

SECURITY OF BELIEVERS

(This paper was prepared by Rev. R. C. Hawkins, D. D., General Secretary of Church Extension, and read in his absence by Rev. M. L. Goodman at the Michigan District Ministerial Convention held at the Berkley Hills Pilgrim Holiness Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, April 1961.)

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." John 10:27-29.

The above scripture is one of many that clearly indicates something of the security of the believer. With the Psalmist of old we can say, "My times are in thy hands." Since "greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world" (I John 4:4) there is wonderful security in Christ. Indeed, as long as we abide in Christ and continue in the faith we are secure in him.

This does not indicate unconditional security. The language of scripture is so plain concerning this vital matter. Our security in Christ is clearly conditioned on our obedience to his word. Rather than uselessly waste time at this point there is an agenda attached to this paper which lists thirty-eight specific New Testament scripture references from which the above premise has been formulated.

However, this must not detract from the beautiful and glorious truth that if we desire to be kept by the power of God and will pay the price to continually go through, we are secure in Christ.

First of all, we find security in the fact of real experiential redemption. Saving grace has lifted us out of the tragedy of sin. The precious blood has washed away our guilty past. We are the recipients of an entirely new life. No longer do we struggle in the mire of sin. Our feet are firmly planted on the rock. In addition, we know something of the glories of truly sanctified living. Here the carnal nature, the ally of hell in the human heart, has been expurgated and we are filled with the Spirit. These marvelous religious crises do not destroy the possibility of sinning, but they do greatly enhance the probability of continuing victory. As we serenely, but triumphantly march up the shining highway of holiness the lions of sin are chained on either side. Unless we step to them, they cannot reach us. This does not deliver us from the solicitation to evil, but since the traitorous carnal nature is gone from our being, there is no inner call or prompting to yield to temptation. Instead, the Holy Spirit which now infuses the human spirit, gives strength and courage to say the resounding "no" that is clearly uttered to temptation however often it may come.

Again, we are secured by an innate sense of right and wrong. God has endowed each of us with the faculty to distinguish between the broad principles of good and evil. It is true that this is often colored with current culture and past tradition. Nonetheless, that does not alter the fact that God has given each of us a certain sense of moral values. If they are guarded and obeyed they can be another thread in this skein of security.

Closely allied to this is the fact that the believer has the voice of conscience to constrain him to consistently follow the paths of holy living. It is true, of course, that an improperly educated conscience can be dangerous. The conscience can also be dulled, depraved, calloused and seared. However, the true believer has a living conscience that is a channel from God to man. If it is carefully guarded and trained, it is a vital link forged into the chain of Christian security.

The believer is secured by his love for God. For many, fear of the consequences of sin was a large factor in bringing us to Christ. However, for the believer, our deep and abiding love for him causes us to keep his commandments and do those things which are pleasing in his sight. Just as one human who deeply loves another will ever seek to please the one he cherishes, so we constantly strive to please the object of our affections. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." This was not only an enforceable law, but it is also a clear utterance of the evidence of our love. The motive then is not to keep from backsliding, but rather to please the one that we love with all the elements in our redeemed being. However, the deterring power of this deep affection provides spiritual security as a wonderful by-product of true devotion to Christ.

Again, we are secured by our militant spirit that leads to aggressive action. Military men are quoted as saying that the best defense is a strong offense. Be that as it may, one good defense against the devil is the spiritual drive that pushes us out to labor for the Master. Idle minds become the spawning ground for evil thoughts; while empty, idle hands soon are filled with the implements of sin and satan. The sins of evil-speaking, backbiting, religious chicanery, hypocrisy, double talk, two-facedness, and related evils are rarely found among those who do with their might what their hands find to do. The sour cynicism of legalistic apostasy is only found in those who have backslidden in heart, often caused by failure to be true to the God-given missionary impulse. This cannot be measured alone (if at all) by the dollars given or raised in a missionary offering. I refer to that inner drive of the truly sanctified to get the gospel to every creature in our own world of influence. This can be, and is, one of the greatest spiritual strengths that help provide the security of the believer.

