



THINK

ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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There's No Security for the Believer of 'Once Saved, Always Saved'

By AL DIESTELKAMP

There is a belief in many Protestant churches, and especially popular among those who would describe themselves as “evangelicals,” known as the doctrine of “The Security of the Believer.” In Calvinism’s TULIP acronym, it is represented by the “P” for “Perseverance of the Saints.” Other terms used to promote this doctrine include “Eternal Security,” and “Impossibility of Apostasy.” Their claim is that one cannot fall from God’s grace, and thus it is commonly known as the doctrine of “once saved, always saved.”

Advocates of this doctrine have a great deal of difficulty dealing with the numerous scriptures that contradict, but somehow manage to put their own “spin” on them to mean other than what they say or imply.

Besides having to deal with the scriptural arguments, they also have to come to grips with the fact that some of their “believers” have left the faith, or have again become “entangled” and “overcome” in the “pollutions of the world.” Peter said it “would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them” (see 2 Pet. 2:18-22).

This fact poses a dilemma for the believer in “once saved, always saved.” They cannot deny that some who had been among them (even in leadership roles) are like that dog that “returns to his own vomit,” but they refuse to say that he has fallen from grace.

You see, the false doctrine of “once saved, always saved” is built on a false concept of the sovereignty of God. Their view of God’s sovereignty is that every thing that happens in this world is by God’s decision, and therefore, man cannot choose to do anything. Therefore, if one is saved, he has no part in that decision. They then conclude that if God

chooses to save a person, it would be impossible for him to be lost.

Well, how do these people explain their way out of this dilemma? A hardcore Calvinist might say that despite apparent apostasy, or moral degradation, God will save them anyway. Most, however inevitably grab hold of the only other possible explanation, and claim that such persons were never *really* saved in the first place. In offering that explanation they are forced to admit that they cannot know whether a person is really saved until after they have died. Then the advocate of “once saved, always saved,” not having completed his life on earth, is left to wonder whether his own salvation is *real*. Thus, for them, their version of “the security of the believer” is *really* a doctrine of “the insecurity of the believer.”

It is hard to read very much in the New Testament without being faced with statements that clearly contradict the “once saved, always saved” doctrine. In fact, I maintain that every inspired New Testament writer included one or more statement or warning about followers of Jesus jeopardizing their salvation. Let me prove it:

Matthew, Mark and Luke record the parable of the soils in which Jesus refers to some who receive the word, but “fall away” at the onset of tribulation or persecution (Lk. 8:13). After believing, Simon, a former sorcerer, found himself in danger of perishing unless he repented of trying to purchase the gift of God (Ac. 8:9-25). The apostle Paul wrote about two brothers he “delivered to Satan” after their faith had “suffered shipwreck” (1 Tim. 1:19-20). The Hebrew writer wrote of the possibility of some falling away though they had “tasted the heavenly gift,” and had “become partakers of the Holy Spirit” (Heb. 6:4-6). James urged that if one “wanders from the

truth,” that if he is turned back to the truth his soul will be saved from death (Jas. 5:19-20). Peter warned the elect to be vigilant because the devil “walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). Jude felt it was necessary to write about an apostasy that was underway. Jesus commissioned the apostle John to warn the Christians in Pergamos to repent, or else He would “fight against them” (Rev. 2:16).

No doubt, there are a few passages in the New Testament which, if isolated from all other scriptures might lead one to believe that a child of God cannot fall from grace (i.e., Jn. 6:37-40). But we can’t be guilty of pitting one set of scriptures against another. If there appears to be a conflict between two statements in the scriptures, we must realize that it is our understanding that is the problem. An important rule for us in understanding scripture is to examine all the passages on the subject and then interpret them in a way that they agree. When there are two possible meanings we must choose the meaning which coincides with the other scriptures. The obvious must explain the vague.

While rejecting the false conclusions, we must take care to acknowledge that God *is* sovereign—that is, He is the Supreme Authority. In His sovereignty He chose to give men free will to choose some things in life, including whether to believe, obey and remain faithful to His word.

We also must agree that there is security for the believer. God keeps His promises to man. The apostle Paul asked the rhetorical question, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31). He goes on to say that believers are “more than conquerors,” promising that no outside force would be able to “separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:35-39). That’s *real* security!

Pressing On

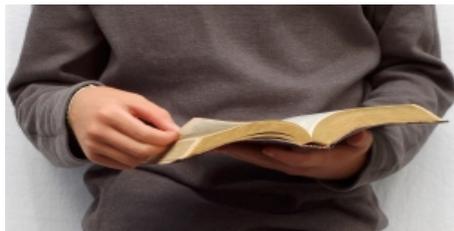
By NATHAN COMBS

It is easily discernible that living things naturally mature into fully-developed organisms. Our physical bodies, assuming we live long enough, inevitably grow from miniscule fertilized eggs into functional adults. Likewise, under normal conditions, all kinds of animals, insects, and vegetation automatically grow up. From the mustard seed to the aardvark, countless living things are purposefully designed by God to naturally reach maturity.

In contrast to physical life, spiritual maturity is by no means a foregone conclusion! Many Christians, however, mistakenly assume that maturity in years equates to maturity in spiritual things. In reality, the scriptures point out that developing spiritually is a conscious choice that one makes, not the inescapable result of living in the world for a number of years.

Consider Elihu's words when he shrewdly remarked, "it is the spirit in man, the breath of the Almighty, that makes him understand. It is not the old who are wise, nor the aged who understand what is right" (Job 32:8-9, ESV). Although the three friends of Job were advanced in years and had plenty of advice for their comrade, they were certainly lacking in wisdom! In my own life, I have noted with surprise that some young men I know are far more spiritually mature than some of their older, more experienced brothers in Christ, despite a huge gap in years.

When considering what spiritual maturity is and how it may be obtained, Hebrews 5:11-14 offers great insight. According to the writer of the book, mature people are "those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil." In context, the writer abruptly halts in his discussion of the Melchizedek priesthood to bluntly rebuke the readers for being "dull of hearing" and still requiring "milk" instead of "solid food."



Apparently, the original recipients of Hebrews lacked many spiritual abilities, including the wherewithal to teach and discern between righteousness and vice. Interestingly, the textual solution for being dull of hearing, unable to handle meat, unfit for teaching, unlearned in the scriptures, and incapable of discernment is the same thing: "constant practice." Spiritual discernment can only come when we persistently polish ourselves and our character.

As well as not automatically accompanying age, spiritual maturity also does not necessarily come with trials and temptations. Although the attitude of "what doesn't kill me makes me stronger" is often haphazardly applied to spiritual trials, the scriptures teach that ordeals only produce strength if a person chooses to let them.

When James admonished his readers to have joy in their trials, he told them to "let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (Jas. 1:4). In other words, trials must be *allowed* to make us stronger, more mature people. Those who bemoan their situation and focus on how miserable they are during hard times are going to have great difficulty using their trials to become more mature. Although trials prime us for becoming more spiritually discerning, it is our own choice to gain wisdom from those experiences.

Let's consider the necessity of spiritual maturity in several different God-given roles. For a man, there are few jobs more important than being an elder in a local church. The oversight, wisdom, and maturity that they should exercise in guiding other Christians is such an invaluable asset to any congregation. What kind of man is prepared to handle such profound responsibility and leadership? What man is qualified? Is it the man who's merely kind, aged, and who's been a Christian for 40 or more years? God requires much more from a man who desires to lead His people!

When Paul wrote to Timothy and Titus to assist them in appointing elders in various congregations, he provided general guidelines which can essentially be summed up in two words: proven character. An elder must be a man who has actively demonstrated that he is spiritually mature by "constant practice"—by raising his children to seek the Lord, teaching others about Christ, and zealously practicing godliness his whole life. Considering the fact that many of the qualities Paul mentions are life-long goals that are not easily grasped (self-control, not quarrelsome, etc.), it would seem that a man

To Maturity

must prepare for the eldership early in life if he is to prove his character in such demonstrable ways. In an age where biblical authority and objective truth is increasingly rejected by the world, there has never been more need in the church for ardent, mature leaders to provide clear direction and guidance. The urgent call for Christian men to stand up and lead is strong and only continues to grow stronger.

Although they are not given specific roles of leadership within the church, women are also charged with great responsibility from God, requiring much spiritual maturity. The honored role of caretaker for her husband and family has been her position ever since Eve was given to Adam as a helper.

When Paul told Titus in Titus 2:3-5 how to teach people in different ages and genders of his congregation, it is instructive that he makes mention of the need for older women to train younger ones to properly carry out their roles as homemakers and husband-helpers. But how can an elderly woman instruct others if she has not dedicated her life to gaining spiritual maturity in sobriety, dignity, and the other areas Paul mentions? How can she give helpful guidance unless she has purposefully learned from her mistakes and triumphs in life, unless she has diligently examined the scriptures, unless she has constantly practiced the attributes described in those verses?

