



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

“Once Saved, Always Saved, or The Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints – IV:

Logical Objections”

TRANSCRIPT

Let’s open our meeting again with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for the opportunity in the study of the word of God again. And we pray, as we consider this great doctrine of eternal life, that our hearts may be strengthened through the study of the Scriptures and that our spiritual lives may be different as a result of the understanding of the word of God. We commit the hour to Thee now for thy blessing upon us.

In Jesus’ name. Amen.

[Message] Now, if you’ll remember we have been studying, for the last few Monday nights, the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. And we considered this doctrine positively first, which probably was a psychological mistake, but we looked at the biblical support for the doctrine and then we looked at the logical support for the doctrine. Although, of course, the logical support is in one sense biblical as well. But in our last study we began to consider some of the objections that had been raised to the doctrine of eternal life or eternal security. And we looked first, or we were in the process

of looking at, the biblical objections to this doctrine. And as you can see, tonight we want to finish them up and then consider some logical objections that have been raised to the doctrine of eternal security. Some that I am sure that if you ever told anyone that you believed in eternal security you have encountered. And we will close with just a few moments discussion of the design of the doctrine of eternal life.

Now, we were looking at the biblical objections to the doctrine. And you will remember that I pointed out that there were passages that dealt with mere profession. And that these passages are often used as material to object to the doctrine of eternal life and I referred to such passages as Hebrews chapter 6 and 2 Peter chapter 2. These are passages that have to do with warnings against apostasy and they deal with mere profession. They are not the only passages. There are others, but this is the type of passage. Then we looked at a passage that dealt with legalism, Galatians chapter 5, verse 4. And we spoke for a few moments about falling from grace and pointed out that the expression falling from grace does not mean you fall from salvation, it means to fall from the grace method of salvation, and the way in which in we fall from grace is by falling into law. And so if after we have become Christians, we are led astray by some who would have us do additional things besides believing in Jesus Christ in order to be saved, we are in danger of falling from grace not from salvation. There are not many passages of this kind but this particular passage, Galatians chapter 5 in verse 4, is one of that kind.

Then thirdly, we looked at passages that dealt not with salvation but fellowship. And we considered 2 Peter chapter 1, in verse 10, and I made reference to 1 Corinthians chapter 10 in verse 12, and James chapter 5 in verse 12. These are passages which speak about the possibility of falling but not falling from salvation falling from fellowship. The passage in 2 Peter and specifically should be translated stumble. And so it has to do with stumbling in our Christian walk. And then we dealt with the passage in 1 John chapter 5, verse 16 and 17, which was a passage that dealt with discipline. And I pointed out that there is such a thing of sin unto death not spiritual death but physical death but that sin is

no specific sin it is any persisted sin or persistent sin that could be sin of the physical death not spiritual death, but it is possible for us to throw men in disobedience to God that his discipline is exercised in our lives we as the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 11 we may become weak, sickly and it may be necessary for God to take our physical lives. In other words, we may be good enough for heaven but not good enough for the earth.

Now, someone came up to me afterwards and said what in the world did you mean by that statement? And so perhaps I should explain. Our entrance into heaven is determined by what Jesus Christ did for us and, consequently, each one of us has the same right and title to heaven as any other person. But our continuing service on the earth is dependent upon our usefulness and need becomes so useless to the law that a contradiction to the teaching of the word of God concerning the lives of Christians, it is possible for others to blaspheme because of our failure to follow the word and will of God. It may be completely necessary for God to take our physical lives, in other words, to take a poll ahead of our time so to speak.

Now, in that case, we are good enough for the heaven for we have believed in Jesus Christ and his finished work is the basis of our salvation, but we are not useful to the Lord on the earth, and so family discipline is exercised that he takes us home. Well, that’s a very serious thing. It does go on and, of course, we have a very difficult time in never saying this is true of any one person that we know. I have known of experiences of people who confess on their deathbed that they were Christians but that they have been living in sin and they felt that God was taking their physical life. But beyond that we would have no reason for really knowing because we are human beings. But we do know that in the Bible that such a thing exists. Israel committed sin unto death in the wilderness. And after they had persistently sinned, God finally found it necessary to allow that generation to perish in the wilderness. And remember only Caleb and Joshua were allowed to go into the promise land. There the whole nation committed sin into physical death.

