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**THAT BURNING QUESTION OF FINAL PERSEVERANCE**

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Light and Life Press  
Winona Lake, Indiana

Other Books By The Same Author  
Foundations of Doctrine  
The Final Counterfeit  
The Ministry of Prevailing Prayer  
I Met a Man with a Shining Face  
The Lord Shall Guide Thee Continually

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1

### INTRODUCING THE THEME THE CONTROVERSY OF THE PERSEVERING SAINTS

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ" (1 Peter 3:15,16).

We have been asked to state reasons as to why we do not believe and teach the Bible doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints. Our answer may be startling, yet it is strictly true: We do steadfastly believe and wholeheartedly teach the Bible doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints. It is difficult for us to see how any person, acquainted with the plain teachings of the Word of God and knowing by experience anything of the power of God, could believe and teach anything else.

Once for all then, let it be placed on record for all who will to read, we believe sincerely and teach emphatically the Bible doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints.

We insist, however, that such a statement should be intelligently interpreted, and in making that interpretation common sense seems to say that if there is to be a final perseverance of the saints there must of necessity be saints and these saints must persevere.

What we do not believe and certainly do not teach is that subtle and dangerous doctrine of continued salvation for those who lapse again into deliberate sin and therefore, being no longer

saints cease to persevere. If they no longer persevere how can they reasonably talk about final perseverance? By doing this they deceive themselves. No longer being saints they have again become sinners; hence, instead of enjoying the saint's assurance they have fallen under the sinner's condemnation.

The favorite argument with these fallen saints is that their perseverance does not depend upon them but on their eternal relationship to their Lord which, say they, cannot ever be annulled. To them the word saint is a sort of courtesy title, bestowed without respect to character; the righteousness which makes them saints not being required in them because found in the One who answers to God for them and covers all their delinquencies; the risen Christ Himself.

It is amazing how subtly a glorious truth can be twisted into a dangerous error, and how many sincere souls can be persuaded into accepting it without realizing the poison it contains. So far as we understand the teaching of our New Testament, the source of all our righteousness is Christ Himself, and there is no salvation for any man except in and through Him. In answer to our repentance and faith in His Calvary merits our past is dealt with and we are born again, "being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare . . . his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus" (Romans 3:24-26).

This, however, by no means confers upon a soul continuing to sin, an unconditioned salvation. God does not have two standards in relation to sin whereby He condemns it in some and condones it in others. What he abhors is an unregenerate sinner He will not tolerate in a confessed believer. As much separation from sin is required in our everyday walk if we are to retain the divine favor as was demanded on that first day, when, as a penitent at the altar of God, we sought to obtain it.

Let it be clearly understood then -- and we speak not only for ourselves but for all who are of like precious faith, and there are many -- we do not believe, neither will we teach that perilous doctrine of the continued salvation of any, no matter what may have been their previous experience, if they cease to persevere in the way of faith. whoever ceases to be a saint obviously becomes a sinner. Whoever ceases to persevere plainly forfeits all right to talk about final perseverance.

We may not "continue in sin that grace may abound." "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1, 2).

"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20); but that abounding grace is not given as a cover for our sinning, it is intended rather to recover us from our sinning. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

In conducting this study we shall take up two lines of thought, first reviewing the doctrine as presented from the Calvinistic viewpoint, then seeking to show why we find it impossible to accept the teaching as there stated.

A charge to keep I have,  
A God to glorify,  
A never-dying soul to Save,  
And fit it for the sky.

To serve the present age,  
My calling to fulfill;  
Oh, may it all my powers engage,  
To do my Master's will.

Arm me with jealous care,  
As In Thy sight to live;  
And Oh! Thy servant, Lord, prepare,  
A strict account to give!

Help me to watch and pray,  
And on Thyself rely,  
Assured, if I my trust betray,  
I shall forever die.

-- Charles Wesley

\* \* \* \* \*

2

## REVIEWING THE DOCTRINE CALVINISM AND FINAL PERSEVERANCE

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate. to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he. called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we. then say to these things r' (Romans 8:29-31a).

It is impossible to enter upon an intelligent discussion of any doctrine, and certainly unfair to attempt to refute it unless we are clear in our thinking as to what that doctrine really is. Moreover, if we are to be unbiased in our judgment our approach must be made, not through the criticisms of its antagonists but through the teaching of its exponents. Until we are thoroughly conversant with it we have no right to discuss it; and having sufficiently acquainted ourselves with it, care must be taken that we correctly state it.

The relationship of the atonement of Calvary to the race of which we are a part may be broadly stated as expressed in three distinctive schools of thought: the Arminian, the Calvinistic and the Universal. Within these, of course, may be numerous divisions and phases of teaching, but in broad outline these divisions cover the field.

At the one extreme stands the Universalist. According to his teaching the atonement of Calvary reaches everybody. If there is any suffering in the life beyond it is remedial and temporary and not punitive and lasting. A God of love, through the death of His Son will have all men to be saved.

