

KJV Deuteronomy 5:33 Ye shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God hath **commanded** you, that ye may **live**, and *that it may be* well with you, and *that* ye may prolong *your* days in the land which ye shall possess.

KJV Galatians 5:21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Notice the connection between "do" and "live"/ and "walk" and "live"? Notice the connection between doing these sins and "not inherit the kingdom of God"?

Yet we still maintain that salvation is not by works:

KJV Titus 3:5 Not by **works** of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he **saved** us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

This is completely true about being saved from the penalty of sin, and delivered from its slavery. Being saved from judgment, we enter a state of being saved. What do good works and obedience mean when one is in a state of salvation? Firstly, it means that the saved person does not view good works as a means of earning salvation. Nobody needs to earn what they already have been promised. Nor does the one doing good works consider that they contribute to meriting forgiveness. For when your sins are pardoned by Christ's faithfulness, why would anyone need to consider their works merit to this end?

How then do we explain the Scriptures that say "do this ... and live"? Or the Scriptures that promise death as the result of committing transgression?<sup>74</sup> Firstly, let us consider what it means to trust in God. In order to abide or continue in the salvation we have received, we must keep trusting in God. Consider the heavenly city, set on a high mountain. Now consider a path along a narrow ridge with sheer valley's on each side leading us to the city. Before we were saved, we lived at the bottom of the valley in fear the flood of death hanging over us. We had no way to climb the cliffs to reach the path. But Christ forgives our sins and sets us on the path of life. We must keep trusting him to stay on the path. If we stop trusting him, then we are choosing to go off the path, and the danger of slipping back into the

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<sup>74</sup> Transgression or Iniquity stands for serious sins of rebellion, and does not include non-serious sins of ignorance or circumstance. Paul's list in Gal. 5:19-21 is a list of transgressions.

valley increases. But we don't have to stop trusting. God made it possible for us to trust Him. So by trusting Him we keep what he has given us.

Trusting in God is the first of his commandments. For one who obeys the greatest commandment to love God trusts in Him.<sup>75</sup> When God forgives us, he puts us on the path. When he enables us to repent of sin, he is showing us how to walk up the path. By walking up the path, as he gives us righteousness, we are receiving real righteousness by His grace. However, we could choose to run back down the path and stumble back into the valley. By not making that choice we keep ourselves from trouble which he has already delivered us from. This is the teaching of Jesus in John:

KJV John 15:1-10 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. 2 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. 3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. 4 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. 5 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. 6 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. 7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. 8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. 9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. 10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

"Abide" means to remain or continue. We remain and continue on the path of God's love by obeying his commandments. If we rebel against his commandments, then we are jumping off the path of God's love right back down into the valley of destruction. We do not get on the path by our works, nor can we advance up the path by our works. Each step forward is by the grace of God and comes from His righteousness in Christ. But if after He has given one the ability to remain in what is right, one rebels and abandon's what is right to transgress, then one is choosing to abandon the path. Jesus says that such branches are cut off and thrown into the fire.

The first step in obedience is to put one's trust in God. Trusting in God is a necessary condition of salvation. Because this is so obvious, Calvin said that man does not have free will and that the trusting is caused by God. What really happens when a person hears the gospel is that God enables the person to trust. God's enabling does not mean the person has no free will.

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<sup>75</sup> Deut. 6:5.

A person who is able to trust God is also able not to trust Him. God gives the person ability to choose to trust him. He does not make the person trust him.

Calvin did not want there to be any condition that man had to meet for salvation. Therefore, he said that God caused trust.<sup>76</sup> The Calvinistic system automatically equates any condition for salvation that comes from man with meriting salvation by works. This includes man's exercising a God given ability to choose. Nevertheless, they overlook the fact that there are non-meritorious conditions that are not the instrument of grace. Christ is the instrument of grace, but to continue in God's grace we must keep choosing to remain in His righteousness.

This must be the case, because the Calvinistic system leads to contradictions of God's justice. First, God is not responsible for unbelief among those whom He calls. Second, God is judging the world for sin, and He did not make man sin. Man chose to sin. Third, God created man in his own image, and gives man the ability to freely love Him. Love is not coerced. God does not want little robots to worship him. That is why God needs to command us to love Him – to persuade us, not coerce us.