Now, we want to move on because we have a lot of material to cover tonight. And if I am able to cover it, you should all hear me at the end because it is a lot of material and I want to try and finish it tonight because we have been four times on the doctrine of eternal security.

The fifth type of passage that we have in the New Testament, which is often used as an objection to the doctrine of eternal security, is the passage that deals with reward. And I want you to turn for one passage to 1 Corinthians chapter 9 in verse 27, 1 Corinthians chapter 9 in verse 27. This is the famous passage and probably most of you have read it, have wondered about it, perhaps even have reached the conclusion with regards to it. What Paul describes for us beginning at the 24th verse something of his Christian experience and he says in verse 24.

“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And everyone that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air” perhaps a reference to shadow boxing. “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”

Or if you have a Bible with the marginal note, you’ll notice that the Greek word is *apodokimazo*, which means disapprove. So really what the apostle is speaking about is not castaway in the sense of losing his spiritual life but he means disapproved that he is disapproved for the prize. He likens the Christian to a person who runs in the race. And we enter the race when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so because we are entrants in the race our running is for a prize and the one who runs successfully receives the reward. A man who does not run successfully who loses can still run, but he has been disapproved for the prize. So the passage has to do with reward. Go to verse 17,

For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.”

So Paul has already let us know he’s going to talk about reward and in verse 24 he says,

“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all [that is everybody runs], but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.”

Now, other passages along this line are perhaps Revelations chapter 2, verse 10, Revelations chapter 3 in verse 11. So there are passages in the Bible which have to do with reward. And when we’re thinking of the doctrine of eternal security and someone offers a text opposed to it, well let’s remember that this is a possible interpretation of some of those passages that seem to be the arguments against eternal security.

Now, the sixth type of passage was a passage dealing with present salvation. That is salvation from the power of sin in our daily life. Remember that the New Testament speaks of several types of salvation. It speaks of salvation from the penalty of sin. That takes place when you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. It speaks about salvation from the presence of sin. That takes place when we are caught up to be the Lord and me. In the mean time, the struggle that goes on in our Christian life is the struggle to be free from the power of sin in our daily life. And there are passages that have to do with present salvation. Perhaps Philippians 2, verses 12 and 13 is a good illustration of this. Paul says in verse 12 of Philippians 2,

“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

Well, that would seem at first as if it were possible for men to lose his salvation “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” And he adds in verse 13 “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” I resist the temptation to say anything about verse 13. I want you to notice that what Paul is saying in verse 12 is addressed to Christians. They are to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. And what Paul means is simply this they are to work out but God has already worked in by his marvelous grace. And the fear and trembling referred to here is not the fear and trembling of losing our salvation from the penalty of sin or losing our right to enter heaven, but it’s the fear and trembling of not being delivered from the power of sin in our daily lives.

And finally, we referred to in our outline to passages that deal with physical situations. That is the salvation or the passage that is under discussion is a passage that refers to physical deliverance and not spiritual at all. Let’s turn over to Matthew chapter 24 in verse 13 for an illustration. I think I should not have said “at all” but the passage’s meaning is not primarily physical.

Now, in the midst of the Olivet Discourse, which some of some studied a few months ago, do you remember that Jesus said as he described the things that come to pass in the future during the time of the great tribulation or at least the period of Israel’s seventieth week we read in verse 13 “And he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”

Now, that word saved is a word that refers to our physical salvation, primarily and the salvation of those who shall be on the earth at that time. In other words, during the midst of the great tribulation there is going to be lawful judgments that are poured from God. On earth, there are going to be all kinds of sorrows, which he refers to in verse 8 and he that endures to the end the same shall be delivered from these physical disturbances that are going to take place upon the earth.

Now, I do think that that also involves spiritual salvation but the primary reference is deliverance from the physical judgments of the great tribulation period. So “He that endures to the end the same shall be saved them.” It’s a passage that doesn’t really have to do with spiritual salvation at all primarily. Now, it’s contradiction. It does not have to do with it primarily. It does secondary, but the passage used to refer to our spiritual salvation primarily.

