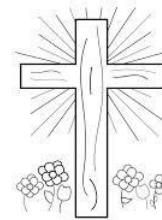


*The Faithfulness
of Man
and Salvation*



God is faithful



The Perseverance of the Saints

“And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.” 1John 5:11-12

In the Preface to his book *Life In the Son* (Westcott Publishers, 1960, 1961) Robert Lee Shank wrote:

IN THE DAYS of the Apostles, explicit answers to essential questions of doctrine were available from men to whom our Lord had personally committed "the faith once delivered unto the saints." Exact definition of doctrine is today a more difficult problem. Definitions lie within the Scriptures; but what saith the Scripture? In some important areas of doctrine, sincere men dis-

agree. We cannot appeal to "them that heard Him" for definitions beyond what the Scriptures now afford. Earnest inquiry into the meaning of the Scriptures is therefore imperative.

Few doctrines have been as much the occasion of controversy among evangelical Christians as the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. This book treats of that doctrine, and is therefore controversial. But controversy is not evil; it is the servant of truth. Only prejudice is evil and the enemy of understanding.

Many volumes have been written on the question of the security of believers. But perhaps there is yet room for others. This volume is sent forth in the

for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation:

35. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

36. At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counselors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me.

37. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

These verses ring clear to me in so many ways. Jonah thought his way was the best, until he found himself in a whale's belly for 3

days! We may not realize right away the repercussions of our sin. Sometimes a year may pass, or even longer, and then something happens to make us remember what we did or what we said. We may spend time wallowing in the weeds like Nebuchadnezzar or in the belly of a whale like Jonah; but, in the end, we realize who is the boss. It isn't the president, or a king, or a queen, or a judge, or the head person of a political party. Nebuchadnezzar states who we all should know is the boss, The King of heaven!

...Bruce Langham
Fort Smith, AR

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and you could have heard a pin drop. The spirit of God was heavy in that congregation that night and the message he gave on faith was something I remember to this day. No baptisms that night; but, practically everyone there rededicated their lives to God.

I was recently given an assignment to prepare and read a passage of scripture of my own choosing; many verses came to my mind, but I decided to go with a passage from the book of Daniel.

Here is the scoop: King Nebuchadnezzar keeps having these dreams and Daniel keeps telling him what these dreams mean. The last dream he has is interesting because a year transpires before the dream actually comes true, long enough for the King, or anyone else for that matter, to forget what he was told. Daniel 4:30-37 gives us an account of a humbling experience for the mighty King Nebuchadnezzar:

30. The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour

of my majesty?

31. While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee.

32. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

33. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.

34. And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth

conviction that it is the fulfillment, however imperfectly, of a task assigned an unworthy servant by the Spirit of grace and truth. It is in a sense the testimony of one whose study of the Scriptures led him to abandon a definition of doctrine he once cherished, and who sincerely hopes that his endeavor will encourage others to re-examine a doctrine of critical practical importance.

Shank states that controversy is not evil but it is the servant of the truth. Controversy is something that we avoid like the plague in this day and age. Fifty years ago honorable men who held different ideas on subjects like baptism for the remission of sins, dividing a congregation into classes, the role of women in the church and various other topics would publically debate the issues. Often they were accused of undermining the character of their opponent when their arguments on the subjects were weak, and this may have been true in some cases, but not all cases. And it is very possible that private discussions of our differences may many times be more profitable than a public debate. However, it may often be the case today that people

have no convictions on certain subjects because they no longer understand what the Bible teaches.

Today in the public arena an even more serious condition exists. Not only do many people not know what the Bible teaches but they do not care. The Bible is not held in the same esteem that it once was held. I believe one reason that even many religious bodies no longer affirm the plenary inspiration of the Scripture is the fact that they do

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not like what the Bible teaches on certain subjects. There is an old joke about a man who had a Bible with various sections missing because the sections had been cut out. When asked why the Bible was missing these sections the owner of the Bible answered that he didn't agree with what those sections taught. Some religious groups in recent years did not resort to cutting sections out of the Bible, they just ruled that the Bible is not inspired and therefore has no bearing on anything that they want to do. So today we see women being ordained to preach and to do other things in the assembly that are contrary to some

plain teaching found in the Bible.