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<sup>76</sup> Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace are ye saved through faithfulness; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." In the Greek grammar, "that" refers to "by grace are ye saved through faithfulness"; (Wallace, pg. 334-335). The words "not of yourselves" is taken primarily from this fact: justice is done by Christ's faithfulness, and not ours. On a second level it can be read as a composite of God's faithfulness with our faithfulness, with the observation "and that not *from* yourselves" as the sense. In other words, our faithfulness comes from God, and not from us. It's point of origin is with Christ's righteousness. This does not mean that our faithfulness is deterministically caused by God. It only means that we got it from him in the first place, and therefore have no basis for boast, "not of works that perhaps any should boast about". Once we have been granted the ability to obey by God, it is still our duty and choice to do so. If the concept of "faith" is reduced the act of "choosing" and the "choosing" made a gift, then Calvin might be right, but the Greek grammar refutes this necessity (Wallace, pg. 335). Another text that might be cited by Calvinists is Acts 13:48, "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed", but the last clause should read "as many as were disposed to eternal life believed" ("*to dispose, frame, Ac. 13.48*" pg. 398 *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, ed. Harold K. Moulton, 1978, Zondervan; pg. 375, *as many as had become disposed toward eternal life*, Friberg, ANLEX, 2000). But even if we read "as were determined for eternal life", the text leaves the reasonable possibility that it was the Gentile believers who were determined to receive eternal life, and not some eternal Calvinistic decree of God before they were born.

The Calvinist doctrine of *total depravity* of all individuals is designed to keep them from offending their core belief: that humans can do nothing to please God either before being saved or after being saved. This is unrighteous because it turns people into robots and prevents them from willingly loving God. It is not the message of the Bible. (It what Satan wants people to think God is like, and steals the glory from Him of lovingly devoted subjects). The doctrine of *unconditional election* says that God predestined individuals<sup>77</sup> to be lost or saved before they sinned. This doctrine is unjust because God is condemning people before they sin, and steals from the glory and sovereignty of his justice. It goes along with the doctrine of imputing Adam's guilt to his descendents. This is unjust because no one but Adam committed Adam's sin (we inherit the sin nature though). The doctrine of *limited atonement* says that Christ died only for the elect. However, the Scripture says that he died for all men,<sup>78</sup> and not just the "elect". This doctrine is unjust because it causes us to second-guess God's love for all men in evangelistic efforts, and brings down his glory by making him prejudicial. The doctrine of *irresistible grace* says that the saved cannot thwart God's plan for their lives by rebellion or disobedience. It says that those God calls cannot resist his call such that the salvation of those He calls is certain. This underestimates man's choice, since "many are called, but few are chosen,"<sup>79</sup> and makes God unjustly responsible for the results. Additionally, the *perseverance of the saints*, or Once Saved Always Saved (OSAS) causes the believer to base their security on their election, just as ancient Israelites based their security on being born Jewish. Finally, picking up Luther's doctrine of *fictional righteousness*, rather than real imputed justice at the cross and imputed righteousness according to sanctification, he confuses the gospel with the concept of acquittal. But God said he would not render a favorable verdict for the wicked (Exodus 23:7). Since we are all wicked, we received an unfavorable verdict: guilty. And Christ paid the penalty so that we can be pardoned, and not acquitted.

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<sup>77</sup> The biblical doctrine of election concerns the nation of Israel, or the corporate body of believers. God chose to sanctify a people for himself from the creation of the world. Individuals opt out of God's plan by sinning, not by God condemning them before they are born.

<sup>78</sup> 1 John 2:2. By "for" John means it is available for anyone who chooses to trust in God, and not the predetermined "elect". In John's context, by the words "our sins" he is referring to Israel's sins, who are the elect.

<sup>79</sup> Matthew 22:14.

## *The Biblical Basis of Salvation Assurance*

The biblical basis of security is:

KJV 1 John 2:3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

KJV John 15:10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

We must remember that we remain in life by obeying God, and that the test of being in life is if we obey God. Therefore, *feeling* secure in salvation is conditional, but we can be somewhat objective about it because the fruit of the Spirit is objective and can be seen.

KJV John 13:35 By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

KJV 1 John 3:19 And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. 20 For if our **heart condemn** us, God is greater than our **heart**, and knoweth all things. 21 Beloved, if our **heart condemn** us not, *then* have we **confidence** toward God. 22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. 23 And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. 24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

John is saying here that it is possible for our heart to condemn us when we are not being condemned by God, because God knows everything about the matter, and our heart does not. But John is crystal clear here about how we should *assure our hearts before him ... because we keep his commandments ... and believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ*. He repeats the matter in vs. 24, "And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him".

The matter of security and assurance can be considered from our negative experiences. Does one who transgresses God's commands feel secure? If God is calling this person, the Spirit sees to it that he experiences guilt, and the Spirit sends doubt that man's way. Anyone who feels secure while in transgression rejects the Holy Spirit's conviction, and they may have put a false doctrine of security in His place. If we know God, then we have assurance, but if we do not know Him, then there is no assurance: