

## Eternal Security

Dave was a young man who professed faith in Jesus Christ at a church youth program. He was extremely bright and motivated for many months and then dropped away, finally denying any faith at all and living a godless life.

People like Dave create a real problem in our minds.

In the words of Paul: "They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny Him" (Tit.1:16a). Can a Christian lose their salvation, or do people like Dave remain 'Christian' and go to heaven despite no evidence or belief to match their previous profession?

A genuine believer (one who has genuine faith, not a superficial assent to certain truths) cannot lose their salvation by committing any particular sin(s) or by ceasing to believe. The security of a believer is the work of God, not his/her own work.

### The Reasons I believe in eternal security:

#### 1. Because of WHO God is (focus on God the Father)

- **Sovereign purpose** – Romans 8:28-30; 1 Cor. 1:8; Eph. 1:4, 11-12; 2:7

#### We are chosen in Christ before the world began

"He chose us in Him before the creation of the world ... He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 1:4-6). God's sovereign choice is one of the most positive statements in the Bible on eternal security. How can we be chosen by God in eternity past, to end up only being chosen by Him for a few years in life! Can you and I, or Satan, or anyone in all creation thwart the sovereign purposes of God? If saved means we are chosen, then we have to be chosen forever, and therefore saved forever. Would God choose you, only to lose you (1 Thessalonians 1:4)?

#### 1. CHRISTIANS ARE CHOSEN

Eternal security teaches that "those whom God has chosen before the foundation of the world and called into saving faith and regenerated by His Holy Spirit can never lose salvation, but shall be preserved in a state of salvation to the final hour and be eternally saved."

"He chose us in Him before the creation of the world ...He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:4-6). God, who looks down through time and who knows every moment of your life from conception to the grave, has chosen you. This choice was according to His will and by His grace.

"If we entertain even the remotest possibility that there is something we can do or not do which can nullify the value of the blood of Christ, we will focus our attention on our obedience, and not Christ's blood. This is the way human nature works.

God's sovereign choice is one of the most positive statements on eternal security in the Bible. How can we be chosen in eternity past, to end up only being chosen for a few years in life! Can you and I, or Satan, or anyone in all creation thwart the sovereign purposes of God? The Scriptures say: "For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable" (Rom. 11:29). The gift of God is eternal life, the call of God is our election to be His sons; these are unalterable. They can never be recalled or revoked. If saved means we are chosen, then we have to be chosen forever, and therefore saved forever. Paul could say to the Christians at Thessalonica: "For we know, brothers loved by God, that He has chosen you..." (1 Thess. 1:4).

Would God choose you, only to lose you?

"What does it mean when Peter writes in 2 Peter 1:10-11 that we are to make our "calling and election sure"? The context presents the doing certain things results in a believer not stumbling and falling. It is another way of saying to persevere to the end. We must make our Christian lives impregnable against falling into sin by adding the virtues in the preceding context to our foundation of faith. We must strengthen our lives. This will make us unshakable and firm in the

midst of suffering." "The absence of these qualities does not necessarily cast doubt on our justification. It only points out that we have forgotten the motivating benefits of the grace of God.

### **Romans 8:29-30**

***"For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the first-born among many brethren. And those whom He predestined He also called; and those whom He called He also justified; and those whom He justified He also glorified.***

### **Who are the ones God will glorify?**

What is the truth implicit in this chain? It means that no one who is foreknown fails to be predestined. And no one who is predestined fails to be called. And no one who is called fails to be justified. And no one who is justified fails to be glorified. The point of the chain is certainty and assurance. God does not just offer salvation, He saves! Those whom He has predestined are saved! It is as good as finished - that's why even the future work of God in glorifying His people is put in the past tense in verse 30.

- **Power to keep** – John 10:25-29; Rom. 4:21; 8:28-30; 14:4; Jude 24

### **We are kept by God**

Eternal Security – the continuous operation of the Holy Spirit in the believer where the work of divine grace He has begun continues, and is brought to completion

When we sin, our relationship with God is affected, but not completely broken. We *"have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous"* (1 John 2:2). We are still His sons and daughters, and He is still our Father. Despite the sin, our relationship with Him is not severed because our Advocate, the Lord Jesus, defends us before God. The Lord Jesus stands up on our behalf (as our Advocate) and intercedes for us (Romans 8:34). He continues to save and keep us in this way right through our lives.

