

## Enduring to the End

Mt. 24:8-13 At the time of the end there will be great persecutions and afflictions, and (true) Christians will be hated of all nations. Because of this many will be offended and betray, and hate, one another. There will also be many false prophets and deceptions. Verses 12-13 – “Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. **But he that endureth to the end shall be saved.**”

This begs the question, are we saved now, or only at the end? This is similar to the “kingdom of God” – some scriptures make it to be in the future, and yet we are told that “the kingdom of God is within you”.

It also is related to the relationship between the security of the believer, and the frequent warnings against backsliding, unbelief, and apostasy. Misunderstandings of these truths result in the errors of “once saved, always saved” on one side, and perpetual insecurity on the other. (“Are you saved? ... I hope so.”)

Actually there is some truth in “once saved, always saved” but it is frequently perverted by a cavalier attitude toward sin, as if we can live as we please and even sin with impunity, because once we are saved, God will never reject us. (This isn’t really all that different from the old Roman Catholic practice of selling “preemptive” indulgences.) Such a person is not saved at all, but is self-deluded. (1 Jn. 2:4, 3:6, 8-10)

Some who rail loudly against “Calvinism” (whatever they think that means, probably never having read anything about it), often live such insecure lives that they think God abandons them every time they fall into sin, and so need to get “saved” again. They often feel the need to earn God’s approval, even though they say that salvation can only be by faith. To them, salvation is almost completely in their own hands – first by “accepting” Christ by their own “free will”, and then by their own determination to stick with it, and not backslide. They think all God does is provide the means, and make the offer, but then it is totally up to us to accept it and live up to it.

What makes these issues perplexing is that there are scriptures that seem to support both sides. Whenever there seems to be a conflict between scriptures, the proper response is never to choose “these” verses instead of “those” verses, but to recognize that God does not contradict himself. We need to come to an understanding that satisfies ALL the pertinent references, not just some of them.

### What can we know about the security of the believer?

1. We have eternal life when we believe (not just after we die), and we can know it.

Jn. 3:36 – “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life ...” (1:12)

Jn. 5:24 – “... 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.”

1 Jn. 3:2 – “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

1 Jn. 5:13 – “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

2. It is God’s will that none of His chosen be lost, but all may be saved in the end.

Jn. 6:39-40 – “And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

3. The Father and the Son share in preserving those who believe.

Jn. 10:27-29 – “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.”

Jn. 17:11-12 – "... Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name; those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled."

Jude 1:1 – "... to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called"

### **What warnings are there which would temper this confidence in our own security?**

#### 1. Parables of warning

- a. The sower and the seed (Mt. 13, Mk. 4) – the seed by the wayside is of those who hear the gospel but do not respond, but the other two 'bad' examples are of people who did respond to the truth, and through shallow living, or the cares of this life, either abandoned the faith, or wasted their lives in fruitlessness.
- b. The ten wise and foolish virgins (Mt. 25) – the significance is that they were all virgins, yet five made no attempt to maintain the oil in their lamps, and were not ready when the bridegroom came.

#### 2. Qualifications, that we must continue in the truth

Jn. 8:31-32 – "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed: and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Col. 1:22-23 – "... to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel ..."

#### 3. Warnings of a great falling away

Mt. 24:12-13 – "... the love of many shall wax cold ..."

2 Thess. 2:3 – "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition"

[Not just saying "I am no longer a Christian", but a graying-down and denial of scriptural truths.]

#### 4. Admonitions to put aside sin and to be holy

Eph. 1:4 – "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him"

Heb. 12:14 – "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

#### 5. Grave warnings against apostasy

Heb. 10:26-39 (If we sin wilfully, ...)

2 P. 2:20-22 (better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than to turn ...)

#### 6. Examples of those who fell away

2 Tim. 4:10 – "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world"

Ray Boltz, Joshua Harris

How do we combine the two sides of the security of the believer with all these warnings? The simplest, but probably not complete, explanation is that there is a difference between those who make a profession of faith which turns out to be temporary, and those who are really the elect of God. From our side we can't tell the difference, but to put it plainly, many of those who fall away for whatever reason, were never really saved, external appearances notwithstanding. (see 1 Jn. 2:18-19) How far can a person "drift" from the faith and still be accepted by God in the end? Praise God that that is not in our place to say. He is the one who knows the hearts, and we must leave that in his hands. As for us, we should desire and determine to fight the good faith and keep it unto the end, and not be satisfied with getting into heaven "by the skin of our teeth."

An interesting scripture that shows both sides of this issue is in Jude, verses 21 and 24. Verse 21 says "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." But then verse 24 says "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy". Also 2 P. 1:5-10 ("... give diligence to make your calling and election sure")