

What The Bible Says About ---

Wednesday, January 6, 2016

Part Seventeen

What The Bible Says About - ETERNAL SECURITY

This will be the last of the “**What The Bible Says About –**” series. Next week I will begin a new series: “**Apocalypse Now - Revelation Revisited.**” It has been a few years since we presented a major prophecy series. With the situation in the world today, as the Bible prophesied, “men’s hearts are failing them for fear.” ISIS, a coming election, the national economic scene, and so many other issues are responsible. The Bible gives us solid direction. Come with your Bible and I will give weekly notes as we study together those things awaiting us.

ETERNAL SECURITY

Once a person commits his or her life to Jesus, is that person’s salvation sealed once and for all? Is that person spiritually secure, no matter what?

It is the age old debate between Calvinists and Arminian believers. The Calvinist stresses, rightly, God’s sovereignty and divine prerogative (that means He can do anything He chooses that is consistent with Who He is) while the Arminian stresses, also rightly, man’s free will and responsibility.

Calvinism is named after the famed French theologian John Calvin who strongly influenced the world in the 1500's while Arminianism is named after **Jacobus Arminius** (Dutch) who ministered about the same time. Both of these men were influential in the great reformation which brought Protestantism into the world. But each one brought into play strongly varied theology.

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO THEOLOGIES

Free Will Versus Total Depravity

John Calvin believed in the total inability or total depravity of human nature. Because of the fall (in the Garden of Ede) man is unable to savingly believe the Gospel. The winner is dead, blind and deaf to the things of God and his heart is deceitful and desperately corrupt. His will is not free - it is in bondage to his evil nature. Therefore, he will not - indeed he cannot - choose good over evil in the spiritual realm.

1 Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ.
2 It takes regeneration by which the Spirit makes the sinner alive and gives him a new
3 nature. Faith, then, is not something man contributes to salvation but is itself a part of
4 God's gift of salvation. It is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God.
5

6 **Arminius** taught that although the human nature was seriously affected by the fall, man
7 has not been left in a state of total spiritual helplessness. God graciously enables every
8 sinner to repent and believe, but He does not interfere with man's freedom. Each sinner
9 possesses a free will, and his eternal destiny depends on how he chooses it. Man's
10 freedom consists of his ability to choose good over evil in spiritual matters; his will is not
11 enslaved to his sinful nature. The sinner has the power to either cooperate with God's
12 Spirit and be regenerated or resist God's grace and perish. The lost sinner needs the
13 Spirit's assistance, but he does not have to be regenerated by the Spirit before he can
14 believe.
15

16 Election 17

18 **Calvinism** God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of
19 the world rested solely in His own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners was
20 not based on any foreseen response of obedience on their part, such as faith, repentance,
21 etc. On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom He has
22 selected. These acts are the result, not the cause of God's choice. Election therefore was
23 not determined by or conditioned upon any virtuous quality or act foreseen in man.
24 Those whom God sovereignly elected He brings through the power of the Spirit to a
25 willing acceptance of Christ. Thus God's choice of the sinner, not the sinner's choice of
26 Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation.
27

28 **Arminianism** God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation
29 of the world was based upon His foreseeing that they would respond to His call. He
30 selected only those whom He knew would of themselves freely believe the Gospel.
31 Election therefore was determined by or conditioned upon what man would do. The faith
32 which God foresaw and upon which He based His choice was not given to the sinner by
33 God but resulted solely from man's will. It was left entirely up to man as to who would
34 believe and therefore as to whom would be elected unto salvation. God chose those
35 whom He knew would of their own free will, choose Christ. Thus the sinner's choice of
36 Christ, not God's choice of the sinner, is the ultimate cause of salvation.
37

38 Universal Redemption versus Limited Atonement 39

40 **Calvinism** Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually

1 secured salvation for them. His death was substitutionary endurance of the penalty of
2 sin in the place of certain specified sinners. In addition to putting away the sins of His
3 people, Christ's redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation, including
4 faith which unites them to Him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all
5 for whom Christ died, therefore guaranteeing their salvation.

6
7 **Arminianism** Christ's redeeming work made it possible for everyone to be saved but
8 did not actually secure the salvation of anyone. Although Christ died for all men and for
9 every man, only those who believe on Him are saved. His death enabled God to pardon
10 sinners on the condition that they believe, but it did not actually put away anyone's sins.
11 God's redemption becomes effective only if man chooses to accept it.

12 13 Resistible Versus Irresistible Grace

14
15 **Calvinism** In addition to the outward general call to salvation which is made to
16 everyone who hears the Gospel, the Holy Spirit extends to the elect a special inward call
17 that inevitably brings them to salvation. The internal call (which is made only to the
18 elect) cannot be rejected; it always results in conversion. By means of this special call
19 the Spirit irresistibly draws sinners to Christ. He is not limited in His work of applying
20 salvation by man's will, nor is he dependent upon man's cooperation for success. The
21 Spirit graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely
22 and willingly to Christ. God's grace, therefore, is invincible; it never fails to result in
23 the salvation of those to whom it is intended.