The Lord's work as Saviour is not finished when we first trust Him to forgive us and come into our lives. He is saving us every moment of every day, and will do so until He appears *"a second time ... to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him"* (Hebrews 9:28). If some can lose their salvation, then there is a point where our Saviour's role as intercessor and advocate is no longer effective. If He has lost those ones, He is not a very good Saviour!

Jesus said: *"And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that I shall lose none of all that He has given Me, but raise them up at the last day"* (John 6:39). In the context of John chapter 6, Jesus is contrasting the superficial adherents who sought Him with wrong motives (v.26) with those whom the Father draws to Him (v.44).

Jesus prayed in His High-priestly prayer in John 17: *"Holy Father, keep them in Your Name ... keep them from the evil one"*. God is *"able to keep you from falling and to present You before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy"* (Jude 24). Paul was so convinced of God's keeping power, he said: *"I know whom I have believed (i.e.: that He is trustworthy) and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him for that day"* (2 Timothy 1:12). In Philippians 1:6 we read that God will complete the good work He has begun in us. God *"will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God ... is faithful"* (1 Corinthians 1:8,9). Surely we can trust the one who is the *"Shepherd and overseer of our souls"* (1 Peter 2:25)!

His work as our Advocate in heaven assures our eternal security. (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 9:24; 1 John 2:1).

His work as our intercessor in heaven assures our eternal security (John 17:1-26; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:23-25).

Dr. John Walvoord: *"The present ministry of Christ in glory has to do with the eternal security of those on earth who are saved.*

When we sin "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous" (1 John 2:2). Our relationship with God is not effected when we sin. We are still sons, and He is still Father. However, our fellowship with the Father is broken. God is consistent, and therefore He is just as opposed to our sin as He is to the sins of the unsaved who are under His judgment.

But the Lord Jesus, our Advocate, defends us before God. He says in effect: "This one has sinned, but he has trusted me as Saviour. I have already paid for all his sins when I died for him on the cross."

The Lord Jesus intercedes for us (Rom 8:34), and therefore He is able to save us completely (forever) because He ever lives to intercede for us (Heb 7:25). In this sense the Lord's work as Saviour is not finished. He is saving His people every moment of every day, and will do so until He appears "a second time...to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him" (Heb 9:28).

If some can lose their salvation, then there is a point where our Saviour's role as intercessor and advocate is no longer effective.

If He has lost those ones He is not a very good Saviour! Such a serious error is often not realized by Christians who lightly hold to the falling-away doctrine.

Jesus said: "And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that I shall lose none of all that He has given Me, but raise them up at the last day" (John 6:39). In the context of John chapter 6, Jesus is contrasting the superficial adherents who sought Him with wrong motives (v.26) with those whom the Father draws to Him (v.44). Anyone who comes to Christ (drawn by the Father), He will never cast out (v.37).

That is why Jesus prayed in His High-priestly prayer in John 17: "Holy Father, keep them in Thy Name ...keep them from the evil one".

God is "able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy" (Jude 24). Paul was so convinced of God's keeping power, he said: "I know whom I have believed (ie: that He is trustworthy) and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him for that day" (2 Tim. 1:12). In Philippians 1:6 we read that God will complete the good work He has begun in us. God "will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God...is faithful" (1 Cor. 1:8,9). Surely we can trust the one who is the "Shepherd and overseer of our souls" (1 Pet. 2:25)!

- Infinite Love – Rom. 5:7-10; Romans 8:37-39
- Faithfulness – the promises of God (John 3:16; 5:24; Heb. 6:16-19)

1 John 5:10 says:"Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given about His Son."

What is this testimony which we must believe or else call God a liar? John goes on in the very next verse to explain: "And this is the testimony, God has given us eternal life."(1 John 5:11-13). If God declares that He has given (past tense) and we have (present tense) the gift of eternal life, we need never doubt it. The gift is not a temporary deposit for a few months or years while a person is tested to see if he can do works worthy of such a gift. In this case it would not be a gift, but a reward which is earned. In Romans 4:4,5 we read "Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation".

