, and is guaranteed the moment a person is born again!

20. And Jesus said to them, "I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out." -John 6:35-37

What a precious promise from Jesus – when we come to Him by faith and receive Jesus into our lives, He will not cast us out! We belong to Him. We were given to Him by the Father! WOW! Danny Campbell was a gift from God the Father to Jesus! No wonder after years of calling myself an Atheist I came to Christ so quickly when He introduced Himself to me! I like that part about not being cast out. When you go fishing there are fish you throw back, and then there are ones you keep! These verses tell us that Jesus keeps whoever comes to Him in faith!

21. "This is the will of My Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." -Jesus in John 6:39-40

A great hymn encourages us to keep standing on the promises of God! Many people have had the same experience I did when they tried out for a high school sports team – they got cut and did not make the team. Jesus here promises that if you have received Him you will make the cut on judgment day – you will be raised up! That is true because of who He is and His ability, not because we can measure up! Jesus measured up for us! I'm standing on this wonderful promise from my dear Jesus!

22. On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified. -John 7:37-39

The clear teaching here is that after Jesus was glorified and went back to Heaven true believers from that time on would receive the Holy Spirit. We have already seen Ephesians 1:13-14 teach us that this is the reality for all who have believed in Jesus. For the believer, having God the Holy Spirit indwell them will be like having rivers of living water flowing out of their life. There will be an increasing spiritual flow in their life brought about by the constant presence of God the Holy Spirit in their lives.

23. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will be converted to You. -Psalm 51:10-13

There is a familiar chorus sung to Psalm 51 in Christian circles. Some have taken the line “take not Your Holy Spirit from me” and concluded that salvation can be lost. I believe salvation happened in Old Testament times when people placed their faith in God and His promises (looking forward and anticipating the work of Christ). John 7:37-39 sheds light on the completed work of Christ and its significance in the life of the believer. In God’s plan of salvation there was no guarantee of a sealing of a believer by the Holy Spirit until Christ’s work had been completed. In the Old Testament, it appears the Spirit made certain appearances to strengthen individuals for tasks they had to perform. Saul lost this empowering presence by his sin. In Psalm 51 David’s plea is that he would not lose that empowering presence. The Old Testament reality was that the Spirit could depart. But today believers live under the New Covenant, in which they have the Holy Spirit indwelling them through faith in Christ. He is in their life, and daily leading us to be all that we are in Christ.

24. Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we may boldly say, “the Lord is my Helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”

The author of Hebrews here reminds us of that great promise – the Lord will not leave us, or forsake us! Because of that, we have great *boldness*! God calls us to have boldness, not in ourselves, but in His promise that He will not leave us or forsake us! The late preacher David Johnson used to reflect on how this promise reads in the Greek language. He would say, “it is a forever never with no exceptions ever!”

25. Therefore do not be unwise but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit...” -Ephesians 5:17-18

We have shown from the Bible that believers have the Spirit inside them. Here we are told to be filled with the Spirit. What does that mean? Let’s use an analogy. If a person came to live with you, you may at first feel reluctant to let them make themselves at home. You may say, “*Mi casa es su casa*,” but you have a hard time letting them into some of the rooms. As you trust them more, though, you invite them to see even what’s in the closets and attic, and they can help you clean those places out. The Spirit comes into your life at salvation, but to be filled with the Spirit you need to let him come into every corner of every room of your heart – and let Him rule every square inch! As you do, you will avoid “quenching the Spirit” and your joy will be full!

26. The mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. -Colossians 1:26-27

The thing that Old Testament saints like David longed to know in its fullness born again Christians now know – that Christ is in us and He will never leave us nor forsake us! It is our great hope, and in the Bible hope refers to an assurance about a truth! Remember I John 5:13? We can and should have assurance that we have eternal life!

27. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. -Hebrews 11:1-2

Do you believe God keeps His promises? Faith says, “Yes, Lord, I believe in You – who You are, and what You have done for me. I’m sure You will be true to Your promises to me even when in my flesh I fail.” It was faith that gave the elders, people like Abraham and David, a good testimony, despite their failures.

**28. “And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.”
-Genesis 15:6, speaking of Abraham**

Old Testament saints were also saved by faith in God. When Abraham trusted the Lord, the Lord viewed Abraham as possessing the very righteousness Abraham didn’t really have in and of himself. This righteous standing before God comes as God’s gift of grace and is received by faith. The apostle Paul quotes this passage in Romans 4:3 and declares in Romans 4:5, “But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.” When we place our trust in Jesus Christ for salvation, His righteousness will count for us on judgment day. We achieve this righteous standing in Him the same way Abraham did – by faith!

29. Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord, and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.” -Psalm 32:1-5

David also believed in God’s ability to forgive sin. Here he knows that his standing before God is that God has covered his sin, and that his sin is no longer imputed (or counted) against him. This is not because David was worthy! He actually connects not having deceit in his spirit with when he came clean about his sin! God responded to David uncovering his sin through confession by covering David’s sin and granting David forgiveness. The true believer is not characterized by a lack of concern for his sin, but is so convicted of his sin that he confesses it to the Lord. In the last entry we saw that in Romans 4:3 David quoted the passage in Genesis where Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. In Romans 4:6 Paul writes, “Just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works,” then he quotes Psalm 32:1-5. When you believed, not only

was your sin transferred to what Jesus did for you on the cross, but His righteous life was transferred to you to count for you on judgment day!

30. “Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book! That they were engraved on a rock with an iron pen and lead, forever! For I know that my Redeemer lives. And He shall stand at last on the earth: and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” -Job on Job 19:23-28

Another Old Testament saint, Job, was absolutely convinced that he was redeemed and that He would see his Redeemer face to face after death! In the midst of the terrible struggle the book of Job describes he held on to this hope. He knew his soul was eternally secure with God and it gave him hope to go on! Conservative scholars believe Job lived about the same time as Abraham, making this one of the oldest statements on the eternal security of the believer! I stand with Job – Danny Campbell’s Redeemer lives, and I will see Him after I die!

31. For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens. For in this tent we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation from Heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we will not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well-pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. -2Cor. 5:1-8

Paul had the same hope that Job did! He was certain that he was saved, and secure, and yes, even confident that he was saved forever. He again refers to the Spirit as the guarantee these things will happen. I choose to share Job and Paul’s hope, the certainty that all true believers have that when they die they will see Jesus and be present with their Redeemer! Again, this hope is not based on my ability to gain my salvation or keep it, but on the work of my Redeemer Jesus on my behalf. THAT’S AWESOME! Won’t you give up your tradition that has you living in fear of losing your salvation because it depends on you, and entrust yourself to this Redeemer who loves you so? Rest on His promises in verses like this! Let all true believers celebrate that this mortal life will be swallowed up by real immortal life with Jesus! Non-

believers think mortality will be swallowed up by death, but believers know that real life is yet to come, when mortality is swallowed up by eternal life!

32. Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen. -Jude 24-25

What a great promise! Salvation starts and ends with God keeping His promises to Himself first, and by extension to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ! He makes happen what I could never pull off on my own! Therefore by faith I'll serve Him with gratitude all of my days!

33. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For this reason, I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know Whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that day. -2 Timothy 1:8-12

Paul had no fear of losing his salvation. He knew that Jesus is able to keep His promise of everlasting life to those who believe. Instead Paul concentrated on living His life under God's grace in Christ, and by faith storing up for Himself "treasure in Heaven" by what He did for God in the here and now, as Jesus had instructed all disciples in Matthew 6:19-21

34. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, ‘You will be made free?’” Jesus answered them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”

-John 8:31-36

There are many noteworthy things about this passage, but for our purposes we will highlight three. First, note the human capacity for self-deception! The legalistic Jewish leaders Jesus was challenging thought they were free and had always been free. The reality was that the nation as a whole had been in bondage to other countries for 700 years, and they as individuals were slaves to their sin! Second, let’s be clear that true disciples abide in Jesus’ words. Where a callous disregard for the things of the Lord is, there should be no assurance of salvation. But third, look at the last verse – “if the Son makes you free, you’ll be free indeed.” True Christians have been made sons not by their own efforts but because Jesus has made them free. Where this “new birth” has come, true freedom has come!

35. Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are One.” **-John 10:25-30**

What a glorious promise from Jesus! These verses say so much. First, they make clear that true believers have been given a disposition to hear the voice of Jesus and follow Him. Earlier we read that everyone that the Father gives Jesus will come to Him, and He won’t cast them out (John 6:37). Here we read that they will hear His voice and follow Him because they are His sheep. Those who are not His true sheep won’t be able to hear or follow. Secondly, we see it guaranteed that true believers have eternal life, and with it, eternal security! No one will be able to snatch them out of Jesus’ or the Father’s hand – a double safety net! Isn’t that great? At this point we should say that it is clear already that no true believer can lose their salvation. Some look at these verses and say, “Well, you can’t lose it, but you can reject it – you can’t be snatched out, but you can jump out!” I have two responses here before we move on. First, I am glad we got you to the point that you admit a true believer can’t lose their salvation. That alone will help a lot of people stop living in the wrong kind of fear and worry. But secondly, I’m

saddened because the “but I can jump out” argument shows an insufficient understanding of the plight that man is in before He comes to Christ and the completeness of God’s salvation. I will continue to demonstrate this from the Scriptures as we move forward.

36. And you He made alive, who were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom we also once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. -Ephesians 2:1-3

Those who say you can jump out of the Father’s hand don’t realize that apart from God’s grace we never would have had the ability to jump into God’s hands. Unconverted people aren’t just sick in their sins – they are dead in their sins. Martin Luther wrote a book called *The Bondage of the Will* in which he argued from Scripture that the mystery of grace presented in the New Testament is that the lost person, being dead in sins, cannot choose the life Christ offers unless God in His grace gives him the ability to do so. **In other words, we can’t choose to jump out of the Father’s hands in our own strength because we never had enough strength to jump in!** That is Reformation teaching 101, salvation by God’s grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone!

37. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. -Ephesians 2:4-7

Look at the awesome, wonderful, mystery of God’s salvation unfold! I was dead – Christ made me alive by His grace. He then raised me up and made me sit in the heavenly places with Him! WOW! Jesus has a place in Heaven reserved for me – and you, dear brother or sister in Christ! And for the next zillion years He’s going to keep showing you and I and all the redeemed just how rich this wonderful grace is as it is poured out before our eyes! I’d rather have God’s doctorate degree in grace than anything I can have on earth! I love the element of coming surprise here! Have you ever had somebody make you put your hands over your face, and then tell them to open them up and see what they have for you? That’s what I am thinking here – how much God loves us and Himself is excited about showing us what He has prepared for us! What a Father! What a Savior! What a Comforter!

38. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. -Ephesians 2:8-9

What is the gift of God mentioned here? Saving faith abundantly poured out by the grace of God! To become a Christian, we have to repent of our sin and place our faith in Jesus. An acronym for FAITH is Forsaking All I Trust Him. But in some mysterious way God even aids us in believing faith. He has to, because we were dead in our sins, and needed to be made alive, or born again. This verses says that faith is the gift of God. But check this out –

39. When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, “Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.” -Acts 11:18

This verse shows us that repentance, like faith in Ephesians 2:8, also comes from God as its source. Here Christian Jews marveled at the fact that the Gentiles there in Caesarea had been granted the same saving repentance they had gotten! These are soul settling truths! On December 16th 1984 I heard the gospel, repented and believed, and was born again. But thanks to verses like these, my assurance of salvation doesn't have to rest on what I did that day alone, but has an even stronger reinforcement when I hear the extent to which God had been leading me to that very moment. I was born again that day, and have been choosing the God who chose me ever since. And He has been 100% faithful toward me, even in my moments of being fickle toward Him! Please, brothers and sisters, don't get caught up in the traditional theological arguments here – settle yourself in God's grace! When I was a child I remember sometimes I would swing on a swingset that wasn't anchored properly. Talk about feeling insecure! At any moment it could pop out of the ground and come crashing down on me! But I would also swing on park swingsets that were anchored in the ground with concrete! I always felt secure on those ones! Thank God for the Bible verses that anchor our salvation in God's grace!

40. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. -Ephesians 2:10

The Greek word for workmanship is poiema, from which we get our word for poem. WOW! You and I are poems of God. The word could be translated “masterpiece.” A work of art becomes a masterpiece when an art master begins their work on it. If you found an unfinished painting by

Rembrandt, it would still be considered a masterpiece, because the master had worked on it! We became masterpieces the moment God saved us by His amazing grace! We are as yet unfinished works, but His work has begun in our life, and He will see it through! Hebrews 12:2 calls Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith! Philippians 1:6 says “He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it!”

41. Then Saul, breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from Heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” Then the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” So he, trembling and astonished, said, “Lord, what do you want me to do?” Then the Lord said to him, “arise and go into the city, and you will be told what to do.” -Acts 9:1-6

This is the account in the book of Acts of Paul becoming a Christian. Think about this question – Do you think that Paul could have said no to God in this encounter? It certainly is hard to imagine Paul saying no to Jesus in that moment! From the time he saw the light he followed the Lord’s direction into the city where he had something like scales fall off of his eyes. That’s my story too – when God got my attention all my arguments against Christianity melted in His presence! Looking back I don’t think I could have resisted Christ any more than Paul did in this encounter. A horse tries in vain to fight back against the goads in which its master is prodding it onward. The Holy Spirit had been convicting Paul, “goading” him toward Christ. And now the moment of salvation has come! The person who can take or leave Jesus probably has never really been converted. But true believers testify that there came a time in their life when God became so real to them that they couldn’t do anything else but follow. It’s like the bug in the movie *Bug’s Life* that is flying toward the bug zapper, and his friends yell to turn away, but he says, “I can’t help it, it’s so pretty.” ZAP!

42. Paul later describing his conversion to King Agrippa...Jesus said to him, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of these things which you have seen and the things that I will reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom now I send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from

darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me. Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance. For these reasons the Jews seized me in the Temple and tried to kill me. Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing to both small and great...” -Acts 26:15-22

In His wisdom God uses preaching and witnessing to save people. We see wonderful truths here. God breaks through to Paul. He obeys the vision! He repents and believes in Jesus, being counted among those he used to persecute, looking forward to the inheritance the redeemed will get. As he preaches, Jesus promises that eyes will be opened as his were, and that people will go from darkness to light, from Satan's power to God's. All of this happened in Paul's life because he had received "help from God." Note clearly that Paul's message was that the truly repentant will bring forth the kind of fruit Christians should have in their life!

43. Now hear Paul describing his conversion to the Galatian Christians: “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach among the Gentiles...” -Galatians 1:15-16

Paul again uses the grace word to describe his conversion, and speaks plainly yet forcibly about the fact of God's plan, as if saying, "God had this planned for me even when I was inside Momma - and when God thought the time was right He revealed His Son in me." Paul clearly attributes his salvation to the grace of God, and saw God's purpose in the direction his life had turned. One of the greatest moments for as I reflected upon God's grace in my life was thanking God not only that I had been born again as a Christian, but also thanking Him that I had been born! It's a wonderful life because of God! For more on God working in your life before you were born, read Psalm 139 and Jeremiah 1:5-8. If you have become a Christian thank God now for your birth and your new birth in Jesus, and God directing your steps between the two!