At the opposite end stands the Calvinist who stubbornly insists that in the atonement provision has been made for a limited number only; these were predestinated to salvation far back in eternity. To them will come the effectual call which it will not be possible to resist; nor can they ever be lost no matter how far they may then go astray. The rest of mankind are left to their fate, and in it God is glorified.

Between the two stands the Arminian who declares that in the Calvary work of Jesus, God has made a bountiful provision for all who will accept it. The conditions of salvation are repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ, a renunciation of all known sin, and a continued obedience to the claims of God as long as they live. Those who meet these conditions are eternally saved; those who reject them are hopelessly lost.

It is with the Calvinistic and Arminian schools that we are here concerned.

The Arminian school of thought originated in a movement headed by James Harmensen, more generally called Arminius, then professor of theology at the University of Leyden in Holland. The best form of his teaching was endorsed by the Wesleys and became the basic doctrine of the Methodist Churches and later denominations of kindred thought. The Calvinistic school, while perpetuating the name of John Calvin, goes farther back than Calvin for its origin, and has for its real founder the monk Augustine, who became bishop of Hippo in North Africa. Augustine was born A. D. 354 and died A. D. 430. Before Augustine the unanimous doctrine of the church, so far as it was developed at all, was that the divine decrees so far as the individual was concerned, were governed by that soul's personal faith and obedience; this of course, was regarded as having been foreseen, though not fore-ordained in the divine mind. There was no fixity of eternal status until death ended probation.

Around this man Augustine history throws an interesting story. His earlier life had been dissolute and wild, but God in His mercy had graciously saved him. So marvelous and thorough had been his conversion that he sought in all sincerity to magnify the grace of God in his testimony and teaching. It should be remembered, however, that in every doctrine there is a place where, unless special care is taken, the overemphasis of truth tends to turn it into error. It was at this point that Augustine overreached himself and became responsible for a twisted doctrinal presentation which in its various points of emphasis has persisted through the centuries until the present hour. His teaching centered around three main thoughts:

#### Concerning Human Sin.

According to Augustine, man is utterly corrupt -- so much so that sin is an ingrained disease in his humanity which not even the energies of divine grace can cure in the present life. Man is sinful through and through and will remain so despite the fact of the imparted God-life in regeneration and all else that an Almighty God can do for him while here on earth.

Despite all the agencies of divine grace "that which is born of the flesh is flesh"; that flesh is sinful and until this mortal puts on immortality it must so remain.

#### Concerning the Human Will.

According to Augustine the will of man by nature is fettered and bound, and only an act of divine grace can liberate it.

#### Concerning Saving Grace.

That grace, according to Augustine has three outstanding characteristics -- it is selective, irresistible and eternal.

##### a. It is selective.

It stoops to lift men, but it is by no means indiscriminate in its lifting. Not all men may be lifted. Laying hold of one here and another there it works according to a foreordained plan, leaving the rest of Adam's rebellious race to the effects of their sin

##### b. It is irresistible.

Once divine grace has begun to work, human resistance is futile; God will break down all opposition and will save those on whom He has eternally set His heart.

##### c. It is eternal.

Salvation, once received, it is received forever. The elect soul is saved by grace and his place in grace can never be annulled.

But this teaching, even in Augustine's day was not without its challenge, and among those who entered the arena was Pelagius, a British monk. It is reported that Pelagius, having gone to Rome found conditions in the church which gave him a tremendous shock. The prevailing corruption, indifference to ethical standards, even common morality, amazed him. These conditions the monk attacked, only to receive the reply that such a state was unavoidable, human nature being altogether too weak to resist the manifold temptations surrounding it. This, Pelagius withstood, raising the questions of the freedom of the will and the nature of sin, the problem of inherited corruption and the value of external help to enable man to do right. Controversy drove him to take extreme positions and his pupil, Caelestius, seems to have become even more radical and committed his master to further difficulties. The teaching of Pelagius ultimately resolved itself into salvation by human endeavor. Neither church, nor sacraments, nor even the grace of God were essential; if man tried hard enough he could do it of himself. Thus came the Pelagian error.

The doctrine of predestination as Augustine taught it continued until the ninth century, when Gottschalk, the Saxon monk, introduced a further development declaring not only the unconditional

salvation of the elect, but also the foreordination of the rest of mankind to eternal death; they were irrecoverably damned by divine decree.

As we pass over to the Reformation period, we have, therefore, the corruption of Rome on the one hand and the rationalistic leanings of Pelagianism on the other, and facing the two a band of desperate men in a determined struggle for spiritual freedom. The Romanistic practices and teachings must be abolished and other doctrines established in their place.

John Calvin and his contemporaries reveled in the glorious truth of the sovereignty of God, and this they emphasized in displacing the then current teaching of the supreme authority of the church, but in their desire to be emphatic they overreached in their emphasis, establishing another error which has proved itself to be as deadly as that which they were seeking to destroy.

So utterly disgusted were they with the brazen error which they encountered, that, like the swinging of a mighty pendulum, they reached back through the centuries for something which they conceived to be authoritative, and laying hold of the teaching of Augustine they embellished it with that of Gottschalk, thereby forming what they conceived to be a bulwark against the flood-tide of corruption and error by which they were opposed. Thus, the unconditional foreordination to eternal life as taught by Augustine and the unconditional foreordination of the reprobate to eternal death as taught by Gottschalk became the basis of the Geneva doctrine which has come down to us under the designation of Calvinism.