24
25 **Arminianism** The Spirit calls inwardly all those who are called outwardly by the Gospel
26 invitation. He does all that He can to bring every sinner to salvation. But inasmuch as
27 man is free, he can successfully resist the Spirit's call. The Spirit cannot regenerate the
28 sinner until he believes. Faith (which is man's contribution) precedes and makes
29 possible the new birth. Thus man's free will limits the Spirit in the application of
30 Christ's saving work. The Holy Spirit can only draw to Christ those who allow Him to
31 have His way with them. Until the sinner responds, the Spirit cannot give life. God's
32 grace, therefore, is not invincible. It can be resisted - and often is - and thwarted by man.

33 34 Falling Versus Perseverance

35
36 **Calvinism** All who are chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and given faith by the
37 Spirit are eternally saved. They are kept in faith by the power of Almighty God and thus
38 persevere to the end.

39
40 **Arminianism** Those who believe and are truly saved can lose their salvation by failing

1 to keep up their faith. All Arminians have not been agreed on this point. Some hold
2 fast that believers are eternally secure in Christ, that once a sinner is regenerated, he can
3 never be lost.

4
5 * *The above based on The Five Points of Calvinism by David Steele and Curtis Thomas / published by the*
6 *Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co./ Phillipsburg, N.J.*
7

8 **Summation:** According to Calvinism, salvation is accomplished by the almighty power
9 of the triune God. The Father chose a people, the Son died for them, the Holy Spirit
10 makes Christ's death effective by bringing the elect to faith and repentance, thereby
11 causing them to willingly obey the Gospel. The entire process (election, redemption and
12 regeneration) is the work of God and is by grace alone. Thus God, not man, determines
13 who will be the recipients of the gift of salvation.

14
15 According to Arminianism, salvation is accomplished through the combined efforts of
16 God (who takes the initiative) and man (who must respond) - man's response being the
17 determining factor. God has provided salvation for everyone, but His provision
18 becomes effective only for those who, of their own free will, choose to cooperate with
19 Him and accept His offer of grace. At the crucial point, man's will plays a decisive role;
20 thus man, not God, determines who will be recipients of the gift of salvation.
21

THOSE TWO POSITIONS - CALVINISM AND ARMINIANISM - ARE WIDE APART AND SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE TO INTERRELATE. HOWEVER, I BELIEVE THE STANCE TAKEN BY THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD AND MANY OTHER PROTESTANT FELLOWSHIPS TO BE AN AGREEABLE MID-POINT OF THE TWO POSITIONS AND THUS SCRIPTURALLY AND THEOLOGICALLY SOUND.

BASICALLY: AM I SECURE IN MY SALVATION? YES. CAN I BY AN ACT OF MY WILL OR SUBSEQUENT SINFUL BEHAVIOR BREAK THAT BOND? YES.

22 We ministers in the Assemblies of God believe that in view of biblical teaching that the
23 security of the believer depends upon a living relationship with Christ. John 15:6
24 **If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men**
25 **gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.** The Bible calls us to
26 a life of holiness: Hebrews 12:14 **Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without**
27 **which no man shall see the Lord:** 1 Peter 1:16 **Because it is written, Be ye holy;**
28 **for I am holy.**

1 Further, Scripture teaches our names can be erased from the salvation journal: Rev.
2 22:19 **And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this**
3 **prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy**
4 **city, and from the things which are written in this book.** And consider the scripture
5 that teaches that “believing only for awhile” is not sufficient for eternal life: Luke 8:13
6 **They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and**
7 **these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.**

8
9 So - do we believe that there is an “unconditional security” position that holds that it is
10 impossible for a person once saved to be lost? No. Of course not,

11 12 FIRST - THE FALLACY OF THE “ELECT” POSITION

13
14 This is also known as the “predestination” teaching. Calvinists teach that God knew
15 who would be saved and who would be lost aeons before the world began. That is true.
16 However, “knowing about the future” and “making the future happen” are two different
17 things. Consider the following questions concerning “election” or “predestination:”

18
19 **1. If God has already elected those who are going to heaven, then why evangelize?**
20 **Why seek to be saved? Why even follow God’s paths? Isn’t that “beside the point”**
21 **if God has already decreed the saved and damned?**

22
23 Writer Ben Parry reminds us that if God has already elected those who will be going to
24 heaven, no amount of influence from Christians will change who is elected or not.

25
26 Why bother evangelizing if God has already decreed the eternal status of men and
27 women? REMEMBER: FOREKNOWLEDGE DOES NOT IMPLY
28 PREDESTINATION!