Now, we want to look on to the logical objections that have been raised to this doctrine. I think that probably these are the most serious objections that have been raised to the doctrine of eternal security. In the first one there’s a problem of freedom. Now, what I mean by this is it is often said that if you believe a man is once saved, always saved then that man becomes a machine. He becomes an automaton and, consequently, his freedom is destroyed by the doctrine that says “Once saved always saved.” We in a sense make the man a kind of machine and he’s bound to get in heaven. And so it has been said that this doctrine of eternal security, the certainty of our day in heaven, is a certainty that is contradictory to human freedom. In other words, we should have freedom to fall if we like, freedom to apostatize if we like, freedom to turn away from the Lord if we like, but if we say that a person “Once saved is always saved,” his character becomes fixed and he is no longer free.

Now, perhaps you never had anyone offer that objection to you, but it has been offered. Now, I’d like to say a word about freedom at this point because I think that it is still misunderstood. Augustine was right when he said that “Freedom is not the ability to choose between the right and the wrong.” Will you let me say that again? Because almost everybody thinks it is. Augustine, who thought a great deal about these things, he was one of the really outstanding men of the Christian church. Augustine said “Freedom is not the ability to choose between the right and the wrong. Freedom is the ability always to choose the right.” That’s freedom. In other words, when a man always chooses that which is right then he’s free and if he has that ability to do it, he is free.

Freedom is not the ability to choose the right and the wrong. You’re not persuaded. So I’ll ask you another question. Is God free? Of course, God is free. What does he choose? What must he choose? What is he bound to choose? Why he’s bound to choose what’s right. Freedom for God is the ability to always choose what is right. He is perfectly free for he operates in accordance with his nature.

Now, that means that a man is free when he is finally in the places where God intended him to be. If we are made to be creatures in subjection to God, we are never free until we are in our creaturely position of subjection to God. When the will of God becomes our will then we are free. For then we are able to do what we should do. So the idea that this is a violation of man’s freedom is wrong. We could lodge the same objection against God. He cannot choose the evil. As a matter of fact, God cannot sin the Bible says. The Bible he cannot lie. Is he not free? Perfectly free. In fact, the only really free person in all of the universe apart from divine enablement is God. The new life in the believer is chosen to choose the right and reject the wrong. So that man becomes free when he comes into harmony with the will of God and only then can he do what he ought to do. So that objection is the objection of an ignorant man, an unthinking man. Well let’s not hear it from you.

Capital B - A problem of license. Now, this one is more common. It is said that one who believes this teaching will go forth and live like the devil because this doctrine induces a false security. Once saved always saved I can try to live as I please. The reverse is actually the case. For the one who is assured of successfully reaching the presence of God has the best possible stimulus to ever greater exertion because he has the hope of success. But let’s be more specific. What’s wrong with this objection? The objection “All right you can go out and live as you please.” Well, in the first place, it fails to understand the change that takes place when a man believes. You’re not the same kind of person anymore. You see when a person comes to know Jesus Christ the savior



what happens to him? Is it all outward? Is his name just written in heaven, is that what happens? Oh no, there’s a tremendous transformation that takes place in this person.

In fact, Paul calls it a “New creation.” You are born again. You’re a different person. You’ll never be the same person again. Do you know once you have believed in Jesus Christ, you can never be what you were before. God has made you into a different person. You are created, born of God. So the man who says “Ah, you believe once saved, always saved; you can go out and live like the devil. That man doesn’t understand what has happened to the Christian when he has believed in Jesus Christ. The new life desires to please the Lord Jesus Christ. Mr. Host once said directly the one enjoying most of Christ will seek most to please him. But that’s the only objection to this objection. There’s another thing that happens when a man is born again and he becomes a new creature, he cannot go out and live like the devil because he has become a member of a family.