One very popular doctrine has to do with the perseverance of the Saints. It is the idea that a man cannot fall from grace. It is often referred to as the doctrine of once saved always saved. In a recent gospel meeting I heard Brother Mark Parkhurst deliver a very well reasoned and tem-

pered sermon on this subject. I asked him if he would submit a manuscript of his sermon to me for publication and he agreed to do so. I pray that Brother Parkhurst's article will stimulate many to examine the Scripture and that they will be more firmly grounded in the faith that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

...lsg

The Faithfulness of Man and Salvation

Everyone wants security. We want Social Security, home security, security dogs, security doors, job security, and even Internet security. This list is only limited by your imagination. The yearning for spiritual security is no less desired. We want a sense of eternal safety for our loved ones who have died. Nothing could be more disconcerting than standing beside the grave of our loved one without a sense of security. Surely while we live we want an awareness of security for our eternal destiny. In this article we will attempt to examine a portion of God's word regarding our role in attaining spiritual security.

The possibility of whether or not one may experience spiritual security should not be in question. I assert to you that you can have spiritual security and

live a life of victory with a great expectation of reward. We should not question the faithfulness of God nor the promised reward to His children. *"If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself."* -- 2Timothy 2:13. Our belief does not determine the character of God. Though we may hold deep convictions, if these convictions are untrue, God remains faithful and true. You and I need never to question His faithfulness. He is faithful to who He is. Jesus said, *"I am way, the truth and the life"*. --John 14:6

In search of eternal security there developed a teaching that became a foundation for a doctrinal position of many sects. Theologian John Calvin (1509-1564) became Luther's successor in the reformation movement. Calvin's theology has

Now is the time to correct our course and walk in the light of Christ.



I saw a picture once of a plains farmer from the depression era. He walked weathered and tired tethered behind a gaunt mule. The farmer held firm to a plow. The picture showed a man who seemed to be working in a hopeless task. The field looked so

big, so vast, so impossible, so daunting. At times I have felt like that man while I attempted to plow in the spiritual field of God. Maybe you have too. My dear brother and sister there is an end to the labor. There is a sunset coming where rest can be enjoyed. Let us hold to the plow and not look back. Let it be said of us that we did not quit. Paul said of himself, *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course"*. --II Tim. 4:7. Let us also finish our course. Rest is near.

...Mark Parkhurst

McMinnville, TN

Who's the Boss?

There are portions of the Bible each of us enjoy more than others, perhaps because of our upbringing, our history or our personality. Growing up I loved the story of Jonah. After looking at this story as a kid and now as an adult, I feel like we all have a little Jonah in us. We all are willing to do what we are asked to do; but, sometimes we have to be shown who is the boss.

We would all like to know how we can better serve the Lord, and maybe one way we can do

so is by learning how to better present his word. One of the people I thought was great at this task was NE Rhodes Jr. His sermons always focused on what we needed to do better and his presentations were almost always spot on. When NE was on a roll, it seemed God would even quiet screaming kids because they knew something important was being said or maybe it was how it was said. One sermon I remember hearing was delivered in Greenwood, AR

This is a time when we learn to obey God, to trust Him and walk as He directs. Eventually, as the later generations of Israel entered into the Promised Land, you and I will receive glorification in Heaven if we remain faithful. It is here the salvation process will be brought to its perfection.

There is a warning to be heeded; the danger is real. We have not yet attained. Peter puts it this way: *2 Peter 2:20-22* “*For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. 21 For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. 22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.*”

There is no safer place than in the will of God. If you are in Christ you may take full assurance for the believer is secure in Jesus. We may take heart because God is faithful in all things and He has promised re-

ward for those who remain faithful.

We must continue for we have not yet attained. *1 Corinthians 9:27* “*But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*”

The Apostle Paul recognized the possibility of becoming a castaway. You and I should also. The plea is an appeal for faithfulness, a cry for steadfastness. Perhaps you are persistent in a sin. This sin has taken up residence inside your soul. If this terrible denizen continues, it will cost you your soul. Perhaps you walk a road that is contrary to righteousness expecting to see a signpost declaring, “beyond this point you will be lost”. That sign does not exist. Those who walk such a road wander until they no longer know where they are and barely understand how they got where they are. Their life becomes a series of misfortunes and they wonder how it came to be.

John said, “*But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*”—*1 John 1:7.*

Now is the time for us to be truthful as to what road we walk.

become identifiable by an acronym—T-U-L-I-P. The “P” in this acronym stands for “perseverance of the saints”. Calvin purported that once a person is saved they can never be lost. We hear this stated today in “once saved, always saved”. Modern day writers describe this belief:

"All the prayers a man may pray, all the Bibles he may read, all the churches he may belong to, all the services he may attend, all the sermons he may practice, all the debts he may pay, all the ordinances he may observe, all the laws he may keep, all the benevolent acts he may perform will not make his soul one whit safer; and all the sins he may commit, from idolatry to murder, will not make his soul in any more danger...The way a man lives has nothing whatever to do with the salvation of his soul." (Do a Christian's Sins Damn His Soul? — Sam Morris)

It is further stated: “*True believers do fall into temptations, and they do commit grievous sins, but these sins do not cause them to lose their salvation or separate them from Christ.*” (*The Five Points of Calvinism, Defined, Defended, Documented*, p. 56)

It may seem reasonable to con-

clude that since a man cannot earn salvation and obligate God to save him, then once he is saved he could not commit any action that would cause God to remove His salvation. I would ask you to consider that there is no safer place than in the will of God. The question then is: May one sin in such a way that it will cause them to lose their salvation?