44. Jesus said to her, “I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” She said to Him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.” -John 11:25-26

We come back to the gospel of John to see Jesus again laying it out for us – the believer will live and never die. She (Martha) stated her belief and reliance on Jesus right there and then! True believers have been born again (John 3:3) and will never die what Revelation 20:14-15 calls the second death – having to spend eternity in the Lake of Fire. What a wonderful promise from Jesus. From this we can make a little riddle – “If you are only born once, you will die twice; but if you are born twice, you’ll only die once!” I trust Jesus to keep this promise to those who have trusted Him alone for their eternal salvation!

45. “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.” -John 12:24-26

The wonderful truth that God saves us by His grace through our faith should lead us to look for fruit in our lives after our conversion. The church has always recognized that some people profess faith that don’t actually possess faith. True believers are characterized by serving Jesus and following Him. He has given them eternal life and He and His way becomes their life! As they grow in Him, they naturally imitate Him the way young children do their parents. Those who selfishly spurn His leadership in their life should not have assurance that they really are His children. The Holy Spirit living inside true believers will give them a desire to turn from things the Bible calls sin in their life. Let me make this observation as a Pastor, though – my experience has been that those who come to me struggling with the assurance of their salvation almost always are truly saved. Their desire to be sure is one of the fruits that they really have been born again. I have seen many others who smugly believe they are Christians who show absolutely no fruit in their life of genuine conversion. I fear for their souls!

46. “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.” Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going, and how can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” -John 14:1-6

If a person can’t be sure of his or her salvation, then Jesus’ promise here about going to prepare a place for us would be meaningless. He is being so personal! He is comforting His own with the knowledge that He’s going to come back for true believers to transport them to their reward. Jesus is working on a place in Heaven for you and me! You talk about prime real estate! Again, this will happen not because we are worthy, but because He is our Way, our Truth, our very Life!

47. “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also. And greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My Name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My Name, I will do it. If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans.” -John 14:12-18

Look at these intimate promises made by Jesus to true believers. He promises that the Holy Spirit will be with them forever! This is ludicrous unless the very presence of the Spirit indicates that believers are eternally secure. In the Greek forever means FOREVER! You can’t have forever one day and lose it the next! And Jesus won’t leave us as orphans, He’s coming back for us! This concept is only a means of encouragement if we know we are His. And here He makes clear that in contrast to true believers, who have the Holy Spirit forever and the promise of His coming for them, there are others who do not know Him. Note that if you love Him, you will keep His commands, see answered prayers in your life, and do the works He did (which together with other believers will make a bigger impact than He did on earth). If there is that kind of fruit in your life, you can and should have assurance of your faith. If not...

48. Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless indeed you are disqualified. But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified. -2 Corinthians 13:5-6

We should all examine ourselves from time to time and look for the fruit of Christ in our life. It's also a role of the church to help us know that Christ is shining through our life. It is clear from the first four verses of this chapter that when Paul speaks of being disqualified he is speaking directly to some people in Corinth that were asking for proof that Christ was speaking through Paul (see verse 3). Basically, Paul is saying, "Some among you think I'm disqualified – but you know my fruit – Christ is in me! Examine yourselves: if Christ is in you, it will show, and this talk of me needing to show you proof of my qualifications will cease!" Attempts to make this text say that "disqualification" means you can lose your salvation fail when we look at the context of Paul's remarks! This call for believers to examine themselves, to look for the fruit of faith in their lives, goes along nicely with 2 Peter 1:10's challenge to "be even more diligent to make your call and election sure."

49. Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.' -John 14:23-24

Those who are true believers keep Jesus' word. Those who do not keep His word don't really love Him. An unrepentant person who flaunts disobedience to God's word thus can have no assurance that he is a true believer. It doesn't matter how many times he's walked an aisle, raised his hand, been baptized, etc... No outward expression can guarantee an inward reality. I John 5:13 says we CAN know that we have eternal life, and that this assurance comes only after evidence is seen that a person has been born of God and does the things Christians do. I have that assurance. Christ is my life and His word is my guide and the life I live I live for Him. You can have that assurance too, and it will help you serve God out of gratitude instead of constant fear that God is angry with you. Check this out...

50. “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. You have heard Me say to you, ‘I am going away and coming back to you.’ If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, ‘I am going to the Father,’ for My Father is greater than I.” -John 14:27-28

Jesus has given true believers peace with God the Father. When two countries make peace with each other, they are ending hostilities between each other, paving the way for relationship with one another. The peace that Jesus gives is a lasting peace we can be secure in. He asks us here not to be troubled or afraid. We would only be troubled or afraid if there was a possibility that God would again view us as His enemy and end the peace He has with us. Jesus says here that the peace He gives to true believers is a lasting peace that keeps us from being troubled or afraid. Jesus is one with the Father (John 10:30). As God the Son He shared full glory with the Father from before Creation (John 17:5). He temporarily set aside His rights as God to come to earth and become fully human (Phil. 2:5-11). During that time on earth, Jesus did not use His Deity to His personal advantage. He did use it to prove He was the Messiah, the Son of God. It was during that time on earth that the Father was functionally “greater” than the Son because Jesus was restraining the full use of His deity. He did that to be the peace broker between Heaven and earth, equally representing both parties! Having secured eternal salvation and peace for all who believe, Jesus has now returned to Heaven and the glory He deserves (John 17:5).

51. “I am the True Vine, and My Father is the Vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it will bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the Vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.” -John 15:1-4

Some have tried to use this passage to say, “Look, a person can lose their salvation because they were a branch, but through refusing to obey and bear fruit they lost their salvation.” Such thinking not only does not fit with what John has already reported Jesus saying, but doesn’t fit with the context of the rest of this chapter either. Such twisting of this passage gets away from the central points of it: our power to bear fruit comes not from trying to create fruit but in abiding in Christ, and that the pruning God does on true believers through trials they experience will actually help them to bear more fruit. When true believers struggle, they need to know that God has a purpose and the end result will be fruit for the Kingdom. Note that they can do this because they are already made clean by Jesus (verse 3).

52. “I am the Vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” -Jesus in John 15:5-11

Jesus has already told us in John’s gospel that a true believer, given to Him by God the Father, won’t perish or be snatched out of the Father’s hand (John 10:28-30). Here we hear loud and clear Jesus calling those same believers to continually abide in Him in an organic relationship, like a branch connected to the vine. The life of the vine flows through the branch, and the branch bears fruit. Ultimately it is the vine producing fruit through the branch – without the vine there will be no fruit. Many religious people try through self-effort to produce fruit, only to wither up over time. Our call is to abide in Jesus, to engage Him in relationship and obey His teachings, and fruit will naturally, or we may say *supernaturally*, appear. Jesus here says true disciples glorify God by fruit-bearing, which means obeying God’s commands and sharing God’s love and joy with others. But no one can be assured they are “In Christ” if their life shows that they are wrapped up in selfish, ungodly pursuits. Such people should fear that they are not “in Christ.” Jesus trees bear Jesus fruit eventually – where that fruit is lacking, it may be because that person is not “In Christ.” But Jesus says the whole reason He is sharing this with His disciples (the ones He earlier in the chapter declared clean) is so that their joy may be full. He’s not trying to make them afraid of losing anything, but exhorting them to abide in Him so they’ll bear much fruit!

53. “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are my friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.” -Jesus in John 15:12-15

Jesus laid down his life for his friends, and we are his friends through the new birth. We are also called to love, and to lay down our lives. This is not just to die for someone. It is to set aside our agenda to spend time and help others. It’s a moment by moment, day by day call from our Savior. Isn’t it wonderful that our God calls us, His disciples, His friends! One of the mysteries of salvation is that God lets us become intimate friends with Him. This was not based on Him

gaining anything by our friendship because we had anything to offer Him. Why should anyone think, then, that keeping our salvation comes in a way different than the way it came to us. God not only saved us, but is tender and patient with us as He helps us become the kind of people who love others the way they have been loved by Jesus and put others before themselves.