In a purely Calvinistic presentation the ideas of predestination and eternal security are found as corollaries; there is a tendency, however, among the more evangelistic element today to embrace what might be termed a semi-Calvinism in which the predestination idea is not openly stressed, but a doctrine of salvation for all is freely declared. Alongside of this is the insistent harping on the teaching of the eternal preservation of all who have once believed, thereby establishing a sort of hybrid doctrine within the limits of Calvinistic thought.

In Calvinism proper, as we have already seen, the thought is much more rigid. There, certain elect souls are born to be saved; for this they were chosen before the world began -- far back in the councils of eternity. Sooner or later they will hear the effectual call and when that call is heard they will obey it -- they can do no other. From that moment they will be eternally saved; no matter what manner of sin they may afterward commit, they cannot be finally lost. God looks at them, not as they actually are, but in the person and through the passion of His beloved Son and they are eternally secure.

Having said this concerning the Calvinistic teaching, it is only fair that we should also say that among those holding this doctrine there are many who in actual spiritual experience are far better than their creed. Choice souls there are who, we are fully convinced, would rather die than willfully grieve their Lord, yet so bound are they by their doctrine that they continually lament their sinfulness, seeing no hope of deliverance while here on earth although all the time insisting that they are eternally secure. The fact of the sincerity of these good people, however, by no means makes the doctrine less dangerous; it rather adds to the difficulty of younger believers when it becomes necessary for them to face it.

In theological thought then, the doctrine of eternal security does not stand alone; it is the counterpart of that companion error, the teaching of predestination, both of which come under what is known as the doctrine of decrees -- according to which God in the beginning by His sovereign choice and decree determined the number and names of those who should be called, thus making it impossible that any other than they should be saved, and equally impossible for them, the called ones, to be lost.

It will be seen, we trust, that in dealing with this error our purpose is not to attack people, however wrong we may deem their teaching to be. Even in political life men may differ and yet remain good friends; it would be a poor mark of grace on either side if men and women professing a mutual relationship to Jesus Christ could not differ in their interpretations and still show Christian love the one to the other.

But why, it may be asked, do some people take what seems to many of us to be such an absurd position? Various reasons may be stated in reply:

Some are Calvinistic in their thinking because of the atmosphere in which they have been brought up. This doctrine has been taught them from their infancy. Others there are who take this position because of the disappointments they have met. Some have been in modernistic churches and have become so tired of the teaching there given that they have sought for something else; or they have been in churches flooded with worldliness and have looked for a more spiritual ministry and hearing a man with what seemed to be a positive note based on the Word of God, the whole thing has seemed so wonderful that they have wholeheartedly accepted it. There is another reason -- shall we call it a psychological reaction? It is possible that at heart many of these people believe exactly the opposite; they fear they are likely to fall and that very fear drives them to the declaration that it cannot happen; psychologists call it the building up of a defense mechanism. Fear preys upon the mind; they meet it with a positive declaration, and in so doing, they go to unreasonable lengths and try to find authority for their attitude in the Word of God. They cannot fall, they bluntly assert; they are saved for eternity! They do not want to face reality.

There is a final possible reason for this attitude which it would be grossly unfair to attribute to all, but which may nevertheless be predicated of some. The fact of eternal salvation is sometimes claimed as a cover for the fact of hidden sin. Refusing to quit their sinning, yet not daring to relinquish their hope of eternal life, they boldly proclaim that since they have been once saved, they are saved forever. The devil deludes them and onward they go; their eyes having been deliberately closed, they walk ever nearer the precipice, yet all the time declaring there is no precipice, until one day the tragedy occurs and they awaken all too late.

It will be of interest here to consider some of the actual statements of the exponents of this doctrine and the Scriptures they use. We shall begin with the standard statement, acknowledged by all Calvinists found in the Westminster Confession, and following this we shall quote from four representative writers, Dr. Augustus Strong, Dr. A. A. Hodge, Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer and Dr. Donald Barnhouse. It will be noticed that two of these are older advocates and two preachers of today.

The Westminster Confession (1647).

"By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory some men and angels are predestined to eternal life, and others foreordained to everlasting death. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designated; and their number is so certain and definite that it can neither be increased nor diminished. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in any of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto; and all to the praise of His glorious grace. Therefore they are elected, being fallen in Adam are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ by his Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power through faith unto salvation. Neither are any others redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified and saved, but the elect only.

"The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as He pleaseth for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice . . . ."

"Elect infants, dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit who worketh when, and where, and how He pleases. So are all other elect persons . . . Others not elected . . . cannot be saved . . . and to assert and maintain that they may is very pernicious and to be detested.

"They whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can never totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but they shall certainly persevere therein to the end and be eternally saved. This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election."