God's integrity is challenged by saying we can lose the gift of eternal life. But Paul says "What if some did not have faith, will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness? Not at all! Let God be true and every man a liar" (Rom. 3:3,4).

## **2. Because of what God has done FOR us (focus on God the Son)**

- He bore our condemnation forever – Rom. 8:34-39; Heb. 5:8-9; 1 John 2:2

**Salvation is by Grace** – Eph. 2:8-9

If works are needed to keep salvation, then salvation is by works (Rom. 4:4-6; Gal. 2:21; 2 Tim. 1:9).

If a person was once saved, then we must say that the only basis upon which they were saved, was the grace God. Their salvation could not be earned by good works or their own righteousness (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-7). If then that person goes back to sinful living and we say they have lost their salvation, we have moved the basis upon which they were saved from grace to works.

If we say that a person has lost their salvation, we would be making their standing before God conditional upon their works. Christians must do good works, but these are evidence of genuine faith, not a condition for it (James 2:17,24). The Biblical view of grace cannot hold out to the sinner a free gift and a condition of works at the same time. If salvation is by works, it is not by grace. The two are mutually exclusive (Romans 11:6).

Paul writes that those who teach salvation by works are eternally condemned (Gal. 1:6-9)!

Some unthinking Christians teach that we are saved by "grace" BUT (!) must do works, and endure to the end, in order to be sure of salvation. The Biblical view of grace, however, cannot hold out to the sinner a free gift and a requirement of works at the same time. If salvation is by works, it is not by grace. The two are mutually exclusive. "And if by grace; then it is no longer by works; if it were grace would no longer be grace" (Rom. 11:6).

God's honour is closely linked with His work as Saviour. "That no one may boast before Him... let him who boasts, boast in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1:29,31). Salvation is not by works "so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:9). When salvation in any way depends on man, God is robbed of His glory.

The fact that the falling away doctrine undermines the Bible doctrine of grace is an argument of far greater weight than the quotation of isolated verses that may support one side or the other.

"Front-loading the Gospel: Attaching various works of submission and obedience on the front end and including them in the conditions for salvation."

"Back-loading the Gospel: Attaching various works of submission as the means for achieving the final aim of our faith, final deliverance from hell and entrance into heaven."

"Works are not a means, whether on the front end or the back end. The only means necessary for obtaining salvation is faith, and faith alone."

## **Salvation involves being justified by God**

The book of Romans shows that our righteousness is not acceptable with God. But God's righteousness is transferred to our account when we trust in the Lord Jesus as our Saviour. We are declared righteous, not because we have measured up, but as a gift of His grace. "*They are justified (declared righteous) freely by His grace, through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus*" (Romans 3:24).

Salvation for the justified person is viewed as something that has happened in the past and will be completed in the future: "*Those whom He predestined He also called; and those whom He called He also justified; and those whom He justified He also glorified*" (Romans 8:30). We are not glorified yet, but in the eternal mind of God we are seen to be. Now that our sin has been put away, and our Lord intercedes for us (Romans 8:33,34) and nothing in all creation can separate us His love (Romans 8:35-39), there is no ground whatever for a belief that salvation is probational (Romans 5:10-11).

**1. Salvation is not repeatable** ('saved' is aorist ... a singular act with continuing consequences – John 3:14-16; 4:13-14; 6:35, 51). Not a single Scripture ... someone is saved, lost and then saved again

**2. Position and Practice** – the church at Corinth was anything but sanctified in practice, but positionally was sanctified (1 Cor. 1:2).

- Believers share in His resurrection life – Rom. 4:25; Eph. 2:6
- Advocate – 1 John 2:1-2
- Intercessor – Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25
- Shepherd – John 10:27-29 – eternal life / never perish / no one can snatch...

### 3. Because of what God has done IN us (focus on God the Spirit)

True salvation produces fruit of righteousness (Titus 2:11-12; James 2:14-24; 2 Peter 1:5-10). Bible exhortations to righteous living are always based on what God has done – never upon the fear of losing one's salvation (e.g. Romans 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 5:15; Eph. 4:1).