54. “You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another.” -John 15:16-17

What? I think the disciples must have been blown away by this statement! Hadn't Jesus come to each of them and said, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men?" Hadn't they chosen to follow Him? Indeed they had! But here He says, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you!" There comes a time in every true believers life when they realize that it was Jesus all along who had orchestrated the events of their life so that one day they would choose Him. It wasn't chance that made you respond for Jesus and kept you on the path you are now on – it was the grace of Jesus in making Himself known to you. You had an appointment with your God! You accepted Him, and as you walked through the door of salvation you looked back and saw written over the door from the other side, "chosen from the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4). I hope that does for you what it did for me, dear friend. It makes every day I have ever lived have meaning. Jesus was always watching out for me, and in the fullness of time, came to live in my heart! Praise God!

55. “These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me. But when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them.”

-Jesus in John 16:1-4

Take Jesus up on the offer to develop an intimate friendship with him. You're going to need it when tough times come, and they will come. Jesus here indicates to those that do know Him that those who don't know Him will sometimes make life difficult for true believers. Lest you think this passage teaches that a true believer might really stumble and lose their salvation, check out these next verses...

56. “Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ Or ‘Look, He is there!’ Do not believe it. For false Christ’s and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, the elect. But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.”

-Jesus in Mark 13:21-22

In these verses Jesus is speaking about being ready as the end times approach. Here He wants those who are truly Christians to be ready for the deceivers that will come pretending to be on God’s side. But despite urging them to be diligent, He encourages them by referring to how God has elected the true believer. Jesus basically says it that it is impossible to truly deceive His elect, or chosen ones, but people will try! Don’t be afraid of the word elect. We elect, or choose presidents, to have both privileges and responsibilities. The one in the office chose to run for the office, and we chose to elect them to it. God elects, or chooses sinners to be His people and this gives us both privileges and responsibilities. Presidents are given daily briefings about potential dangers in the world. Here Jesus gives believers advance warning of persecution and hardship so they will be ready, and not stumble or be deceived.

57. “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” -Jesus in John 16:33

What a wonderful promise – not that we can on our own overcome the world, but that Jesus has overcome the world, and He’s the one we’re with! This brings to mind a great little saying – “I can’t, but God never said I could! Jesus can, and He promised that he would!” Jesus is the Hero of the Christian faith! Philippians 4:13 says that believers can do all things they are called to do through Jesus who gives them strength. John 15:5 told us that without Jesus we can do nothing, but through abiding in Him, we can bear much fruit! That includes the perseverance of the believer amidst life’s troubles.

58. Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to Heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. -John 17:1-3

Jesus our God and Savior keeps referring to this same glorious truth – that eternal life will be given by Him to as many as God the Father has given to God the Son. These references to God’s choice of the believer behind the believers choice of God are of course a mystery that human minds simply cannot fully comprehend. Why do you suppose that Jesus wants us to know a little about these things? I believe it is so in our moments of being “prone to wander” our

confidence will not be in ourselves but in His ability to keep His Word to those who have believed! I am so thankful that Jesus told me what I can't fully understand, but I can appreciate! Note also here how Jesus defines eternal life – not just as being forever with the Lord, but a growing experiential knowledge and relationship with the Triune God!

59. “I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all mine are Yours, Yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. Now I am no longer in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom you gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.”

-John 17:9-13

Judas is sometimes used as an example of someone who was saved and then denied his salvation. He is used as an example of someone who lost his salvation. This passage refutes that. Jesus affirms that all true believers are kept by God through the power of His name (verse 11). And then He makes clear that Judas' rejection of Christ fulfilled Scripture. Basically, when Jesus calls Judas the son of perdition, he is calling him the son of destruction or the son of hell. Earlier in John Jesus had referred to lost people as the sons of the Devil. Judas' plight shows us that it is possible for non-believers to be mixed in with believers as we go through this life. But their presence among believers should not be interpreted as the fact that they were saved – For instance –

60. “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.” **-I John 2:19-20**

Here John reinforces that there are people who hang around churches that are not Christians. Note a very important statement for our study – “If they had been of us, they would have continued with us.” It is obvious John thought true believers were guaranteed to follow on to everlasting life). You'll remember that John's purpose in writing I John was that his readers might know they have everlasting life (I John 5:13). We should also note here that if true believers are physically able they will want to regularly gather with other believers. The New Testament casts doubt on the salvation of someone claiming to be a believer but who refuses to regularly gather with other believers. The church was God's idea and Jesus promised to build His church, His bride. His intention is for us to gather in His name for His Kingdom purposes. The

fact that when you put people together in churches there are some relational challenges to overcome did not escape God when He was planning the church! That's why He gave us many relational commands the church is to put into practice among one another. Kind of like you have to do in your own family!

61. "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are One; I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You loved Me." -Jesus in John 17:20-23

WOW! Jesus wanted us to know that we who have become believers are loved by the Father in a like manner as He is! Note verse 23 – "I in them!" Jesus promises that He will be inside the true believer! And He prayed not just for those 11 disciples that day – He prayed for every true believer throughout time, including you and me! WOW! Can't you picture Jesus thinking of you and me, even as He was thinking of Peter and John, and Billy Graham and Joni Erickson Tada. Oh how glorious a thought – but His next thought is even more glorious in our discussion –

62. "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your Name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them." -Jesus in John 17:24-26

The intimate desire of Jesus is for all true believers to be in Heaven with Him! This is startling, because Jesus knows full well that what's coming next is His arrest (thanks to the false disciple Judas) and the denial by Peter and the scattering of the disciples. Yet Jesus, despite knowing that, loves them so much He's already phoning in reservations in Heaven for them to His Father! What great love! I can't wait!

63. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to become sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. -2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Look at this truth – if we are in Christ we are new creations! Our sins are no longer imputed to us, or charged against us. Instead we are now reconciled with God and stand in Christ's righteousness. A critical mistake made by those who believe you can lose your salvation is to believe that we are saved by Christ's righteousness but keep our salvation based on our own righteousness. That is simply not what the Scriptures teach!

64. “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?” -Galatians 3:1-3

Paul here reminds the Galatians that true believers begin their Christian journey by the work of the Holy Spirit, and are to continue on in their Christian life by relying on the Spirit. Instead of that, the Galatians were starting to listen to false teachers who said they needed to do other things to get or keep their salvation. The result was that they were preoccupied not in living by faith, loving and following Jesus, but they were preoccupied with meeting the demands imposed on them by various false teachers. Sadly, the same thing happens today – some preachers have their followers so in dread of losing their salvation that they stop living by faith, hope, love, and joy. Instead, they set up impossible standards that steal the joy of believers.

65. Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? – just as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. –Galatians 3:5-6

Again we see it – salvation is by faith, and daily living is by faith. It is God who supplies the Spirit to us, and when He does, the recipients receive the Spirit by faith, not by things they do. All around us are people who teach that if you apply their teachings, God will bless you and you will do nothing but walk in victory. In their eyes any sinful setbacks believers have mean they might have lost their salvation. But in the Bible we read of men like Abraham, who believed God, and then did both good and stupid things after he believed. His life decisions, both good and bad, had consequences that he had to live with. But we are told here and elsewhere that Abraham never lost the ACCOUNTED righteousness that came when he believed God. This doesn't mean we are excused to sin. We definitely need to apply our faith to every area of our lives, seeking to make godly decisions. We definitely need to repent and return when we make sinful decisions. But true believers never lose their ACCOUNTED righteousness!

66. Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: “Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the disciples which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.” –Acts 15:6-11

In this critical chapter in the life of the early church we see Peter standing up for the message of grace. The people around the apostles were demanding that more conditions to salvation be added to the Gentiles. Peter first defends the way the Gentiles received salvation – by God's grace through their faith, which God acknowledged by giving them the Holy Spirit and purified hearts. Note that their hearts were purified by God through faith, not self-effort. Then at the end Peter stunned the religious leaders by saying they can be saved like the Gentiles have been if they'll rely solely on God's grace also and not their own efforts to keep the law. In the middle Peter resists putting on the Gentiles a burden of self-effort which none of them had ever been able to pull off! I need to say here that I have seen so many people who say you can lose your salvation try so hard to live lives that please the Lord. Many times they try so hard and see such little results that they burn out. I've seen many chuck their faith for months and even years at a time. Self-effort is a cruel master. So many that think this way live under the lower motivations to serve God in a “fog” of fear, obligation, and guilt. Jesus intended us to serve Him out of the

kind of gratitude that comes from knowing that “we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.” That gratitude leads us to serve God primarily out of the higher motivations of faith, hope, and love!

67. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.

-Romans 3:23-27

Dear friends, because we are sinners, there is nothing we can do before or after salvation to be justified in God’s sight. On our own we are hopeless. The God of justice has to deal with our sin. So Jesus shed His blood on our behalf. God chooses to let the perfect, sinless life of Christ be imputed to us. In justice He sees Christ’s death, counts it as if we have died, and cancels the death penalty due our sins. In grace He sees Christ’s righteous life and lets it forevermore count for us! That’s why He can still be just, and yet also justify worms like you and me if we place our faith in Jesus instead of ourselves! What is our part? Humility and gratitude for our salvation. There is absolutely no room for pride or boasting!

68. But He gives more grace. Therefore He says, “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble!”

-James 4:6

God continues to give even more grace to believers as the engine of their faith! We are saved by God’s grace, we grow in the faith by God’s grace, and we are guaranteed Heaven by God’s grace! As John Newton wrote, “Twas grace that brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home!”

69. Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.”

-Romans 4:4-8

Friend, you are working so hard, and you are so frustrated because you wonder if it will all be good enough for Jesus to let you into Heaven. The worst thing is, as this text says, you're getting no credit for the things you do because you are doing them in hopes of them making you more acceptable to God. And yet the last few texts have made clear that you are accepted forever not through your own work but through your faith in Christ's work for you! Won't you rest in Jesus and be eternally secure in God's great love for you?

70. Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have access by faith into this grace in which we now stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. **-Romans 5:1-5**

Look at all these things believers are said to firmly possess: justification, peace, access, joy, hope, flowing love, and behind it all, the Holy Spirit! Christian, now that you have been born again, one of your calls is to search the Scriptures to find out who you now are in Christ. These are blessings secured for you by Jesus and are to be enjoyed – they are devotional food for you to live by! And Romans is increasingly clear that just as you couldn't do anything to earn this standing before God, you can't do anything to lose it! If you doubt this, check this next thought out –

71. Much more, then, having been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. -Romans 5:9-11

A lot of people who believe you can lose your salvation live in fear of God's wrath. Here Paul tells us that because we have been justified by Christ's blood shed for us, WE ARE SAVED FROM WRATH. In the next verse we are told this happens because Jesus lives, not IF we live right for Him. We are told to rejoice because we're reconciled, because we're God's friends now, no longer His enemies, no longer under His wrath. If a person can lose their salvation, and thus go on to face God's wrath, then Paul's words here are meaningless. But they are not meaningless, they are Bible truth, the subject of a great means of rejoicing for Paul and us!

72. Therefore as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through the one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous. Moreover, the law entered that the offense may abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. -Romans 5:18-21

It was Jesus Christ's righteous act that allows God's free gift of salvation to be offered to sinners. And now grace reigns through Jesus Christ's righteousness so that true believers have eternal life. Check out verse 19 again. Whose obedience makes many righteous – people's or Jesus Christ's? Only the obedience of Jesus Christ! After stating this Paul states a startling truth – true believers can not out-sin the grace of God. Wherever sin abounds, grace abounds all the more! Take a moment for that to settle in! What a remarkable truth! God's grace is truly remarkable! But I hear someone saying, "But wait – if you teach that, people will go out and do whatever they want, just presuming that God will always forgive them. Interestingly enough, Paul answers that very objection next!

73. “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life.” -Romans 6:1-4

Baptism here speaks of our spiritual union with Christ at His death for our sins. Our old life has been buried; we are to walk in newness of life. Paul speaks of that here as historic reality! His argument is that you should no longer do the things you once did because you are no longer the person you once were! You were a sinner enslaved to sin. Now you are a saint that needs to choose to walk in the newness of life that God has given you. We have already pointed to enough scripture to make clear that God doesn't leave you alone in that pursuit. Combined with the past passage we know that Paul is telling us that our knowledge of God's wonderful grace abounding to us is the motivator God wants us to have for living holy lives, not fear of losing our salvation!

74. “For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” -Romans 6:5-11

Basically Paul says here that if you really were saved, you really are free now not to choose sin in a way you were not previously, and you really are alive in God and will partake in the likeness of Christ's resurrection. Note the statement: “If we died with Christ, we believe we shall also live with Him!” This verse teaches eternal security won for us who believe by Christ's death and resurrection. It is saying, “If you truly were saved, you truly will live with Jesus.”

75. “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” -Romans 6:12-14

Here Paul makes clear what has happened for the true believer – they have changed masters! Law used to be their master, but now grace is their master! Grace reminds you of all that Christ has done for you, and walks with you day by day as you experience victories and failures. When you blow it, grace reminds you that you are now a child of the King, and bids you confess your sins to Him, to clear the air so you can experience the heights of fellowship with God. Grace reminds you that what you can't do on your own Christ can do in and through you. Law is a cruel master when used by Satan – it only reminds you of how far you fall short of being like God. Satan uses it to beat you up, to tell you you're not good enough and you'll never be good enough – so just despair. But wait! Don't forget that the Law given by God just pictures what total obedience to God will look like. Christians can use it as a humble guide to see what areas of their life still are a poor reflection of the heart of the lawgiver (see Romans 7:7-12 on the law's good purpose). But God never intended the Law to be the master of His children. God is the Master of His children. The law is the “House Rules.” But God doesn't stop loving His children when they fall short of total obedience! At home, I didn't reject my children when their room wasn't clean enough! Why? Because they are my children, and I love them no matter what. Paul's argument is that since they are now God's children through the new birth, they are now under grace, not under law! Are you? Are you resting in God's grace, seeking to obey Him not out of fear but out of faith, hope, and love? Or are you still trying to make God love you more by your own feeble efforts?

76. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. -Romans 6:15-19

NOW HEAR THIS! Lest there be any misunderstanding, Paul makes clear that the person who thinks they can take this grace for granted and have a cavalier attitude about sin probably is a lost person who hasn't really been born again. Woe to the person who says, “Well, I'll just do whatever I want because I'm saved and God has to forgive me.” Paul's words here indicate that

such a person is probably still a slave to sin instead of being a slave of righteousness. But note how tender Paul is here. “He says, “I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh.” Paul is saying here what we all by experience know: TRUE BELIEVERS STRUGGLE WITH SIN. Many times this losing your salvation message is accompanied by teaching that if you are truly right with God you won’t struggle with sin. I thank the Lord that the Bible teaches us here, and in chapter 7 to follow, that true believers do struggle with sin, and that their acceptance by God is not due to their ability to defeat sin, but by being new creations in Christ who in the power of the Holy Spirit persevere in their battles with sin, knowing that Christ has won the war! I’m tempted to fast forward to Romans 7 here, but first...

77. “For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” -Romans 6:20-23

**aised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
-Romans 6:5-11**

The first point to bring out here is that those who are truly born again may struggle with sin, but they are ashamed of sin in their life. That is a fruit of conversion, a desire toward holiness. The sinner used to hate God’s law. The saint has come to agree with God’s law, and is frustrated when they fall short of it, but they rejoice that God gives more grace in the midst of the struggle. Even still they long for the day when they will be in Heaven with Jesus and away from the very presence of sin. Again we see that our sin earned us death, but our salvation, our eternal life, is a gift from God. It is given not because of our work but because of Christ’s work for us. And it is absolutely illogical to suggest that one day you can have eternal life (which includes every day in the future), and then lose it. On to chapter 7!