Dr. A. H. Strong states:

"The Scriptures declare that in view of the original purpose and continuous operation of God, all united to Christ by faith will infallibly continue in a state of grace and will finally attain to everlasting life." -- Systematic Theology) p.491.

Dr. A. A. Hodges writes:

"They whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit can neither totally and finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved." -- Outlines of Theology, p.542.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer says:

"It is nowhere taught that any feature of salvation depends upon the faithfulness of man."

"There is no salvation contemplated for man in this age that does not guarantee perfect preservation here, and a final preservation of the saved one in Glory. There may be an issue between the Father and His child as to the daily life . . . the Christian's sin may call for the chastening hand of God, but those questions which enter into the daily life of the believer are never made to condition the promise of God concerning the eternal salvation of those whom he has received in grace . . . Those who believe are saved and saved forever because it is according to the unconditioned covenant of God." -- Major Bible Themes, p.155.

Dr. Donald Barnhouse has put it thus:

"I have no doubt whatsoever, though some may disagree with me, that Ananias and Sapphira, as well as the Old Testament characters of whom we have spoken, were saved people. When death came to them from the hand of God, I believe they went directly to heaven." -- Sermon in the Keswick Week 1935.

Dr. Barnhouse had already spoken of several Old Testament characters who had been smitten in judgment because of sin, and then, as we have quoted above made the astounding statement concerning Ananias and Sapphira. According to Dr. Barnhouse these two lying, cheating, devil-filled hypocrites "went directly to heaven."

It will be well to notice what the inspired record has to say about them:

"But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

"But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

"And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things" (Acts 5:1-11).

As we read this inspired record and then link with it such an amazing comment, we are staggered by what seems to us to be a most unwarrantable assumption, and are compelled to ask some pertinent questions.

Do liars go straight to heaven? Do men and women whose hearts are filled with the devil go straight to heaven? Do people on whom the judgment of God has fallen because of their hypocrisy go straight to heaven?

Do lying and hypocrisy become any the less heinous when under a religious cloak? Is Christ the minister of sin? If a complete renunciation of these things was necessary in order to reach believing ground, will anything less than a continued separation from them enable us to stay there?

We know of nothing short of a continued separation from sin that will keep us in the place of assured salvation.

\* \* \* \* \*

3

### REFUTING THE ERROR SOME HINDRANCES WHICH STAND IN THE WAY OF OUR ACCEPTANCE OF THIS TEACHING

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men" (Matt. 5:13).

"And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his band to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that pertain unto us to glory and virtue:

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

"And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

"And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

"And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

"For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

"For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

"Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth" (2 Peter 1:3-12).

"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

"For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

"But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Peter 2:20-22).

"Even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

"As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.

"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:15-18).

Having stated the doctrine of Final Perseverance, we shall now offer our reasons for rejecting it. Any person has a right to reject any doctrine if he has what he deems sufficient evidence for so doing; he should, however, be able to state his reasons and to do this in such a manner as to appeal to the intelligence of thinking men. We shall state our reasons and leave it for the reader to decide as to their soundness or otherwise; they are threefold.

1. The doctrine is contrary to the plain teaching of the Word of God.

To some, such a statement may at first be puzzling and that for two reasons, first, because those who teach it boast of their loyalty to the Scriptures and quote and place their own emphasis on a number of selected passages. We give five as samples.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).

"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28).

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ" (Phil. 1:6).

"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they may be made manifest that they were not all of us" (1 John 2:19).

That surely is conclusive! How is it possible to deny the fact of unconditioned eternal security in the face of Scriptures such as these? But we do deny it, and deny it emphatically and that for two reasons, first, because of the isolation of these texts, and further, because of the interpretation, or to be more correct the misinterpretation of those who use them.

a. They are invalidated by their isolation.

No matter what the subject may be, to take a few passages from the Word of God and quote them as though they constituted its complete teaching is never convincing.

b. They are misleading in their interpretation.

We have no quarrel whatever with the Scripture passages themselves, but we do object to the interpretation that is put upon them. They are plain and simple words which if taken at their face value need not be misunderstood.

Let us examine the first passage. Here is the statement:

"He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation but is passed from death unto life."

Here is the emphasis:

You have believed, therefore according to the plain statement of God's inspired Word, you have eternal life. Since this life is eternal it can never be lost, therefore you are saved for eternity.

Here is the error:

Such an argument, on the surface, may sound very convincing, but our friends who use it do not seem to realize that their logic carries implications which are going to cause them trouble at the other end. "Eternal life has no end," say they, "therefore you cannot lose it." "But" we answer, "it has no beginning, therefore according to such an argument you cannot get it." "Oh," say they, "it

does not actually begin when we receive it, it is bestowed, God gives it." To which we reply, "whatever is bestowed may be withdrawn and its nature may yet be eternal."

The expression "eternal life" is not used simply to indicate length or quantity; it has to do primarily with quality. It is the life of the Eternal. Eternal life is a bestowal conditioned by a faith relationship, and is retained only as the conditions are fulfilled. The condition here is a present-tense believing, a faith link, the implication being that to cease to believe cancels the relationship. Nowhere in the Bible are we informed that we may retain our salvation with any less degree of faith and devotion than that with which we sought and obtained it.