The question then is: May one sin in such a way that it will cause them to lose their salvation?

Men who lived in a time closer to the apostolic age believed one must continue in the will of God in order to be saved.

“Certain ones of those [heretics] who hold different opinions misuse these passages. They essentially destroy free will by introducing ruined natures incapable of salvation and by introducing others as being saved in such a way that they cannot be lost.” ~ Origen (c. 225)

Tertullian (140-230) wrote: “Some people act as though God were under an obligation to bestow even on the unworthy His intended gift. They turn His liberality into slavery.... For do not many afterwards fall out of grace? Is not this gift taken away

from many?" (Tertullian On Repentance chap. 6.)

What did our Master have to say on this question? The writer of Hebrews 3:1 asks us to consider the faithfulness of Jesus. Since Jesus is King and Judge, ultimately what he teaches is all that matters. *"And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."*—Luke 9:62

Isn't Jesus teaching us that since we have gone to work in the vineyard of God that we cannot look back to our former life? And if we do aren't we *unworthy* of the kingdom of God?

Isn't Jesus teaching us that since we have gone to work in the vineyard of God that we cannot look back to our former life?

Consider also the parables of judgment from Jesus. The parable of the ten virgins (Mt.25) display ten lovely girls that have everything in common except the oil of preparation that was lacking in five of the virgins' lamps. The five with no oil simply were not ready to meet the bridegroom. The parable of the talents, in the same chapter, also teaches about three men who received "talents" from their

master. But one buried and hid his talent. He did not put it to work. He had become unfaithful. On the day of reckoning this one talent man stood condemned (ref. vs. 30). The parable of the sower (Mark 4) teaches us that some seeds fall and begin to take root but the "cares of this world" choke them out. Isn't Jesus giving us a warning of the necessity of growth and a caution of the things that may steal our eternal security?

Perhaps aside from the direct teaching of Jesus, there is no clearer exhortation for the faithfulness of man than in Hebrews 3 and 4. The Holy Spirit gives us a clear contrast of the faithfulness of Jesus and the unfaithfulness of the children of Israel who were delivered from the Egyptian bondage. He asserts that Jesus was faithful in all His house and is counted more worthy than Moses for He built the house. We are also told we are this house Jesus has built. The Apostle Peter names us "lively stones" in the house of God. —I Peter 2:5. The Holy Spirit reveals that this privilege of being the house of God is contingent upon "*holding fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end*". —Heb. 3:6

Heb. 3:8 encourage us to not take the same path the children

of Israel walked in their release from Egyptian bondage. How terrible to have been redeemed and then harden our heart and provoke God. The Israelites become a clear example of those who have been justified from their sins and are no longer held captive. They also become a vivid example of those who turn their hearts from God and wander in the wilderness never to receive the reward. Remember that Joshua and Caleb were the only ones to receive the promised land of the original group that left Egypt. *"So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."*—Heb. 3:11-12

Hebrews 4:1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

We are instructed to labor. Much like the man who grabs hold of the plow, you and I must strive and exert an effort to enter into rest. *"Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."*—Hebrews 4:11

What do we learn from the Hebrew warning?

We learn from the Hebrew

warning that Jesus is the example of faithfulness. I am thankful that He remained faithful to His work...even to the cross. I am thankful He chose not to quit even when the suffering became unspeakable. We also learn that we are the house of God, *"if we hold fast"*. We learn that Israel, who was freed from Egyptian bondage, is the example of the unfaithful. Even though they are in a covenant agreement with God, all but two failed to realize the reward of the Promised Land. This is true not because of an unloving God, but rather a gainsaying and provoking people. We learn we are to "fear"

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lest we fall after the same example of unbelief. We learn there is a land of rest for those who remain faithful.

I might add this resemblance to Israel is incredible when we understand the process of salvation. Israel was saved from Egyptian bondage. We have been justified from our past sins. Israel walked through the Red Sea and began a journey toward the Promised Land. We too are in a period of sanctification.