78. “For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice, but what I hate, that I do. If then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin who dwells in me.”

-Romans 7:14-20

Even Christians struggle with sin! Some have tried to say that this section is Paul hypothetically talking about what non-Christians go through. NOT! Every believer resonates with Paul’s struggle here! We often do that thing we didn’t want to do, and we don’t always do the good we could. As long as we are here on this this present earth, we are going to struggle with sin. True believers don’t give up, and often over the years find Christ giving victory in areas of previous disobedience. I’m so glad the Bible is more honest than we are here! It shows Abraham obediently offering Isaac to God, and then it shows him acting like a coward, calling his wife his sister because he was scared of what a king might do to him. It shows David as a man after God’s own heart, and then it shows him getting caught up in adultery and orchestrating a murder. And here Paul clearly says that he agrees with God about sin, but still struggles some. If you do too, you are a normal Christian. Don’t use that as an excuse for any sin! Confess your sin as sin, receive His forgiveness for it, and keep walking with Jesus!

79. ...and (God) delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds) – then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. -2 Peter 2:7-10

The reason I share this text is that Peter calls Lot a righteous man, and he was. But if you look at the life of Lot in the Book of Genesis, you see a man with a lot of warts! He himself chose to move his family to Sodom and Gomorrah! His wife loved the world and lost her life as a result. His daughters were so wicked that they got him drunk after leaving Sodom and committed incest with him, and Moabites and Ammonites, two future enemies of Israel, were the result. Lot’s family put the capital “D” in dysfunctional families! And yet here he’s called a righteous man. Why? Because of the grace of God, whereby Lot was declared righteous, like Abraham, by his faith, and thus God delivered this “righteous” man. The unjust die in their sins. The just are made so by Christ’s righteousness. WOW! If there’s hope for Lot, there’s hope for you and me -

not because of our abilities to overcome the flesh, but because Christ has given us eternal life through faith in Him!

80. I find then a law, that evil is present within me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then with my mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. -Romans 7:21-8:4

In the midst of Paul's struggle with sin, he comes back to this bedrock truth of Christianity – "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!" Why? Because Christ through His life, death, and resurrection has met the righteous requirements of the law for all those who are born of the Spirit! And it is obvious that this NO CONDEMNATION sign hangs there despite our struggle with sin as a believer! We are eternally secure in the love and salvation of Jesus! Hooray!

81. "So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you." -Romans 8:8-11

These verses could not be any clearer: if you are really saved you are always really saved and will go to Heaven when you die. The Holy Spirit lives in you and will raise you as surely Christ was raised up! Again, this is based on the work of God in your life, and we have already shared with you that "He who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

82. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. For I consider the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

-Romans 8:14-18

Ask yourself this question: Would God save you based on your faith, then encourage you to call Him 'Daddy,' and then abandon you because you didn't measure up after salvation? What kind of 'salvation' would that be? God knows that in yourself you are weak – before and after salvation. He saves you, and sustains you by His grace for His glory, making you not just His dear child but assuring you of your inheritance. He tells you these things as an encouragement to persevere in the midst of suffering, suffering that is nothing compared to **'the glory that shall be revealed in us.'** What assurance! What security! It is obvious in this chapter that Paul means for sure knowledge of our salvation to be a comfort and encouragement to us as we live in this world. Please consider that the obvious opposite of security of having salvation is fear of losing salvation. Verse 15 says clearly that is exactly what we don't have as believers – a spirit of fear. Instead, we have received the Spirit of adoption. Thank you, Heavenly Father, for adopting me and placing within me the Holy Spirit of God, making me Your child and giving me a sure inheritance!

83. Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the Devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

-Hebrews 2:14-15

Here the author of Hebrews agrees with Romans 8 that for true believers the fear of death has been eliminated, never to be a source of bondage again for true believers!

84. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. Likewise the Spirit also helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

-Romans 8:23-27

This passage tells us that we are weak, but we are saved and that we have a hope that our weak bodies will one day be as saved as our souls already are. This hope leads us to persevere. Paul quickly goes on to tell us that because we were saved our weakness will be aided by the Spirit's help and by Christ Jesus' prayers. We are told that Jesus is praying for His saints, His chosen ones. This brings our minds back to John chapters 14-17, where Jesus comforted His true disciples with their hope of Heaven! Jesus our Lord will see us through!

85. "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He may be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. What shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is He who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us."

-Romans 8:28-34

These verses speak for themselves, and are some of the most powerful in the Bible. Many who believe you can lose your salvation openly say they reject predestination and election. But for people who love the Bible, this is simply not an option! Jesus uses the word elect! Paul uses the word elect! And they do it so that you will know that you will know that ultimately your salvation is a God thing! But notice what true believers have been predestined for – to be like Jesus! If a person has truly become a Christian than over time they will grow more and more like Jesus! Notice too that those who are true believers are not only justified but they are glorified! They will go to Heaven when they die, and in many ways Heaven is already inside of them! God is now for them, and they will freely receive all things they need to grow into

Christian maturity. These verses say very well the kind of security we are talking about believers having when we say they have eternal security!

86. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, ‘For your sake we are killed all day long: We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” -Romans 8:35-39

Paul was persuaded that nothing could separate him from God’s love after his conversion experience. I am too! How about you?

87. “What shall we say, then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.” So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, ‘For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show my power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.’ Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. You will say to me, then, ‘Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?’ But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, ‘why have you made me like this?’ Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As He says in Hosea, ‘I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved, who was not beloved.’ And it shall come to pass in the place where it had been said to them, ‘you are not My people,’ there they shall be called sons of the living God. -Romans 9:14-26

There is a lot of overwhelming truth here. What we see here is that God is in absolute control and can do whatever He wants. As it relates to all the questions that come into our mind when verses like this appear in the Bible, Paul basically says, “Don’t go there!” Lots of Bible verses indicate the sinner must turn to Christ or they will remain on the way to Hell. Many verses like

these ones indicate that somehow God is powerfully behind every true conversion. As it relates to Pharaoh, we read both that Pharaoh of his own free will hardened his own heart, and that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, completely consistent with what Pharaoh wanted. Many things in the Bible that appear to be contradictions to us are merely paradoxes that we won't understand until we get to Heaven. On the human level I understand that when I receive Christ, I become a child of God (John 1:12). On the divine level I read that behind the decision I made was the initiative of God (John 1:13). The Scripture never fully explains how all this works to us, but encourages us to appreciate the mystery that if God has truly saved us, we are saved forever! I like how the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 talks about these things:

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

88. ...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, "whoever believes on Him is not put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." How then shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" So then, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. -Romans 10:9-17

In the last section we saw the Book of Romans give us some verses in chapters 8-9 about God's sovereignty in salvation. Lest the pendulum swing too far away from the individual's responsibility, these verses make clear that we must call upon the name of the Lord to be saved! When the sinner obeys God by believing and confessing Christ, they are saved, and they will not be put to shame! Then they too can start preaching to others the gospel of peace!

89. “He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.”