And what takes place in God’s family. Tell me. Discipline. Discipline. Now, that doesn’t take place in many families on the earth these days, but it does take place in God’s family. Discipline. Discipline. So I cannot live like I want to live, if by that it means live contrary to the word of God. Discipline is a fact of the family of God. Well, let me just read a passage, Hebrews chapter 12 beginning at the 5th verse.

The writer of the epistle say “And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”

Did you see that? Did you notice that wonderful, that really wonderful universalism of family discipline “He scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” If you get to heaven without any disciplining or any scourging, you will be a most unusual

exception. As a matter of fact, the Bible says “If you do without chastisement, 8<sup>th</sup> verse, whereof all are partakers then are ye bastards and not sons. So every child of God is going to have some disciplining, some chastening, some scourging from the Lord. Why? Because we need it, that’s why. Because we need it. Now, of course, we cannot then go out and live as we please. Not only are we new creatures but we are in the family of God.

Some years ago I read an illustration of a Nigerian preacher. He was a white man, and he was expounding the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Epistle to the Romans to the congregation. And all of the people who were in his congregation with a few exceptions were black men who did wear shoes. They didn’t really know what it was to wear shoes. And when he came to the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter which begins remember “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” He began by telling an illustration of something that was common to all of them in the audience.

In Nigeria, in those days, the children used to run all over the hills of that country barefooted, and naturally as they ran over the rocky hills and stony paths they managed to get splinters and thorns and other things in their feet. And in Nigeria there was sold in the market a little steel prod, which was very useful in extracting the things out of their feet like thorns and other things that came into them as they ran over those rocky and difficult places to run. So he began to expound to the congregation this text. And he spoke about the fact of a man longing to possess this steel prod and finally being able to buy it.

And then he said “Now did this man when you brought this steel prod, which was able to remove the thorn from the feet, did this man cry out “Now I can run in thorny paths with impunity and make no more difference for now I have a prod which you tell me removes the thorns that may pierce my feet.” And the preacher concluded by saying “What then shall we continue to walk freely upon thorns in order that we may use a steel prod to remove those that pierce us God forbid.” And he went on to point that, after all, that

thorn wound may become infected, may leave a scar, may even simply lamen our walk. So the fact that we have a remedy does not mean that we’re going to, therefore, take advantage of what we possess. It’s just like a man who would say today “I just bought myself a blue cross hospitalization policy with blue shield protection and now I don’t really care what happens to me. I could fall off a building and break a leg and my injuries are all paid.” It is just as ridiculous as that for us to say because we know that we are safe and secure we can live as we please.

Now, of course, it also fails to consider the fact of reward. Remember the Bible speaks about reward. Paul spoke about it in 1 Corinthians chapter 9. So the man who says if you believe “Once saved always saved” then you can just live like the devil. He forgets that a Christian is not only a new Christian, not only is there family discipline but also God a system of rewards. And if I live as I please contrary to the will of God then I may stand the possibility of losing my reward. As John says in his 2nd epistle in the 8<sup>th</sup> verse, I will read it you needn’t look there because you couldn’t possible find it in time, verse 8 of 2 John “Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.”

And then fourth, I’ll say one more thing in objection to this objection. The person who says “Once saved always saved” then you could just live like the devil that is an invitation to license forgets the danger of doubt. After all, doubt about my salvation produces insecurities and it produces lack of diligence. As a matter of fact, it is just the opposite from this objection; the man who is always doubtful about his salvation is not diligent because it doesn’t mean as much to him, and he is unstable. And, I think, I could give you illustration after illustration of this.

At Dallas seminary we used to receive students from a certain school out on the Pacific coast which taught you could be saved one day and lost the next and saved the third day and lost the fourth. And we used to get these students and, inevitably, I have hardly known one of them who accepted the teaching. We did have a few people who

went to that school who didn’t accept the teaching. But of all of the students who have come to our seminary, we have a number of them through the years that have come from that school. Those that accepted that doctrine they were unstable because you see when a man is doubtful about his salvation that is instability. If a man is always worrying about the foundation, he’s not going to build the proper superstructure upon it.