Sin in the believer's life does not sever salvation, but only severs fellowship (1 John 1:6-6, 9). Persistent sin shows lack of new birth (present tense of verb 'sin' { 'continues to sin'} – 1 John 3:6-10). Perfection is not achievable in this life (Phil. 3:12-14; 1 Tim. 1:15 '...I am chief')

- **Regeneration** – Gal. 6:15; Eph. 2:10

#### **We are born again and receive eternal life**

New birth and receiving eternal life are saying the same thing. Both terms speak of the point in time when the Holy Spirit first enters and transforms an individual. In contrast to natural birth, our supernatural rebirth is permanent (1 Peter 1:23 - "*born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and enduring Word of God*" ). If we lose our salvation, what becomes of our new birth? Can we be 'unborn-again'?

#### **NEW BIRTH AND ETERNAL LIFE**

New birth and receiving eternal life are saying the same thing. Both terms speak of the point in time when the life of Christ first enters an individual.

Natural birth into our human family was brought about by a corruptible seed (Adam's reproductive seed). We were born only to face the unavoidable process of decay and death. In contrast our supernatural re-birth into the family of God is permanent ("not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and enduring Word of God." (1 Pet. 1:23).

In John 10:27-30 Jesus says: "My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life..."

To whom does He give eternal life? To His sheep.

What characterizes His sheep? They hear His voice and follow Him. They are not merely professing. To these the Lord not only gives eternal life, but He and the Father are both involved in protecting them: "They shall never perish". The Shepherd's hand of care and the Father's hand of power will keep the sheep from the enemy of souls. There is no condition to these promises. To add the word 'if' so as to read "if My sheep listen to My voice...and they follow me" is to seriously tamper with the words of Jesus Christ.

If we lose our salvation, what becomes of our new birth, our redemption, our reconciliation, our seal and so on? Can we be 'Un-born again'? Will the redemption price paid for us by Christ lose it's value? Will we be robbed of our seal?

The Bible says we have

- \* An eternal salvation (Heb. 5:9),
- \* through the eternal redemption (Heb. 9:12),
- \* which gives us an eternal inheritance (Heb 9:15),
- \* which is all according to God's eternal purpose (Eph. 3:10,11).
- Indwelling of the Spirit – John 14:16-17; 1 Cor. 6:19; Eph. 2:22; 1 John 2:27
- Baptism of the Spirit – 1 Cor. 12:13

At the point when we trust in Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour, we are baptised by His Spirit into the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). We become part of "*His body, the fullness of Him...*" (Ephesians 1:23). We are "*created in Christ Jesus*" (Ephesians. 2:10), and our life is "*hidden with Christ in God*" (Colossians 3:3). We are "*members of His body*" (Ephesians 5:30-32). We are linked in a permanent, vital union with Him.

- Sealing of the Spirit – 2 Cor. 1:21-22; Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30

According to Ephesians 1:13, when we hear the gospel, and believe in Him (Jesus Christ), we are sealed with the Holy Spirit. This seal speaks of ownership, and *"is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance"* (v. 14). The Holy Spirit has been given as a permanent gift, and so we need never fear that we may lose His presence within us (*"to be with you forever"* John 14:16,17).

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is a sin committed by unbelievers, not believers, and only occurred at the time Christ was on earth.

### **Grace and Rewards**

2 Tim 2:11-13

***"Here is a trustworthy saying:***

***If we died with Him, we will also live with Him;***

***If we endure, we will also reign with Him.***

***If we disown him, He will also disown us;***

***If we are faithless, He will remain faithful, for He cannot disown himself"***

The passage seems to teach both salvation is eternally secure, and that salvation can be lost!

In this passage there is a "chiasm" which is a literary device common in Hebrew literature that uses a unique repetition pattern for clarification or emphasis. Paul compares the gift of salvation with God's reward for the Christian using four statements forming **A B B A**. The first and the last (the 'A's) are related to each other and speak of salvation; and the middle two (the 'B's) are likewise related, but speak of reward:

**A. "If we died with Him, we will also live with Him"** (Salvation by grace with certainty of heaven)

**B. "If we endure (suffer), we will also reign with Him"** (The reward for a believer's faithfulness)

**B. "If we disown (deny) Him, He will disown (deny) us"** (Believers who are not faithful will not receive a reward – c/f 1 Cor. 3:15)

**A. "If we are faithless, He will remain faithful, for He cannot disown Himself"** (The faithless believers will lose their rewards, but will not lose their salvation. God is faithful to His promises, and cannot deny what He has said. In short, He cannot lie!)