-Revelation 3:5

The Book of Life has been the recipient of much speculation. It is specifically mentioned 7 times in scripture. One of those places is Revelation 20:15, which says that “anyone not found in the Book of Life was cast into the Lake of Fire. Some have used this text to say, “See, your name can be blotted out of the Book of Life after it is in there.” The problem is that is not what the text explicitly says here or elsewhere. But you can also turn it around – it can also be viewed as a reference to Eternal Security. I can read it as, “see, the truly saved are guaranteed that they are in the Book of Life – here God guarantees they are in it!” In Philippians 4:3 Paul speaks of two church women who are having a big argument as “in the Book of Life.” They were in the Book of Life not because they were “overcoming” at the time but because God had saved them! The other references in Revelation refer to it matter of factly – the lost don’t have their names in there (Rev. 13:18; Rev. 17:18; Rev. 20:12,15; Rev. 21:17). In Exodus 32:32-33 Moses is pleading with God to forgive the Israelites for their sin of idolatry, and even offers to have his name out of the book that God is keeping. The Lord refused to hear Moses on the request that he be removed, but answers, “Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of my book.” Again you have a difficult interpretation. Some could say, “See, you can be in the book and get blotted out.” I don’t think the text says that! In fact, knowing we’ve all sinned against God, that would mean we all deserve to be blotted out! You could also say this is an eternal security text because Moses was sure his name was in the Book! And God wouldn’t let him out of it! The bottom line is, whatever else you can do with the Book of Life verses, you can’t make them say a person can lose their salvation before God.

90. ...and war broke out in Heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in Heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, the serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard a loud voice saying in Heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the Kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.”

-Revelation 12:7-11

Look at that name for Satan – “the accuser of the brethren.” Satan does everything he can do in the courts of Heaven to try and slander those who were once his. But as we look into the future we see that true believers overcome him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their

testimony. All true believers will overcome, they will persevere! But don't forget what we learned about Lot! What helps believers overcome is saving grace and keeping grace, and the aid of the Lord in difficult situations. True believers will all point to the blood of the Lamb as the key to their overcoming, making them "more than conquerors" through Christ! Their testimony is not what they have done for Christ as much as it is resting in what He has done for them! Their testimonies will be full of examples of how Christ has brought them through many dangers, toils, and snares, and how Christ will lead them home!

91. "Nevertheless, I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place – unless you repent. But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." -Revelation 2:4-7

This is one of the focal passages used by those who say you can lose your salvation. But this is one of seven letters written to seven churches, and what is clearly in view here is the actions entire churches have taken. Back in Revelation 1:20 we see churches referred to as lampstands. Even though Jesus is speaking to a church full of people he uses the singular here, referring to the church in Ephesus. The world is littered with churches that used to be something they no longer are. No local church is promised continual existence where they are. Here is a prophecy for the church that if they don't return to first love commitments as a church body, their lampstand will be snuffed out. And this has happened to numerous "used-to-be churches" in church history. We can of course use these verses for personal devotional benefit as members of local churches, but to make them a text for losing personal salvation completely misses the context they were given in. After the word to the church as a whole, the appeal is again made to the individual believer to hear the warning and overcome, gaining the tree of life! Do not make the mistake of thinking of overcoming is a work we do in our strength! Remember that John also wrote in I John 5:4-5, "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that overcomes the world – our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"

92. Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. This is a faithful saying: "For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful: He cannot deny Himself."

-2 Timothy 2:10-13

This is another text that some use to say a true believer can deny their salvation and thus lose it. Others try to say that the true believers denial will cause them to lose some of their rewards. I think that's a stretch. I think the one who denies Him is the one who, having been among Christians for some time and even been thought of as a believer, openly rejects Christ when for whatever reason it is no longer to their advantage to identify with Christ. I think this happened with Judas, who after walking with Christ and His disciples for three years, went away from both Christ and the believers. I think this happened to Demas, who was with Paul for some time and then left him, because he "loved this present world," as indicated in 2 Timothy 4:10. This is in contrast to true believers who struggle, fall into sin, make temporary denials of Christ when the pressure is on, but return to both Christ and His church. That includes people like Peter and Mark. In the moment, other believers might have thought of Peter and Mark as they did of Judas and Demas. We should never be over zealous to say someone who has identified with Christ is not really a believer. As we recall Jesus' parable of the wheat and the tares from Matthew 13, we realize that God will take care of all the judging. If a true believers sin and temporary backsliding doesn't result in their death (See I Corinthians 11:27-32), we can expect to see them return both to the Lord and to a church in due time. What grace filled words are at the end of this faithful saying, "If we are faithless, He remains faithful: He cannot deny Himself." We come back again to the mysterious concept of God's saving and keeping power toward those who believe, whom this and other passages call "the elect." If you have been faithless, confess that as sin, and do what Peter and Mark did – return to Jesus, and return to His church!

93. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is past; and they overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless, the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

-2 Timothy 2:15-19

One of the unfortunate realities for Christians is that imposters do arise among churches who teach false doctrine. The Old Testament often warned of false prophets who said what men wanted to hear rather than what the Word of God truly teaches. The New Testament does the

same, warning of false teachers and false preachers who teach unbiblical concepts and overthrow the “faith” of lost church members and attenders who have not become diligent Bible students. Here the apostle Paul challenges true believers to be diligent in studying their Bible and applying its teachings in their lives! AWANA is a wonderful scripture memory program. AWANA is taken from 2 Timothy 2:15 – Approved Workman Are Not Ashamed! For our purposes we want to highlight that last thought about how the solid foundation of God stands – the Lord knows those who are His, and let everyone who calls on the name of Christ depart from iniquity. Here we have both a strong eternal security verse AND a call for those who are trusting Christ to prioritize departing from sin. The two concepts go together! Anyone using the biblical truth about eternal security to justify sin should not be confident of their sin - they should be departing from their sin! The person who is truly saved does not say, “I am saved so I can do whatever I want,” they say, “I am saved so now I will seek to do whatever God wants!” They don’t say, “I’m saved so nothing I do matters,” they say, “I am saved so everything I do matters!”

94. “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in Heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’” -Jesus in Matthew 7:21-23

Here Jesus says that true believers will be characterized by doing the will of the Heavenly Father, the will revealed in the pages of the Bible. To do God’s will is to do what God wants, and Scripture is filled with commands for believers to fulfill as part of their joyful response to God’s grace. Note here the ones not getting into Heaven are not ones said to have lost their salvation or even rejected it. They even have done wonderful things, supposedly in the name of Jesus. But they thought they could sin all they wanted to (practice lawlessness) and then do some Christian-like things, and they would get into Heaven. The kind of things they brag to Jesus about doing currently fill stadiums and raise huge offerings when the plates are passed. Men in thousand dollar suits act like they have a special hotline to God! In the past some men like this have been exposed as involved in all sorts of wickedness behind the scenes. Their problem is that many people like this accept Jesus on their terms but not on His! The result is that they seem to the naïve to talk the talk and walk the walk, but they will be exposed as frauds on judgment day. They never truly repented and turned to God. They remind me of the Pharisee in Luke 18:9 that had confidence in himself and tried to impress God with his own righteousness rather than saying “God have mercy on me, a sinner!” Jesus’ words here are so important! Let no one think that after “accepting Jesus” they can go out and do whatever they want, give their leftovers to God, and go to Heaven. Many who believe you can’t be sure of your salvation think

this way because they are disgusted at people who claim to know God and yet their lifestyle mocks God, the gospel, and the church. I have sympathies with them because I hate it when I see people take God's truth for granted. But just as we are not to preach what we think people want to hear, we are not to hold back on preaching exactly what's in the Bible, and the Bible sounds forth the message of grace over and over again. God makes clear that this side of the cross He wants us to serve Him out of gratitude and joy, not out of fear or worry. Some will take advantage of this teaching, but we must teach what the Bible teaches. God will take care of the phonies on judgment day. Again, this passage can't be used to say a person can ever be truly saved and lose their salvation, because Jesus states forthrightly this kind of person was NEVER KNOWN BY HIM in the first place!