Now, let me just give you a practical illustration. I’ve even heard people say it is immoral to teach “Once saved always saved.” Immoral because of this tendency to license. And I would like to turn the tables, I would like to say it is immoral to teach that you can lose your salvation for this reason. Let me illustrate. Let’s suppose that I decide that I’ve been preaching long enough and I should go out and work for a living now. [Laughter] And so I look around and I go in one of these shopping centers, and I notice that there is a place that is vacant and I decide that I want to put in a shoe store. And it has been used before and it’s in somewhat bad condition. And so I inquire about owning it on this particular space. And I am told that the company will be very glad to lease out that piece of property to me.

But I say to the man who is leasing the property to me “I would like to spend some money on this particular space because it really looks bad. It needs some improvement.” And the man said “Well that’s wonderful. I’d be just delighted.” And I say “As a matter of fact, I’d like to spend ten or fifteen thousand dollars before we move in just to bring it back up into good condition. He says “Fine.” And so I say “Well all right draw up the lease.” And so he draws up the lease. And I am careful enough to read the lease before I sign it, and I notice that it’s a standard lease but there has also been another provision in it that reads something like this “This property may revert to the leaser on ten days notice.” Well I take that to the man I say “Wait a minute. I said “If I spend fifteen or twenty thousand dollars making this property the kind of property that I want it to be and you say that you can take it back within ten days, at any time, well my

investment is in jeopardy. Now, I don’t spend any money on the property if you can take it back at any moment.”

And so don’t you see if God has saved us and brought us into eternal life and we can lose it the next moment, then who is going to bother to spend any money on the improvements? You’re not going to be concerned about what you have. And it is inevitably true that the man who does not believe in eternal security, the man who does not believe in the doctrine of eternal life is not willing really to devote the time and energy to the maintenance of the relationship with the Lord.

And further the time and the discipline and the hard work necessary to please the Lord. So I challenge you. In fact, I accuse you. If you believe that a man may be saved at one moment and then lost the next you believe an immoral doctrine, ultimately. A doctrine that is destructive of stable Christian living and service. So the problem is not the problem of license. We’ve satisfactorily handled that. Now, that’s forever gone.

Capital C - The problem of the admonition. Well Dr. Johnson, what about all these warnings in the Bible? What about Romans chapter 14 in verse 15. What about 1 Corinthians chapter 8 in verse 11? What about Hebrews chapter 3, verse 12? “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in apostatizing from the living God.” Now, the key to this problem as with many is to realize that security or the doctrine of eternal life is not just an abstract theory, but it’s woven into the warmth of human life and experience. The interplay between grace and faith must continue in the daily life. And the aim of this interplay is to keep our hearts constantly looking to him.

There are two explanations for the admonitions in the Bible. In the first place, there is God’s appeal to the mere professor such as Hebrews chapter 3, verse 12 “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you (in any of you) an evil heart of unbelief, in apostatizing from the living God.” It may be that there is someone in this congregation who has made a profession of faith but it’s not really a genuine possession of it. And so beware, beware of apostasy. For if after you’ve received all of this life you turn away,

then it’s impossible to renew yet again unto repentance. But not only are they appeals to the mere professor, these admonitions of the Scripture, but they are also God’s means to secure the end of perseverance. In other words, God gives us warning in order that they might be moved by him in preserving us in our salvation. So his warnings are means to the end.

Let’s not fail to look at the warnings and respond to them and know wherein the danger lies. In the Canons of Dort, it is put this way and, I think, I agree with this. “And as it has pleased God by the preaching of the gospel to begin this work of grace in us, so ye preserve, continue, and perfects it by the hearing and reading of his word, by meditation thereof and by the exaltation, threatenings and promises thereof, as well as by the use of the second.” In other words, admonition points out the way of error and impels in the true way. And God in his preservation of us in the faith uses the promises of the word of God, he uses the admonition. So these are means to the end.

It’s just as if I might warn my daughter. I can remember when I used to warn Gracie all the time. She had a tendency to fall. And I would warn her over and over again now “Gracie be careful. Don’t fall. You’ll break a leg.” And frequently, when she was just a little girl and she had this proneness to falling I would hold her hand and say “Now Grace don’t fall, don’t fall” holding her hand the whole time in order that she might learn to be careful. And the same thing is true with the warnings of Holy Scriptures, God holds our hand while he warns us all the time to teach us carefully because as a child of God we should be careful. So the warnings and admonitions are means to the end. There are ways to use it in preserving us and bringing us into his presence.