Take the second passage. Here is the statement:

"Him that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Here is the emphasis:

You have been given by the Father to the Son, otherwise you would never have come to Him. Now that you have come you can never be lost, for no matter what you do -- you may temporarily lose His smile and His favor, but you can never forfeit your position in Christ -- He will never, for any reason, cast you out.

Here is the error:

Our Calvinistic friends read into this passage far more than our Lord said and obviously more than He intended.

a. They read into it the divine condonation of sin

They would indicate that the same sin willfully committed by two people, one a child of God and the other a sinner, would have two different effects according to their relationship to Christ, whereas willful sin is damning in its effects no matter by whom it is committed. God's purpose and desire is to save and keep all who come to Him. He will not cast them out nor will He turn them away, but sin will separate and damn them.

b. They read into it the divine act of paralyzing the human will.

But does the entire business of our continued salvation rest only with God? Are we retained in position spiritually as a sort of lifeless log? Or is there not a union of wills here? God's side is that He will not change and will not fail us. In the text, our side is not mentioned because it is not the point that is being discussed, but who ever in his right senses would insist that every phase of truth should be packed into every verse, and because some phase was not there mentioned it had no part in the general scheme?

Christ will not cast out a trusting soul -- that is the obvious thought; but there is no continued place in the heart of God for any who cease to trust Him. "The just shall live by faith."

Take the third passage.

Here is the statement:

"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Here is the emphasis:

Since the life given is eternal and it is plainly declared that no man can pluck them out of His hand, they are eternally safe, no matter what they do.

Here is the error:

a. They assume something that is not here said.

"They shall never perish" -- That is the divine purpose for all who trust Him. He will keep them in the shelter of His hand. "Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." No man has power to do that -- but may not that soul deliberately walk out of His hand? Has the power of the will now been so utterly destroyed that it no longer functions?

b. They overlook the qualifying utterances of the context.

It will be noted that the verse here quoted begins with a conjunction, indicating a lack of completeness and linking the thought with the utterances of the previous verse. Here it is. We intersperse in parentheses what is obviously the Master's meaning .

"My sheep hear my voice . . . and (hearing it) they follow me. And (while following me) I give unto them eternal life; and (while following me) they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

There is no promise of eternal life that is not conditioned by faith and maintained obedience. If you are obeying God and walking in all the light God gives, it is gloriously certain that you will never perish, and certainly while abiding in Him no man -- and no devil either -- will have power to pluck you out of His hand. God is determined to keep you as long as you are willing to be kept, but He will never fail to respect your will. He appealed to it when He sought to save you. He will respect it as long as you are in this world. He will never hold you an unwilling prisoner; His is a domain of free men. You are free indeed.

Having said this, however, we must now go on to say that the Arminian interpretation is far from the thought of being "Saved today and lost tomorrow as some of our Calvinistic friends so sneeringly charge. We cannot conceive of any soul consciously born again and sanctified wholly being so fickle as that. The soul most fully aware of the awful possibility of backsliding is the one who is least likely to do it. None but a fool positive would want to walk deliberately out of light into darkness, out of the glorious liberty of the sons of God into the awful bondage of sin; there are, however, those who have done it, therefore we need to take heed. There is no place this side heaven from which a saved soul may not fall, and if remaining unrepentant that soul will be finally lost.

Before leaving this section we must also say that the Arminian answer to this teaching of the unconditional security of those who have once believed is more than the mere re-interpretation of what the Calvinists claim as proof texts. There is, on the other hand, abundant Scripture evidence of the awful possibility of a saving contact with Christ, followed by a sad backsliding and a final apostasy. We shall here quote only twelve passages with brief comment, later giving a more complete list for handy reference.

"But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? In his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die" (Ezekiel 18:24).

"When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby" (Ezekiel 33:18).

Such passages surely require no comment. We are aware, of course, of the dispensational distinction on which our Calvinistic friends so ardently insist, but there is more than dispensational teaching here. It is a vital warning for every age. It is useless to beg the question by saying that it is his own righteousness he is said to turn from. That righteousness while maintained was sufficient to save him from the death here pronounced.

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men" (Matthew 5:13). This was spoken by our Lord to His own disciples. He never suggested such an idea to the multitudes. These men had something to lose, and were in evident danger of losing it.

"And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). why quibble here? In the light of general Scripture teaching, is not the truth apparent? To say "he may not be fit but will nevertheless be saved through Christ's fitness" is to take the teeth out of the passage.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:1-6).

That expression, "Every branch in me" is arresting. Such a branch can represent none other than a true believer. These branches, if failing to bear fruit are taken away. "Taken away," say our Calvinistic friends, "to heaven." what a travesty of the majestic utterance of the Son of God! Here evidently is the thought of severance and spiritual loss. In those wonderful epistles so rich with spiritual truth, Paul the apostle also uses what, among others, is one of his favorite expressions; just two simple words appearing again and again -- "in Christ," To Paul, the fact of being in Christ

meant salvation. That expression, however, is not Pauline in its origin, it is an echo of these very words of our Lord Himself which we have here considered.

"Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4). Here is a word surely too definite to be misunderstood. "Ye are fallen from grace." Did any person ever fall from any position he had not previously occupied? And if fallen from it, could he still be in it? A fall from a ten-story window would be sufficient proof.

"For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end" (Hebrews 3:14). While He has promised to keep us, our hold also has evidently something to do with it.

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Hebrews 6:4-6).

While here is truth which can only be satisfactorily dealt with in its wide dispensational aspect, we now read this and the two following passages for the purpose of calling attention to the fact that whatever more the writer may be intending to teach, he is conscious of the possibility of spiritual backsliding and of final apostasy. Whatever we make of the passage as a whole there are some things recognized about the people here discussed which are unmistakable. They have been enlightened. They have been partakers of the Holy Ghost. They have known something of the powers of the world to come. What do these things mean? To suggest that these people are not Spirit born is to juggle with words and to trifle with things most sacred. The writer recognizes the awful possibility of such souls falling away and does not hesitate to say so.

"For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:26-29).

Here is another passage surely much too clear to require comment.

"Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Hebrews 10:38, 39).

It will be noticed that this drawing back is of necessity from something and to something else. It is from the life of faith to perdition. The declaration, "We are not of them that draw back," does not indicate the impossibility of doing so, but rather suggests that there are those who are doing it. It is our determination, says the writer, not to be among them.

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these Things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fail: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:3-11).

Note the emphasis here as the writer of this passage conditions the promise of a divinely kept life -- "If ye do these things ye shall never fall." Is there not here at least a suggestion that, if these things are not done, the fact of falling is within the range of possibility? The implication is inescapable.

"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb. The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Peter 2:20-22).

The people here addressed are said:

- a. To have a knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
- b. Through that knowledge to have escaped the pollution of the world.
- c. To be in danger of a possible further entanglement.
- d. If later entangled, to be in danger of falling into a condition worse than before they knew anything at all of saving grace.

What else is this but a plain statement setting forth an awful possibility which only a mind prepared to bolster up a preconceived theological position by verbal juggling can attempt to refute?

Added to these very pointed Scripture statements are some notable Bible examples:

Angels fell -- 1 Peter 2:4; Jude 6. -- If it was possible for angels to fall, the best among men need to be careful.

Our first parents fell -- Genesis 3. -- Placed in the best possible environment and with faculties unmarred, they were overcome and God drove them from their Paradise home.

King Saul fell. 1 Samuel 10-16. -- Anointed by Jehovah to be king over His people, no man had a more wonderful opportunity than he, yet by reason of disobedience he forfeited all. 1 Samuel 28:15. Hear the word of Samuel as he meets Saul: "Because thou hast rejected the Word of the Lord he hath also rejected thee" (1 Samuel 15:23).

Judas fell. -- John 13:8; Matthew 26:24, 25; John 17:12; Acts 1:25.

A member of the apostolic band, yet now a name which is a synonym for the crowning infamy.

Hymenaeus and Alexander fell. -- 1 Timothy 1:19, 20.

Of these it is said that having put away a good conscience they made shipwreck.

Demas fell. -- 2 Timothy 4:10.

When needed most he forsook his fellow worker, having been lured away by his love for the present world. It is useless to argue as some have done, that we have no evidence that he did not finally return. We have no evidence that he did return, and that is the thing which concerns us here.

The younger widows are warned lest they should fall. -- 1 Timothy 5:12.

All this, and much more which any ordinary reader of the Bible may discover for himself, goes to show how contrary to the Word of God, in its clearest and widest teachings, is the pernicious doctrine of assured final salvation to any soul regardless of a watchful, prayerful, everyday vigilance, simply because of one spiritual transaction whereby the soul has at one time been born again.

2. This teaching is opposed to experience within the church of God.

No man has ever been saved contrary to his own desire and against his will, neither has any man kept within the realm of saving grace who did not desire to stay there. Salvation is for intelligent agents possessed of moral freedom and capable of moral choice.

The pathway of Christian experience is strewn with wreckage. Among the no hell teachings and the bloodless isms there are thousands of backslidden hearts, while out in the sinning world are heartbreaking tragedies of those who once ran well but somewhere along the line badly failed. Many who once knew the joy of pardoning grace have died in their sins. Any experienced pastor, except perhaps some theological bigot with a pet theory which blinds him to things as they really are, could give a record of cases which had begun well and showed signs of remarkable promise and then had died out. We all wish that such were not the case, but we are determined to face the truth and acknowledge things as they really are.

3. This teaching is dangerous to the people of God. We make this final statement for three reasons:

a. Such a doctrine tends to condone sin

Some horrible deeds have been committed by people so assured of their eternal standing in grace as to arrogantly declare that since their righteousness was in their Lord and not in themselves, no sin, however black, could tarnish it and no earth thing could even affect it. Unconditioned final perseverance is the parent of gross antinomianism. With such a false assurance the necessity for watchfulness is weakened, and sin is no longer seen as the damning thing which God has declared it to be.

b. Such a doctrine deludes the backslider.

In a revival meeting we witnessed the following distressing incident. A young man manifestly under conviction of sin listened to a powerful appeal and a Christian worker, concerned about his condition, pleaded with him to forsake his evil ways and return to God. Within hearing was a man, a stranger to them both, who soon joined in the conversation. "Brother," said he, "you may be saved now by simply accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour." The young man replied, "I did that a long time ago, but I am sorry to say I have not gone on with it. I have gone back into sin." "why, brother," replied the stranger, "you are still a child of God; a naughty child perhaps, but His child nevertheless. Once a son always a son, you know. That moment, away back there when you first trusted Him you were sealed for eternity, and no matter what you do you can never perish; God could no more damn you than He could damn Jesus Christ, for you and Christ are eternally one."

That young man went out to his old sins and to deeper sin insisting all the time that he was eternally secure. Had it not been for our well-meaning, but sadly deluded Calvinistic brother, better things might have been seen that night.

c. Such a doctrine damns the unwary soul.

It would not be extravagant to say that by this teaching many have been lulled to sleep and even lured to spiritual death. As one among many tragic incidents we relate the following. Only a few weeks ago in a Chicago gospel meeting we knelt at an altar of prayer facing a man and his wife who were evidently earnest -- we might almost say desperate -- in their seeking.

In answer to our question as to whether we could be of help, the man replied: "I certainly need help from somebody. Twenty years ago I knew something of God's saving power and enjoyed a good spiritual experience. Then I contacted a company of people who taught the doctrine of eternal security. Our holiness in Christ was emphasized with the accompanying insistence on our own incurable depravity. We sinned daily, they said, in thought, word and deed, but grace covered it. Gradually I succumbed to the poison and gradually lost the deep spiritual experience I had once enjoyed. Insisting on a holiness in Christ which covered my sinning I gradually drifted until today

there is no more happiness in our home -- it is like hell. I want to get rid of this poisonous teaching. I want real deliverance; my wife is here beside me, we want to get back to God."

Remember! As long as any soul remains this side heaven, that soul is on probation. Salvation can never be mechanization. The will which said the first word of yieldedness is the same will that must keep yielded all the time until Jesus comes or calls.

Ah! Lord, with trembling I confess  
A gracious soul may fall from grace;  
The salt may lose its seasoning power  
And never, never, find it more.

Lest that my fearful case should be,  
Each moment knit my soul to Thee;  
And lead me to the mount above  
Through the low vale of humble love.

-- Wesley

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4

#### MARSHALING THE SCRIPTURES TEXTS WHICH DO NOT TEACH UNCONDITIONAL SECURITY

"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. . . Now unto him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 20-24).

In the previous section we have quoted and commented on some Scripture passages which stand as the direct antithesis of unconditional security teaching. We now purpose in these concluding pages to place in convenient form for handy reference a more complete list.

Declarations: Ezek. 18:24, 26; 33:13,18; John 15:1-16; 1 Cor. 9:24-27; 15:2; Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26-29; 10:38,39; 2 Peter 1:3-11; 2:20-22; Jude 5.

Warnings: 1 Chron. 28:9; Matt. 5:13; 5:29, 30; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:62; 11:24-26; John 15:6; Rom. 11:17-22; 1 Cor. 10:12; Gal. 5:4; 1 Tim. 5:12; 2 Tim. 2:12; Heb. 2:1-3; Heb. 10:38; 1 Peter 1:17.

Exhortations: 2 Cor. 6:1; Col. 1:22,23; 1 Thess. 5:19; 1 Tim. 1:18,19; Heb. 3:8,12,13; 4:1,11; 12:14-17; 2 Peter 1:10; 3:16-18; Rev. 2:10.

Examples: Angels, 1 Peter 2:4; Jude 6. -- Our first parents, Gen. 3. -- Balaam, Num. 22-24; 2 Peter 2:14, 15; Rev. 2:14. -- The Israel Fathers, 1 Cor. 10:1-12. -- King Saul, 1 Sam. 10-16;

28:15. -- The unnamed prophet, 1 Kings 13. -- Judas, John 13:8; Matt. 26:24,25; John 17:12; Acts 1:25. -- Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5. -- Hymenaeus and Alexander, 1 Tim. 1:19, 20. -- Demas, 2 Tim. 4:10. -- The Galatians, Gal. 1:6; 3:1-3; 4:9; 5:4.

Conditional Clauses:

1 Chron. 28:9; Matt. 10:22; 24:13; Mark 13:13; John 15:6; Rom. 2:7; 11:20-22; 1 Cor. 9:27; Col. 1:23; Heb. 3:6,14.

Conditional Parables:

The Sower, Matt. 13:18-23; Mark 4:18-20; Luke 8:11-15.

The Pounds, Luke 19:12-27. The Talents, Matt. 25:14-30.

Be it my only wisdom here  
To serve the Lord with filial fear,  
With loving gratitude;  
Superior sense may I display,  
By shunning every evil way,  
And walking in the good.

O may I still from sin depart!  
A wise and understanding heart,  
Jesus, to me be given;  
And let me through thy Spirit know  
To glorify my God below,  
And find my way to heaven.