95. "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You a drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to you?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to Me.'" -Jesus in Matthew 25:37-40

Here we see Jesus referring to a future day of judgment where He will separate those He calls sheep and the goats. In John 10 and other places sheep is a metaphor for those who are true followers of Jesus Christ. Here Jesus says that doing good deeds for others is characteristic of His sheep, good deeds done for Jews ('my brothers') and fellow believers and extending to others as able (Galatians 6:10). They were always seeing needs and meeting needs! In contrast, the goats will be the ones who saw needs but refused to get involved. They lived selfish lives that didn't have room to help others. Friend, if you are truly born again, you will be a "first responder" to needs, ministering to others as if you were ministering to Jesus Himself. This theme is repeated throughout the New Testament, like Titus 3:14, which says, "And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful."

96. And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in Heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

-Matthew 28:18-20

In this great passage, referred to by Christians as the Great Commission, we find that true believers should have the task of world evangelism and disciple making ever before them. Some have said that if you teach the kind of things we have shared directly about God's grace in salvation, your hearers will be reluctant to embrace the missionary spirit. But all one needs to do is look at the pages of history to see that many of the most evangelistic pastors, evangelists, and missionaries emphasized the same scriptural themes. Why? Because they chose to believe everything the Scriptures teach, not isolating verses or pitting texts against each other. Jesus said be witnesses, so they were witnesses! They read that if they preached, the Word would not return void, so they preached! They read that the Holy Spirit would draw folks unto salvation, so they relied on Him! They refused to use gimmicks to elicit emotional responses, and they saw lasting results from their labors. God said all the glory was to go to Him, and so all the glory went to Him! They read that if people were truly born again, God had done it, and those converts would bear fruit over time. Jesus said He was with them forever, so they felt eternally secure in His love and salvation, serving the Lord with glad and grateful hearts!

97. "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, why it is called, 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast until the end, while it is said, "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.' For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who had sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word was not mixed with faith in those who heard it. -Hebrews 3:12-4:2

At first it looks from this text like a person can lose their salvation. But the final verse makes clear that those lost in Israel had never had saving faith in the first place. Jesus Himself indicates that unbelief is the chief sin in John 16:9. Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than going to McDonalds makes you a hamburger. The rebellious Israelites had seen

exciting, miraculous things happen, but never gave their hearts to God in faith. Your church might have exciting things going on, but unless you are born again you will not see the Kingdom of God. But even amidst this sobering warning to pretenders, there is the knowledge that true believers have become partakers of Christ which will be evidenced by them holding the beginning of their confidence steadfast until the end. Passages like this one are the reason I don't prefer the wording eternal security. It has often been misunderstood and some immature believers think of it in a more passive sense, saying, "I'm saved so it doesn't matter what I do." I prefer the Reformation phrase "Perseverance of the saints." It breeds a more active sense. It's not, "I'm saved so it doesn't matter what I do," but "I'm saved so everything I do matters!" Everything is now for the God who loved me so much that in His grace He made me alive with Christ when I was dead in my trespasses and sins. Philippians 1:6 reflects this when it says, "HE who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." The author of Hebrews knew that this confidence breeds the healthy kind of fear that keeps our eyes fixed upon the Author and Finisher of our faith, the Lord Jesus (Hebrews 12:2).

98. "Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection from the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame. For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by which it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; but the if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end it is to be burned. But beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that each of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." -Hebrews 6:1-12

At first look at the beginning verses of chapter 6, the author of Hebrews seems to be saying here that a person can lose their salvation. That's why the law of context is so important when reading the Bible. Some speak of the twenty-twenty rule – make sure you understand what the twenty verses before a verse say, and the twenty verses after. Chapter 6 starts with the call for the reader to go deeper in their faith. He wants them to go beyond the elementary things they had experienced to Christian maturity. Amen! That reminds us of Philippians 1:6. Then in verse

3 he says this growth will happen if God permits it! He says this even stronger in Hebrews 12:2, where he says that Jesus is the Author and the Finisher of true faith! God started it! He'll finish it! Let's skip over verses 4-8 for a moment. In verse 9 he says, "But beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, things that accompany salvation, though we speak to you in this manner." Obviously, then, he is stating that whatever is happening in verses 4-8 had to do with those who possessed something other than true salvation. He underscores this by saying, "though we speak to you in this manner." In verses 4-8 he had gone right up to the line in describing a person that looked saved but "fell away." But in verses 9-12 he makes clear he is exhorting them to persevere in their God-given faith and be like those who have gone before and through faith and patience inherited the promises. Which brings us back to verses 4-6. The surrounding context makes it look like he is talking about those who have been around the faith but are not yet believers. We are told that they were enlightened. But John 1:9 says that all men have been since Jesus came into the world. We are told that they tasted the heavenly gift. But John 6:54-58 speaks of going beyond tasting to actually eating. Partakers of the Holy Spirit is a strong phrase that leaves room open for discussion. It is placed between tasting the heavenly gift, and tasting the good word and powers to come. The word repented is also strong, but does not here conclusively indicate conversion. When seen in the context of verse 9, he is clearly saying that they have identified themselves with the cause, but the language leaves room to the extent of their commitment. I conclude that in the context he is referring to those who knew everything they needed to know to be saved and had spent considerable time in the presence of believers. They were probably thought of as believers by others around them. Like Judas and Demas, they were numbered among the disciples. But they had never experienced the "better things" of verse 9, the things that accompany salvation. The band U2 had a song that said, "I still haven't found what I'm looking for." In the song, Bono sings about how he has experienced Jesus. He has even spoken in tongues. Then in a haunting voice he sings, "but I still haven't found what I'm looking for." Such people, as indicated here, go on to live the rest of their life saying, "I tried that Jesus stuff and it hasn't really worked for me." Of course some will still insist that this passage says a person can lose their salvation. But if it does, it must be clearly understood from verse 6 that if the person did have salvation and lose it, they will never get it back. The text says it is impossible to renew them again to salvation. I know many people that grew up in churches that teach you can lose your salvation, and none of them took it that way. They were often encouraged to get "re-saved" after being in sin. To me the simpler explanation is that to encourage Christians to grow in their faith and persevere he speaks hypothetically to them in verses 4-6 of those whose walking away shows they had never totally committed to Christ. Those who persevere will experience the "better things" verse 9 speaks of, the things that accompany salvation!

99. Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, “This is a hard saying, who can understand it?” When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, “Does this offend you? What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? It is the Spirit who gives life, the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. And He said, “Therefore, I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.” From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also want to go away?” But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” -John 6:60-69

This is the passage God used with me to give me the full assurance of my salvation. In verses 54-58 Jesus had really pressed His Lordship to all of His “disciples,” or learners. Four times in those verses He says things about “eating His flesh.” Apparently, many of the “disciples” had “tasted” but not eaten. They had seen the Spirit fall on Jesus. Some had been baptized into John the Baptist’s baptism of repentance. They had heard Jesus preach the Sermon on the Mount. But when Jesus talks of Lordship, of eating Him, many of the ones who had before identified themselves as His disciples split. In verse 64 Jesus makes clear that these “disciples” had never really believed. But when they go, He turns to the twelve and asks a question that has also pierced my own heart. He says, “Do you also want to go away?” Simon Peter (good old Simon Peter!) answered for 11 of these guys when he said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” Basically Peter says, “Lord, I’ve got nowhere else to go – you ARE my life now!” There came a time in my life, when in seeking the kind of assurance that John said is possible in I John 5:13, I came to this passage and God gave me assurance of my salvation. You see, I can agree with Peter, and say “I have nowhere else to go! Jesus has become my life, my all! I believe He is the Son of God, God the Son. I have yielded my life to Him who love me enough to die on the cross for my sins. I will follow Him the rest of my days, and I know for certain that I’m going to Heaven when I die! What about you? Can you take or leave Jesus? If Jesus doesn’t matter that much to you, then you can’t be assured of your salvation. But if you can resonate with Peter and Paul and John and I, and confess that Jesus has become your life through the new birth, then you too can, and you should, be assured of your own eternal security based on God’s promises!