Four, D – The problem of contingency. What about all those “if” passages Dr. Johnson? What about all those “if” passages? Well let’s let you take a look at one of them Hebrews chapter 3 in verse 6. You know lots of “if” passages perhaps but here is one “But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” You know, what about that

"if"? Contingency. "Christ as son over his own house whose house are we, if hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hold firm unto the end." What if we don't? What if we don't? If we don't does that mean that we lose our salvation? No. If we don't, it means we never had it. If you notice he says "Whose house are we?" It will become his house by holding fast. We prove that we are by holding fast. For you see, the Bible teaches that the true saints will persevere till the end. What about these warnings or these "if" passages then? Some of them involve rewards or discipline, again the answer to them is as the answer of the passages that are warnings. They're designed to be the means to secure our perseverance or they are the means to test our profession. Are we really of the house of Jesus Christ?

You know when you read a text like that that's the question you should ask yourself. You shouldn't just read over it and say well I believe in eternal security. I'm not going pay any attention to that verse. Well, that's not the way to read the Bible. The way to read the Bible is to read it proved that "Christ as the son over his own house whose house are we if hold fast?" Am I holding fast? Am I holding fast? That's the way you should read those passages. They are a test for profession and they are means to preserve the genuine faith Jesus cared for and so on.

The problem of prayer. Now, if we believed "Once saved always saved" then why pray? Again, the answer is simple I think. Prayer is perfectly consummate with security for again we have that which is divine as a means by God for the obtaining of a certain end. Professor Berkhofer, one of our great contemporary theologians, a sound man has said "We can see here especially that perseverance is not a speculation about continuity but that we persevere only through the exercise of faith and prayer." We begin our means God uses to preserve us.

You know, I'm getting warm. Are you all warm? We need some air-conditioning. Does anyone know how to turn on the air-conditioning? Richard, do you? Okay thanks. Might save us a few drops of perspiration.

Sixth, the problem of temptation. Problem of temptation. The problem of temptation is real to some but the answer is found in the desire of God to educate and refine the believer not to lose them. Why does God bring us temptation? Well, let’s turn to one of them. Turn to Luke chapter 22, verse 31 and 32. I guess this is really the classic illustration of temptation because of the revelation of truth that is contained within it. Luke chapter 22, verse 31 and verse 32, find it, okay.

“And the Lord said ‘Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.’”

Peter found the foundation of continuity in his life not his own constancy in the faith but the Lord. Notice “I have prayed for thee. Satan desires to have you that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.” Before the test, he rested in his own faith and love, afterwards in the Lord. He made a contribution to the total forsakenness of the man of sorrows by his reaction to our Lord. But he was kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation and I think that is probably why Peter writes those words in 1 Peter.

He knew what it was to be thrown into the midst of temptation and he knew what it was to fail and in the midst of failure and even his denial of the Lord he discovered he was kept through it all. So temptations are not designed to trip us up because to lose our salvation they are designed to strengthen us in our faith and to impress upon us the fact that it is God who keeps us through all the experiences of life even when we fail. Isn’t that amazing really when you think about it?

Remember I told the illustration or we referred to the illustration of Peter sinking and Jesus did not say “Too bad Peter your faith failed, so long.” And when Peter denied the Lord, denied him thrice, he did not say well too bad Peter “Once saved now lost.” He



didn’t say that. You remember that when after he arose from the dead he said “Go tell the disciples and Peter.” In other words, Peter was even singled out for special attention. Jesus gives special attention to those who’ve fallen. Now, Peter didn’t lose his salvation. He learned that God kept him in the midst it. That’s when wrote his epistle, we are kept by the power of God through faith, the faith that brought us to him in the first place, and with this faith we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed at the last time. Peter of all the apostles came to understand what it was to be kept by the temptations and even by his fall. Now, we don’t like to say that falls are good, but Peter’s fall was good for us.