*Normally in the chiasm, the center holds the main idea (here the idea in both 'B's is rewards).*

The word inheritance does not always mean heaven; it often refers to rewards.

*All believers have an eternal inheritance, but not all will inherit the kingdom.*

**Assurance of Salvation** is conditional on having 'died with Him' (a faith-commitment to Christ involving identification with the crucified Lord)

to die together with ... live together with

**Assurance of Reward** is conditional on endurance

DENY = disassociate yourself (disown by word / action)

*John 18.25 As Simon Peter stood warming himself, he was asked, "You are not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it, saying, "I am not."*

*Acts 3. "You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go"*

*1 Tim 5.8 "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever"*

*2 Tim 3.5 "having a form of godliness but denying its power"*

*Titus 1.16 " They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him"*

### **Reward:**

*"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism" (Col. 3:23-25).*

Heirs with God ..... Joint-heirs with Christ

Faith alone ..... Faith & obedience

Identity (position) ..... Character (practice)

Unconditional ..... Conditional

Cannot forfeit eternal life ..... Can forfeit firstborn rights

All saints will enter the kingdom through faith alone (John 3:3), but only obedient saints who endure, who overcome, and who perform works of righteousness will inherit it, i.e., rule there."

(EG. the meaning of "adokimos" in 1 Corinthians 9:27 is simply "to fail the test" "- not loss of salvation, but loss of reward as in the Isthmian games)

### Reassurance

You may know of a person who made a commitment to Jesus Christ, but later threw away their faith. Others say they are Christians but you see no evidence of God in their lives. As Paul said: *"They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny Him"* (Titus 1:16a).

### THE KEY ISSUE - FAITH

The Bible teaches that it is possible to have faith that is not saving faith "...does his faith save him?" (James 2:14). The implication is "No"!

Even demons have a kind of faith, and they tremble, yet they are not saved! We may call it "Faith", but it is not what the Bible defines as genuine faith. It does not possess the characteristics of the kind of faith that brings a person into eternal life.

Faith without works is dead (v.17). Faith is like love in this respect. If I say that I love someone, but my actions show the contrary; then my love is not genuine.

### True SAVING FAITH has certain qualities:

#### 1. Faith is a Condition of the Heart

God "knows the secrets of the heart" (Ps. 44:21). Although God loves without partiality, He cannot accept insincerity. He desires truth in the inward parts. People can know the gospel message and seem to live a Christian life, but God knows and tests their hearts. He allows temptation, opposition, suffering and the attractions of the world to sort out the genuine from the false. It must be shown in this life whether a person's faith is genuine. There will be no test in heaven!

A. W. Pink: *"A conscience terrified with the prospect of hell, will cause a person to seek Christ after a natural way. It is but the instinct of self-preservation at work. Add to this, the craving for happiness which self-love ever seeks, and hearing that such happiness is to be found only in Christ, it is little wonder that multitudes seek Him now for what they can get from Him, as of old they sought Him for the sake of the loaves and fishes."*

#### 2. Faith Continues

Genuine faith will not be deterred by opposition or enticement. In Hebrews 11, all the heroes of faith faced massive stumbling blocks to their faith. The very things God promised, they did not receive in this life. Yet they were sure of what they hoped for, and certain of what they did not see (v.1). It is of the very nature of faith to continue: "Now these three remain; faith, hope and love" (1 Cor. 13:13).

The genuineness of faith is tested in the crucible of time by the fires of trials. 1 Peter 1:6-7 says: *"...you may have to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith...may be proved genuine"*. Even gold is shown to be genuine by the test of fire. Fools gold will not pass the test. True gold will be refined by the heat of the flame. In the same way, says Peter, our faith (far more precious than mere gold) is proven to be genuine by withstanding the trials and temptations we face. Peter implies that some people's faith will not survive the test.

Jesus, in His interpretation of the parable of the sower, seed and soils (Luke 8:11-15), says that the seeds which fell into shallow soil where the hot sun caused the young plants to wither, illustrates people who hear God's Word, and believe for a while, but in a time of temptation fall away. The very same seed produces fruit when sown on good soil. The good soil, says Jesus, illustrates "those with a noble and good heart (inner attitude of the heart), who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering (continuing) produce a crop." Jesus goes on to say "take heed how you hear."