Like the office of an elder, this important role also requires early dedication. If a woman decided to spend her lifetime throwing herself wholeheartedly into her role by developing her character, helping her husband, and molding her children, she could potentially influence generations of aspiring wives and mothers with her carefully-cultivated wisdom and rich life experience. Once again, we see the vital necessity of obtaining spiritual maturity.

Even though many physical things naturally grow up to a level of maturity without much effort, spiritual growth is certainly not inescapable. In order to lead others, teach others, and assist others in wisdom, we must consciously (and constantly) practice godliness. Wisdom is not a natural attribute of older people like wrinkles or poor eyesight; it is the result of choosing to live every day with a purpose.

Whatever our gender, age, or role in the Lord's kingdom, God has given us all great responsibility to use our opportunities and resources to grow as we should. Spiritual maturity may not be as easy as physical growth, but it is the most vital and essential development in our lives. Are you pressing on towards spiritual maturity?

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Subjection: Something We Give Voluntarily

By RICK LIGGIN

It is interesting to me to see the way the New American Standard Bible (NASB) translates 1 Corinthians 13:34. This, of course, is that text in which Paul instructs women to be silent in the worship assemblies. He says that “women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to *subject themselves*, just as the Law also says” (1 Cor. 14:34—NASB). I checked into it, and it seems that “subject themselves” is just as accurate a translation as may be found in any of the other popular versions...and I like it. I like it, because (in my mind) it really shows where the responsibility lies in this command.

Think about it for a minute. We husbands sometimes think that it is our responsibility to “keep our wives in subjection”—which often leads us to act like tyrannical dictators over our women. But this text shows (and the NASB really brings it out) that it is the responsibility of women to “subject themselves.” Subjection that is acceptable to God cannot be forced on a woman...or on anyone else for that matter. Subjection

that pleases God is something that a person voluntarily gives out of respect for Him.

Which brings us to other passages that demand subjection: if you men were starting to get comfortable with this article, thinking it was only aimed at our women, think again! The New Testament teaches us about subjection in a variety of areas: we are to “be in subjection to the governing authorities” (Rom. 13:1-7); children are to be subject to their parents (Eph. 6:1-3); church members must be submissive to their elders (Heb. 13:17); and all of us must “be subject to one another in the fear of Christ” (Eph. 5:21).

These texts make it clear that subjection is not something only women have to be concerned about. Subjection to others is something every Christian (men included) is obligated to offer. And that subjection—just like the subjection required of women—is something that we must do ourselves...we must *subject ourselves*. No one, other than me, can “keep me in subjection”! I must voluntarily submit myself to others out of respect for Christ. Any subjection I give to others (to my parents, my elders, my government, etc.) that is thrust upon me or forced on me—any submitting that I do that

is based solely on coercion or intimidation—is not going to be subjection that pleases my Lord. The only kind of subjection that pleases Christ is subjection that I voluntarily offer—I must submit myself...and so must you! Just like women in the church who must “subject themselves,” we too must *subject ourselves*.

Now, you may be wondering why we are emphasizing this point so strongly. Well, here’s why: we must stop trying to “lord it over” or “exercise authority over” one another! That is an unacceptable “Gentile” concept that *must not be so* “among” us (Mk. 10:43-45). Instead, we must learn to serve one another; we must learn to *subject ourselves* to one another out of a respect for Christ. Any Christian that has a problem submitting himself to whomever the Lord requires his submission, has a problem! And his problem is not with men, but with Christ. It’s not about others “bossing me around” or “keeping me in line.” It’s about me respecting Christ and respecting my brothers...and *subjecting myself*!

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'Male and Female He Created Them'

By ANDY DIESTELKAMP

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...Then God said...And it was so...And God saw that it was good.”

That pretty well summarizes the pattern of words for the six days of Creation. At the end of day six we’re told, “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good” (Gen. 1:31).

However, as we read the elaboration on the work of God on day six (in chapter two) there is a notable difference in the divine observation. Having created man and the garden in which he was placed, Jehovah God said, “It is not good that man should be alone...” (2:18). Of course, this is not indicative of any failure on God’s part to anticipate this. Rather, we are being given insight to the specific rationale for God’s creation.

God had already created life in the form of plants and animals with their various abilities to produce after their own kind (1:11,12,21,24,25). The parade of some of those animals before Adam was not a trial and error search on God’s part but an education for the man. “There was not found a helper comparable to him” (2:20). Despite

our animal loving tendencies, neither dog nor horse is man’s best friend.