-- Wesley

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5

EMPHASIZING THE TRUTH  
WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES TEACH?

"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (1 Peter 5:10).

"But ye beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life . . . Now unto Him who is able. to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy . . ." (Jude. 20:24).

If it be true that the Scriptures do not teach the unconditional security of those who have once believed in Christ for salvation without further concern about its continuance, some closing word will be needed concerning the character of the salvation which the opponents of Calvinism profess to enjoy.

Controversy is never without its attendant dangers for either side. Too often slogans are adopted, epithets hurled and personalities discussed when the sole purpose of all concerned should be a mutual helpfulness to see and to enjoy the truth. In the Arminian-Calvinistic controversy this very thing has frequently happened. Arminians have labeled the Calvinists, "Once in grace, always in grace -- no matter how disgraceful you may be." On the other hand, the Calvinists have sneeringly said of the Arminians, "Saved today and lost tomorrow -- and often a dozen times in between." Such religious mudslinging will get us nowhere. It will not help us to respect each other, which as followers of a common Lord we should endeavor to do despite all our theological differences.

To say that those who oppose the doctrine of the unconditional security of those who have once believed in Christ for salvation have swung to the other extreme and teach a doctrine of alternations, being in Christ one day and out of Christ another day, is far from stating the truth. We venture to say that, so far as we have been able to observe, there seem to have been fewer backslidings among Arminians than among Calvinists, the difference seeming to be that among Arminians the personal-life standard required by their doctrine is higher. Calvinistic backsliders are more easily concealed; they may go on in their sin and yet talk about imputed righteousness, declaring it is not what they are in themselves but what they are in Christ, while Arminian backsliders are conscious how useless it is to claim the merits of Christ as a protective covering before God when their lives are so unfaithful before their fellows. They realize that we may not continue in sin that grace may abound, and that it is only if we walk in the light as He is in the light that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin.

What then, is the actual position taken by those who refuse to endorse what appears to them to be the pernicious doctrines of predestination and unconditional final perseverance?

To those who have had theological training, what follows will hardly be necessary. We write, however, not for the theologian but for the layman who amid these mazes is groping to find his way.

We believe that when dying on Calvary's cross, the Son of God made an atonement which was full and sufficient.

That atonement provided a way whereby a corrupt and guilty soul might approach a just and holy God. Rom. 3:23-26; Gal. 3:13; Col. 1:14; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 3:18; and other Scriptures.

We further believe that this atonement is unrestricted in its reach, comprehending an entire world. John 1:29; 3:16; Rom. 5:18; 2 Cor. 5:14; 1 Tim. 2:4-6; Titus 2:11; Heb. 2:9; 1 John 2:1, 2, and other Scriptures. We insist, however, that according to the plain teaching of the Word of God, the benefits of this atonement are necessarily conditioned.

a. As to its reception.

The first condition of receiving atonement benefits is a radical repentance.

To accept Christ is not enough. The sinner is an alien (Eph. 2:12); an enemy (Col. 1:21); a rebel; and consequently he is exposed to the wrath of God (Col. 3:6).

The sinner's first business is to repent and that repentance must be deep; there can be no participation in saving grace without it.

This "repentance toward God" will also of necessity carry with it all needed restitution. It is on the ground of repentance, with a godly sorrow for sin, and on this ground only that a saving Christ may be approached. Matt. 3:2, 8; Acts 3:19; 17:30; 20:21, and other Scriptures.

The second step is an act of faith.

Repentance takes the soul onto believing ground where the seeker must plead for mercy, cast himself in contrition upon God, and believing His Word, trust Him for Jesus' sake to cancel the past and to make him a child of God. John 1:12; 3:16. Rom. 3:21-26.

In their desire to magnify the simplicity of the gospel, some men have shaved away far too much. The only believe teaching is only true as its preliminaries are faithfully observed.

b. As to its retention.

It now becomes apparent, surely, to all who will pause to think, that a salvation reached by faith on the ground of repentance for sin can only be retained by faith, and that while sin is abhorred and shunned. Moreover, such faith will of necessity be active, progressive, and obedient.

Salvation, while in its initial stages made real in the soul through an act of faith, is maintained within the soul by a life of faith, manifested in faithfulness. It is sustained in response to obedience to God-given light, the soul being led into the deeper experiences of entire cleansing and spiritual fullness and realizing that the path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Saved today and lost tomorrow, do our critics say? No! We do not expect to be lost any more than they, and it is certainly not our purpose to backslide. We have started out with one purpose in mind; we intend to go through. We have sought from God that experience of establishing grace whereby carnality is removed and the soul is gloriously settled in God. We prove from day to day that He is able to keep us from falling, and we anticipate a blameless presentation in His presence when He comes again for His own. We expect to be held fast, but we are conscious that like the clasp of two hands the hold must be reciprocal. We must keep ourselves in the love of God while trusting Him to keep us from falling. No man can pluck us out of His hand, yet His domain is that of free men. He never arbitrarily held an unwilling soul.

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THE END