Genuine faith continues. Faith that is not genuine may at first respond to God's message, even with enthusiasm and joy; but when tested it dies. We can never tell who has real faith, and who has not.

### **What about a 'backsliding' Christian?**

The man in 1 Cor. 5 was continuing in serious sin, and Paul writes to the church saying that this man is to be given over to Satan... "that his spirit may be saved in the day of Jesus Christ".

How can we reconcile such severe backsliding with 1 John 3:9 which says "No-one who is born of God will continue to sin..."? William MacDonald (U.S.A) once said *"It is amazing how close a person can get to God and yet not be born again, and it is equally amazing how far away one can get from God and yet still be a born again Christian"*.

The existence of carnal Christians is a reality; those who deny this important truth are divorced from reality.

"The fruits of faith are helpful as a secondary confirmation of one's regenerate state, but their absence does not necessarily invalidate a man's salvation."

"It is possible for true Christians to fail to persevere in faith and, in remote cases, even to deny the faith altogether. The automatic unity between justification and sanctification ... is not taught in Scripture. A life of sanctification will not inevitably and necessarily follow justification. A life of good works is the obligatory outcome of justification, but is not the inevitable outcome."

This area is a mystery, and we are forced to say with Paul "The Lord knows those who are His, and everyone who confesses the Name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness" (2 Tim. 2:19).

Looking at the O.T. record alone we may have grave doubts about Lot being a genuine believer. Only in the N.T. do we find him to be just, with a "righteous soul" (2 Peter 2:7-8).

### **3. Faith is Confident**

The primary attribute of faith is confidence (or conviction) in what God has said. Confidence in what God says about us as sinners; about Jesus Christ and the way of salvation; about eternal life and our future hope.

Knowledge does not save. The whole generation of Israelites who died in the wilderness had a knowledge of God's truth, "but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith" (Heb.4:2).

Nor does faith in itself (as a virtue or quality) save. Only Christ can save. Faith is the channel for us to receive that salvation. It is not so much our faith, but the object of our faith that is important. We can have complete confidence in Jesus Christ when He is the object of our faith. He can be trusted!

Abraham, the Bible's example of a man of faith, showed confidence in the promises God gave him. "Without weakening in his faith he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead - since he was about a hundred years old...yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God... being fully persuaded that God had power to do what He had promised" (Rom. 4:19-21).

The same principles of interpretation apply to other difficult passages like Hebrews ch's 6 and 10.

If Scripture clearly says one thing, the seemingly contradictory or obscure verses must be interpreted in light of the plain statements elsewhere. If there are two opposing statements, then it must be decided to whom they apply. They can't both apply to believers!

The "if" clauses in the New Testament ("If you continue steadfast..." "if you hold it fast...") are warnings which are rightly annexed to the promises of God. Imagine writing to someone whom you have heard is a new Christian. You write positively and encouragingly. You apply the promises of God to them - "You are a child of God - you are eternally secure." As you write the words you are aware of the fact that you are not at all sure whether this new Christian is truly converted. To keep from giving a false sense of security you add "provided you continue in your faith..." You may be confident that they will continue, but you are not able to read the heart. The New Testament writers wrote in a similar fashion.

**Bible verses to meditate on:**

John 5:24 *"I tell you for certain that everyone who hears my message and has faith in the one who sent me has eternal life and will never be condemned. They have already gone from death to life"* (Contemporary English Version). Jesus states that the one who believes "has passed from death to life" (NOT "is passing"). The Greek tense is perfect indicative active. The perfect indicates a completed state.

1 John 2:1 *"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous."*

John 10:28-30 *"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 6:38-40 *"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the 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."*

Romans 8:1 *"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"*

Romans 8:37-39 *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Do not let the difficult or obscure passages of the Bible rob you of your enjoyment of rest and security. There are enough clear verses to re-assure your heart that faith in the Lord Jesus results in God's unchangeable promise of an eternal salvation.

Jesus isn't much of a Saviour if I can jump in and out of His hand! God is playing tricks with me if He tells me salvation is a free gift, but I must fulfill the conditions and persevered to the end.

***God's gift is bona-fide - Believe it! Enjoy it!***