29
30 If God predestined everything, then why pray? If He has so decreed, no appealing to
31 Him will change His mind.

32
33 If man is totally depraved, as John Calvin taught, then he cannot truly be repentant for
34 sins. He is incapable of such a good thing.

35
36 So if man is so totally incapable of good, it has been pre-determined by God, then man
37 cannot be honestly condemned for his condition. If God predestined everything, then
38 why eternally condemn the so-called non-elect? After all - it’s not their fault! It’s
39 God’s.

1 Jesus did not give His life on the cross for the alleged “elect.” John 10:11 I am the
2 good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. Acts 20:28
3 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy
4 Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased
5 with his own blood. John 15:13-14 Greater love hath no man than this, that a
6 man lay down his life for his friends. [14] Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I
7 command you. 1 John 2:2 And he is the propitiation* for our sins: and not for ours
8 only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

9 *Propitiation - the appeasement between God and man through Christ*

10 WHERE WE STAND ON THE ISSUE OF ETERNAL SECURITY?

11 We stand between the positions of extreme Calvinism and extreme Arminianism. We
12 believe there are some scriptural elements found in both teachings.

13 The Calvinist stresses, rightly, God’s sovereignty and divine prerogative, while the
14 Arminian stresses, also rightly, man’s free will and responsibility. There are four
15 theological compass points that should be recognized at the very outset of this discussion.

16 1. Salvation is available for every person. John 3:16 For God so loved the world,
17 that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not
18 perish, but have everlasting life. Romans 10:11-13 For the scripture saith,
19 Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. [12] For there is no difference
20 between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call
21 upon him. [13] For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.
22 2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count
23 slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but
24 that all should come to repentance.

25 2. Salvation is received and kept by faith. Romans 3:28 Therefore we conclude that
26 a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Galatians 2:20-21 I am
27 crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the
28 life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me,
29 and gave himself for me. [21] I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness
30 come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. Ephesians 2:8 For by grace are ye
31 saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Philip. 3:9
32 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but
33 that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:
34 Hebrews 10:38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul
35 shall have no pleasure in him.

1 3. Continued sin will adversely affect the believer's faith. 1 Cor. 3:1-3 And I,
2 brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as
3 unto babes in Christ. [2] I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye
4 were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. [3] For ye are yet carnal: for
5 whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and
6 walk as men? Hebrews 3:12-14 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an
7 evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. [13] But exhort one another
8 daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness
9 of sin. [14] For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our
10 confidence stedfast unto the end; Hebrews 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are
11 compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight,
12 and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is
13 set before us,
14

15 4. The believer's salvation is forfeited by rejecting Christ. John 17:12 While I was
16 with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have
17 kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition (Judas); that the scripture
18 might be fulfilled. 1 Tim. 4:1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter
19 times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines
20 of devils; Hebrews 6:4-6 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened,
21 and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, [5]
22 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, [6] If
23 they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to
24 themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. 1 John 5:16
25 If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he
26 shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do
27 not say that he shall pray for it.
28

29 SALVATION IS AVAILABLE FOR EVERY PERSON - NOT ONLY FOR "ELECT"
30

31 Here are two vital questions: "Are some predestined to be saved and others to be lost?"
32 and "Who are the elect?" The answer is clear when it is recognized that the message of
33 the Gospel is one of "WHOSOEVER WILL." No one reading the New Testament can
34 miss the impact of this great truth.
35

36 Those who hold to eternal security and predestination will often point to Romans,
37 chapters 9 - 11. There one can find some statements that seem to imply that man's free
38 will is excluded in the matter of the believer's salvation and that God in His choice of
39 the elect exercises His divine sovereignty entire apart from man's will (volition). For
40 example:

1 *“For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the*
2 *purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of him that calleth.”*
3

4 *“Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. I will have mercy on whom I will have*
5 *mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of*
6 *him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.”*
7

8 *“Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.”*
9

10 Romans 9:11, 13, 15, 16, 18
11

12 When this passage is considered in the light of ALL that God’s Word teaches concerning
13 election, however, it is evident that man’s will is involved in his election. Jacob was
14 chosen before having done good or evil, but God’s choice was on the basis of what He
15 foreknew Jacob would do.
16

17 **THERE IS A HUGE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOD’S FOREKNOWLEDGE AND**
18 **PREDESTINATION.** God knew millennia ago what each person here would do with
19 his or her life. But He did not **FORCE** you or **MAKE** you do it.
20

21 This truth is brought out in Peter’s letter to “the strangers scattered throughout Pontus,
22 Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.” These believers were recognized to be “elect
23 according to the **FOREKNOWLEDGE** of God” (I Peter 1:1,2). This same truth is stated
24 in Romans 8:29: **For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be**
25 **conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many**
26 **brethren.**
27