Capital G - The problem of experience. Now, this is, well we could talk for a long time about this - The problem of experience. You know, you will talk to people about eternal security, you’ll answer all the problems, all the questions, and present all the positive evidence and somebody will come up “But I knew somebody who was a Christian and he was a faithful Christian and a fruitful Christian and now he is completely lost.”

Now, the first thing you should remember is that truth is not settled by experience. Truth is settled by the teaching of the word of God. Truth is the truth of the word. Every experience is an uncertain foundation for our faith. Experiences, you see, can be interpreted in different ways. In fact, I think, it is true to say that no experience that is not wedded to the words of holy Scripture is a genuine Christian experience. So experience is secondary. There are too many Christians who are basing their doctrine upon their experiences instead of looking at what the Bible teaches. If they relied upon what God teaches then their experiences would become joyous and happy and fruitful.

Now, let’s remember that we cannot refuse to believe a doctrine because someone says “I’ve had an experience contrary to it.” For example, take the question of speaking in tongues. If the Bible teaches that we should not expect anyone to speak in tongues today, then when someone comes and says “But I’ve had the experience” that should not

disturb you in the slightest. It is what the Bible teaches that counts not life’s experiences. So when a person comes and says “I know someone who was saved and then lost.” Just remember truth is settled by the word of God not by what we think someone’s experience is. Our knowledge is so limited that we cannot really know of a certainty the spiritual experience of anyone except ourselves and even then we can be confused about our own. We do know this, as far as the Bible is concerned, no Bible character was ever saved and then lost. There is no illustration of that in the Bible. No Bible character was ever saved and then lost.

Second, there is no record of a double baptism for salvation. In other words, there is no record of a person who was saved and baptized and then was baptized again in order to express his faith that brought salvation. We have the one illustration of the disciples of John the Baptist who underwent John’s baptism and then the Apostle Paul baptized them. But he said “It was related to their acceptance of the Holy Spirit.” And they have not lost their salvation. They were the disciples of John the Baptist. There is no illustration of a person who was saved, baptized, lost his salvation, and then was rebaptized. And remember even in the Roman Catholic Church, which believes you can lose your salvation, admitted that there was enough of the value of the original baptism that you don’t have to be rebaptized but that, of course, is just purely a doctrine that was created out of a figment of some Roman theologians mind. It’s not in the Bible at all.

So appeal has been made to do Judas because we know Judas was lost. He was one of the apostles. And then we know he was lost because he’s called the son of perdition. And then it said Judas repented Matthew chapter 27 in verse 30. But when you look at that text, you discover it’s not the word for repentance that is ordinarily used it’s the word for regret. Instead of the word *metanoeo*, it is the word *metamelomai*.

Now, this word means to regret, *metamelomai*. The [word] up here means to change the mind that means, to repent. But *metamelomai* means to regret. It’s the kind of word that you would use to describe the feeling of your child, who has done

something wrong, and whom bring in and you put him over your knees and bring out the latest strap or whatever it is you use to punish a child with. And you begin to punish the child with the brush I guess. And the child says “I’m sorry daddy. I’m sorry daddy. I’m sorry daddy.” But he’s not really sorry for what he did, he’s sorry for what’s happening to him right at that moment. Now that is *metamelomai*. He regrets what’s happened to him. And you see what happened to Judas was death. Because he had rejected Jesus Christ, he never was anything more than a professor. He was the apostle of perdition. He was the apostle who had never really been born again but now having betrayed Jesus Christ and having gone into such deep darkness, there came into his spirit a sense of lostness that caused him to make the ultimate rebellion against God which is suicide.

And so he said “I have sinned and I have betrayed the innocent blood.” The text says that he regretted himself. He regretted what had happened in his heart. For when a man is out of fellowship with God he’s very unhappy, even Christians are unhappy. But the man who is was responsible for the death of Jesus Christ, humanly speaking, that man surely had a horrible feeling in his heart and cried out, out of his regret, not out of his repentance. Judas was not a man who was saved then lost then saved again. Judas was never saved.