Also, we are secured by the means of grace. Bible reading, secret prayer, the family altar, prayer meetings, Sunday school, church services, revival meetings, camp meetings and other religious functions, funnel a wealth of spiritual sustenance into the soul that gives us strength for the common day. To fail here, rivals the stupidity of a hungry man refusing nourishing food, or one with a burning thirst refusing a drink of clear, cool water. It could not be truthfully said that to miss any of these once would cause us to backslide. The truth here is simply this. These things are for our edification and sustenance. Faithfully finding joy in the means of grace will have strengthened our spiritual muscles to the point that as we wrestle with principalities, powers, and spiritual wickedness we will be assured of victory. Here, too, is security for the believer.

The child of God is also secured by the Word of God. The truth that has set us free will keep us free, if it is carefully inculcated into our mental, spiritual, and moral nature. The sinew of the soul is strengthened by the tendons of Biblical truth in the inner man. "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee," said the Psalmist. The Word not only strengthens the soul fiber, but it also is applicable to every life situation. It is truth for eternity, but it is also truth for the moment. Whether we need commendation or rebuke; chastisement or encouragement; warning to stop, or a nudge to go; if we carefully store the scriptures in our minds and hearts, the Holy Spirit will bring to remembrance that truth that we need at the exact moment we need it. What a bulwark for the child of God!

This leads me to say that believers are secured by the Spirit of God. Not only does He work with and through the word of God, but also we are sealed by the Spirit in many ways. Indeed He is the ally of heaven in the human heart. He quickly gives an inner warning of that which is wrong, and an answering "amen" to that which is right. He seals out the world and seals in imparted holiness. He gives the power of abstention by so altering our spiritual nature that we not only will to do God's will, but also delight to do His will. He gives added strength in the hour of temptation. In fact, by faithfully leading us around the pitfalls of the enemy, he enables us to avoid many temptations and dangers.

He provides a wonderful balance to all of life. Sanctified people are not queer, odd, or strange. Never! Such an idea is unscriptural and untrue to life. Sin is hell's additive to human living that makes men abnormal. The Spirit in keeping us out of sin, properly balances our spiritual concepts until all of life comes into proper focus. Don't ever let anyone betray you into thinking you have to be some kind of a spiritual freak in order to be true to God. The Holy Spirit will save you from carnal emulations and let you be your own wonderful, sanctified self. Here, again, is wonderful security for the believer.

This leads me to say that we are further secured by our personal convictions. These God-given things are not to be expounded or used for exploitation. Since they are personal, they are only for the individual to whom they are given. They are no mark of "special spirituality" or depth of devotion. Never fall into the snare of thinking you must be ultra-radical to be spiritual. Such effort is vain and unscriptural. Personal convictions are given to the person in order to build a high hedge at the points of lowest resistance. If one has a weakness in the area of covetousness, God will give strong convictions in material matters. If he has strong tendencies to pride, God will lead him in plainness of attire, automobiles, home, furnishings, etc. This principle reaches out into every area of life. These things then are given only to the individual. Their primary purpose is to help build a wonderful wall of protection to further secure the believer.

Then, too, we are secured by the providences of God. How often have we seen in retrospect how God has constructed circumstances in such a way that we were not only kept from evil, but made more secure in Christ. Perhaps at the time our limited vision would not allow us to see it. Some things in the permissive will of God bothered, for they seemed to be working against us. Still,

all the while, God was slowly, but surely making all circumstances work for our good and his glory. Even those things that seemed to be against us were arrested and made to work for us. Bless his name! He can educe good out of evil, even making the wrath of man to praise him. Here, too, behind the high wall of God's good providences is security for the believer.

Not only are we secured by the providences of God, but also by the angels of God. "He will give his angels charge over thee." These words, penned by the Psalmist and uttered sneeringly by satan, have not lost their luster or truth in succeeding ages. The angel of the Lord does encamp round about those that fear God. There is a spiritual warfare raging in the heavens immediately above us. Satan would use his cohorts to yet dethrone God, if he could. To prevent us from becoming unwitting and powerless pawns in satan's hopeless struggle for supremacy, God guards us with good angels. The battle is not ours, but the Lord's. Does anyone doubt the outcome? Thus, we join in rejoicing because we are further secured by the angels of God.