28 God determined beforehand the conditions on which He would show mercy. And on the
29 basis of His foreknowledge believers are chosen in Christ: Ephesians 1:4 **According**
30 **as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be**
31 **holy and without blame before him in love:** Thus God in His sovereignty has provided
32 the plan of salvation whereby all can be saved. In this plan man’s will is taken into
33 consideration. Salvation is available to “whosoever will.”
34

35 **SALVATION IS RECEIVED AND KEPT BY FAITH** 36

37 The Bible clearly teaches that we are saved by grace through **FAITH.** Ephesians. 2:8
38 **For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of**
39 **God: and the just shall live by faith. Habakkuk 2:4 the just shall live by his faith.**
40 **Romans 1:17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as**

1 it is written, **The just shall live by faith.**
2
3

So - here is a great divine principle by which we live: Our salvation is gained by our faith in what Jesus did on the cross, not by our own righteousness. We believe - we are committed - to the fact that Jesus took our sins on Himself at the cross. Our salvation is MAINTAINED not because "we are so spiritually hot" but by a life of faith. I am saved NOT BY HOW I FEEL....but by WHAT JESUS DID FOR ME ON THE CROSS. Being a follower of Jesus is not a matter of works; it is a matter of faith. God does not accept you and me because of anything we have done. No, we are saved totally and solely by grace through faith. I ACCEPT THE FACT THAT JESUS DIED FOR ME ON THE CROSS. By faith I throw myself on the mercy of God and accept Christ as my personal Savior. By faith I see myself clothed with the righteousness of Christ - something I did not earn. **Philippians 3:9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:**

4
5 **DOES THIS LEAD TO A SHALLOW LIFE?**
6

7 No. My life serving the Lord is another matter. Salvation is a gift; I cannot earn it.
8 However, I MUST earn my rewards. I am responsible now for spiritual growth, a
9 progressive sanctification by obedient cooperation with the Holy Spirit. Romans
10 6:12-13 **Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in**
11 **the lusts thereof. [13] Neither yield ye your members as instruments of**
12 **unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from**
13 **the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. Romans**
14 **8:13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify**
15 **the deeds of the body, ye shall live. Col. 3:1-5 If ye then be risen with Christ,**
16 **seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. [2]**
17 **Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. [3] For ye are dead,**
18 **and your life is hid with Christ in God. [4] When Christ, who is our life, shall**
19 **appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. [5] Mortify therefore your**
20 **members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection,**
21 **evil concupiscence (strong desire), and covetousness, which is idolatry:**

22
23 Do we sometimes stumble? Drop the spiritual ball? Yes. However, we LEARN by
24 those mistakes and overcome them through our faith in Christ. My security - your
25 security - is never in doubt as long as our faith in Christ is steadfast. We are kept by
26 faith!

1 THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ISSUE

2
3 Sometimes I am mentally jostled by some of my Calvinist friends who say, "Well, Betzer,
4 the old hymn "You Must Be Born Again" needs to be changed for you of Arminian
5 persuasion to "You Must Be Born Again - and again - and again - and again - and, etc."

6
7 That is not true. We need to be born again once. The believer is not in a revolving door,
8 moving in and out of the grace of God. He is secure in the hand of God, and Paul wrote
9 it best: Romans 8:38-39 **For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor**
10 **angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, [39]**
11 **Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the**
12 **love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

13
14 This passage does not give me the right to live a sinful life. Paul also wrote: 2 Cor.
15 5:17 **Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed**
16 **away; behold, new things have come.** (New American Standard) It is now an
17 unnatural thing to sin since Christ dwells within our mortal bodies. Unnatural - but
18 possible all-too-often. Sin has become foreign to our new nature. That new nature, the
19 indwelling Christ-life, does not practice sin.

20
21 As the believer who has sinned turns to Christ, he turns not with the despair of a lost soul,
22 but with the secure knowledge that as a son of God he has an advocate with the Father
23 who is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse from all unrighteousness.

24
25 Vital point: Just because we have committed our lives to Christ does not mean that God
26 has withdrawn our power make some bad choices. Romans 6:1 **What shall we say**
27 **then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?** The answer to that question:
28 Romans 6:2 **God forbid.**

29
30 It is not always possible to determine if a person has turned his back on Jesus. Therefore,
31 it is well to leave judgment of those matters in the hands of our omniscient God. But let
32 it be said – **IF GOD DOES NOT GIVE UP IN HIS EFFORTS TO BRING THE**
33 **PRODIGAL BACK, NEITHER SHOULD THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST.** Don't
34 write anybody "off."

Next week starts a new series: **APOCALYPSE - REVELATION REVISITED!**