While God had formed man and beast from the dust of the ground (2:19; 3:19), He created the ultimate companion for man *from* man (2:21-23). “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created



him; male and female He created them” (1:27). The woman was created by God to be a helper comparable to man (2:18). It is noteworthy that the Scriptures (which are so reviled by modern skeptics who decry its “sexism”) virtually begin by affirming that both man and woman were created in the image of God and are comparable to one another.

From a physiological perspective, it is clear that man and woman were created by God to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (1:28). However, the more detailed account of the creation of man reveals that the *primary* function of the marriage relationship was/is to provide an intimate “one flesh” companionship that is far more than a mere physical union (2:24). Jesus confirmed that this is true when He observed in commenting on this text, “So then, they are no longer two but one flesh” (Matt. 19:6). The physical oneness of the sexual relationship symbolizes a deeper emotional and spiritual companionship/partnership/fellowship that God intended to be ongoing and permanent in this life.

Recognizing God’s design and intent for marriage helps us to understand the sanctity of the sexual relationship and, hence, the numerous warnings and prohibitions relative to uncleanness, fornication, and adultery. To act on physical impulses outside the commitment of marriage is to behave as mere animals and profane what God has intended from the beginning for the intimate companionship of beings created in His image.

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METHODS OF GROWTH

By **LESLIE DIESTELKAMP** (1911-1995)

The denominational world uses many methods to bring about growth of a congregation. Here are some such worldly methods:

“Come as you are” method. This means that you won’t have to give up sin and sinfulness. You can continue in adultery, still drink and swear, and you can keep your own moral standards.

“Have fun” method. This includes involving the church in every conceivable program of recreation and social activities. Youth parties and games comprise a great deal of the total work of the congregation. Gymnasiums, social halls, kitchens and other such facilities are built. Banquet tables,

sports equipment and uniforms, etc., are major church expenditures.

“Believe as you please” method. This requires no conviction. It allows you to take your choice: Was Jesus God’s Son, or just an exceptionally good man? Is baptism immersion, or sprinkling? Is Jesus coming again, or not? Is there really a heaven and hell? Take your choice—believe as you please.

Naturally, by such a process many unlearned people (those who don’t know what the Bible actually teaches) and many unstable ones (those who don’t care what the Bible teaches) are led into such churches. Rapid growth is seen.

On the other hand, notice some scriptural

methods that are designed to make a congregation grow numerically:

“Practice what you preach” method. Preach the truth, the whole and unadulterated truth, and then live it out in the lives of the people who make up the congregation (see Rom. 2:21-24).

“Let your light shine” method. The power of influence from lives of devoted Christians will attract others. Doing good to all men (Gal. 6:10) and keeping oneself unspotted from the world (Jas. 1:27) makes a Christian useful and fruitful in bringing others to Christ.

“Be awake” method. Enthusiasm is contagious. Some people have just enough religion to make them miserable. The real Christian will be zealous and devoted (Rev. 3:19). His life will radiate with love for God and man. His influence will bring others to Christ through the gospel.

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Voluntary Partners

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Wow! This was unexpected, especially with all the news about the current economy. God has surely blessed His people! We want to thank those who have erased our deficit, as well as all who have been our “voluntary partners” through the years in this labor of love. We also want to give thanks for the many messages of encouragement we received marking our 40 years of publication. This issue is expected to cost about \$500, which will leave us with a surplus of about \$795 toward future issues.

‘No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities’

By **AL DIESTELKAMP**

This passage (1 Tim. 5:23) is used by some who want to justify social drinking of alcoholic beverages. However, this was never intended by the Holy Spirit to be the favorite passage of brewers and distillers. Notice what the passage says, and what it doesn’t say:

- ◆ It says, in effect, “*don’t drink the water*” which was believed to be the source of Timothy’s trouble.
- ◆ It says “*use*” wine—not imbibe in it.
- ◆ It says use “*a little*” wine—not a lot of wine.
- ◆ It says to use a little “*wine*,” not beer, whiskey or a number of other intoxicating drinks that many think this verse justifies.

ating drinks that many think this verse justifies.

◆ It says use it “*for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities*,” not for social recreation.

By the way, though Paul was not a doctor, Luke, who was with Paul during this time, was. This advice was like unto a prescription for one man’s particular illness. Need I remind you that it’s not advisable to use other people’s prescriptions? Besides, we have other remedies for stomach ailments that were not available to Timothy.

This text also implies that this was not a usual beverage for Christians in that Paul had to instruct him, because of his problem, to use this as a remedy.



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