Furthermore, we are secured by the blood of Christ. The redemptive, atoning blood that was efficacious to save and to sanctify, is also a most wonderful hiding place. How often in the conflict of life have we plead the blood! Some day we hope to join the ranks of those who overcame by the blood of the Lamb and the word of testimony. In the meantime, we live under the atoning blood, safely sheltered from the storms of life. Who could ask for better security?

Again, we are secured by the steady infusion of spiritual life. True Christian life is not merely physical or mental. It is not in the church, or in any of its ordinances. It is not in merely holding to certain doctrines or tenets of faith. It is not found in standards and convictions. As the scriptures clearly teach, the believer finds his life in the Son. I John 5:11,12.

Jesus illustrated this by saying, "I am the vine, ye are the branches." This familiar but beautiful scripture plainly teaches us that the spiritual life that was imparted at the moment of surrender and faith, is only the beginning of a constant impartation. We look back on the finished work of Calvary, but we cannot look back on a Christian experience, however glorious, and consider that our redemption is completed. In the figure of the vine and the branches, we see our utter dependence on Christ. Our security is not based on the caprice of the human mind, or the spurts of great emotions. Just as the vine imparts life to the branches all during the growing season, Jesus constantly imparts spiritual life to us. Thus, our life, our strength, our all, is not in ourselves. It is in Him! This continuing infusion or impartation of life is one of the great glories of Christianity. We are not left alone to die from the blasts of the hot winds from a Godless world. This constant inflowing of spiritual life secures the believer, as no extraneous force could possibly do.

The last, and certainly one of the greatest means of security for the believer is found in the presence of God. Such words as "certainly I will be with thee" and "lo, I am with you always" and "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" are only a few of the wonderful words that assure us of God's presence as we travel the Pilgrim way.

"Never Alone" is more than the title of a lovely song. It is the testimony of every believer. No matter what life brings, God is there. Can you realize that? When tempted to stray, God is there to stay you. When the bully of the world would assail you, he will be your big brother defender. When you are weak, he will be there to make you strong. He never leaves! He never forsakes! As the little child confidently slips his hand into the hand of his father, let us purposefully take his hand and let him lead us on. We are secure as long as he holds us, and we hold to him.

As God's sheep, we hear his voice and follow him. He knows us and gives us a steady stream of eternal life flooding into our spiritual being. The hand of another man cannot reach into this area of the individual life. Thus, conditioned on our faith and obedience, we have wonderful security in Christ.

A few New Testament passages establishing the position of conditional security for the believers:

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| 1. Matt. 18:21-35 | 20. I Thess. 3:1-8 |
| 2. Matt. 24:11-13 | 21. I Tim. 1:18-20 |
| 3. Luke 8:11-15 | 22. I Tim. 4:1-16 |
| 4. Luke 11:24-28 | 23. I Tim. 5:11-15 |
| 5. Luke 12:42-46 | 24. I Tim. 6:9-12 |
| 6. John 6:66-71 | 25. II Tim. 2:11-18 |
| 7. John 8:31 | 26. II Tim. 3:13-15 |
| 8. John 8:51 | 27. Hebrews 2:1-3 |
| 9. John 15:1-6 | 28. Hebrews 10:26-31 |
| 10. Acts 14:21-23 | 29. Hebrews 10:38,39 |
| 11. I Cor. 9:23-27 | 30. James 1:21,22 |
| 12. I Cor. 10:1-21 | 31. James 2:14-26 |
| 13. I Cor. 15:1,2 | 32. II Peter 1:5-11 |
| 14. Gal. 5:1-4 | 33. II Peter 3:16,17 |
| 15. Gal. 6:7-9 | 34. II John 6:9 |
| 16. Phil. 2:12-16 | 35. Jude 20,21 |
| 17. Col. 1:21-23 | 36. Rev. 2:7 |
| 18. Col. 2:4-8 | 37. Rev. 2:10,11 |
| 19. Col. 2:18,19 | 38. Rev. 22:18,19 |