Now, what is the design of the doctrine of eternal security? I have just stated very briefly that the doctrine of eternal security is designed to be an incentive to holy living. I think this is hinted in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 30 where we read “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” In other words, we have security and we should not grieve the one who has secured us for the day of redemption. So it is an incentive to holy living what God has done for us, this wonderful work of salvation, this wonderful work of bringing us to the knowledge of God and giving himself to preserve us in the faith that should be an incentive to holy living. And my dear friend, if you believe in eternal security and it does not affect your life, you do

not really believe in as the New Testament desires that you believe in it. For if you believe this doctrine your life should be holier because do believe.

Now, secondly, it has an incentive to service. That is expressed in passages like Philippians 2:12 and 13, 2 Timothy chapter 1, verse 12 may be a good illustration. Paul says “I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” Isn’t that a wonderful affirmation of faith “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” And then before he says that he says this “For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed.”

In other words, in the midst of his suffering in the midst of his service to the Lord, he was strengthened by the knowledge that God was able to teach that which he had committed unto him against that day. And so my dear Christian friends, if you believe in the doctrine of eternal security, your service should be a better service for the Lord as a result of it. You should not be discouraged by persecution. You should not be discouraged by difficulties in the way of serving the Lord.

And finally, it is an incentive to worship. I think that is so evident in, for example, the benediction of Jude 24 and 25 or 1 Peter chapter 1, verses 3 through 5, either one of these. Remember Peter says as he begins his epistle “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” And he concludes that wonderful expression of worship to God and praise of God and blessing God by saying “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” In other words, the knowledge of our security is the incentive to the worship of God. And so my dear Christian friends, if you believe in eternal security of our God, the eternal security of yourself because of his preserving power, you should not only have an incentive to holy living, an incentive to service, but you should have further an incentive to the worship of

God because you are kept by him. So don’t talk about believing in this doctrine without there being the accompaniment of a deeper Christian life.

You know, I have a friend. He’s a wonderful friend. I’ve referred to him before because there are many things about him that stood out. He was a Braniff pilot. And many years ago, when I was preaching in the city of Dallas in one of the churches here, we had J. Vernon McGee for some meetings. And my friend was not attending any church. He had just moved back. He had been living in South America flying for Braniff down there. And he moved back and he looked in the paper. And he saw that Vernon McGee was going to be here and he knew about Dr. McGee. And he said, as he looked at that advertisement, “Well any church that would have J. Vernon McGee there must be a pretty sound church.” So he came to church afterwards. I don’t think he was able to come to the McGee meeting and he came.

And he became a very regular attender listening to the ministry of the word. If I ever wanted any encouragement I always looked to him because he would be sitting over about right here about in the third row always. And he never took his eyes off of the preacher, and if he ever started talking about the cross of Jesus Christ tears would start running down his face real slowly. And so if I ever thought I was not doing too well, I always looked over to him, started talking about the cross and I could see the tears begin to come down his face.

Now, outside of a meeting like this he was just about as hard as you would ever imagine a person to be, tenderhearted underneath but very hard outwardly. And I knew a lot of Braniff pilots, and he was one of the top men in the Braniff organization even then. And I knew some of the copilots and they were afraid to death of flying with this man because he was so demanding. And he had a reputation among them, but he was a man who was very tenderhearted and he loved the Lord and he did a lot for the Lord’s work. He never went around and told anybody about anything that he did, but I knew a number of things that he did.

When I was in Edinburgh, Scotland, he corresponded with me and over there I had received a letter from him. I had recommended to him, he wanted to study the Bible a little more deeply, and I recommended to him that he get Dr. Chafer’s systematic theology. And I received a letter from him April the 21<sup>st</sup> 1960, in Scotland, and these words were in that letter. And I thought they were so wonderful, I just copied them down and I’ve read them a number of times. Some of you have heard them before. This is what he said “I’ve almost finished Dr. Chafer’s volume on soteriology and I’m telling you it has been a terrific blessing to my old sinful being. I absolutely wallow in it. Particularly do I thrill at his discourses on the eternal security of the believer.

I only read these volumes at the hotel on my trips. So I go rather slowly. This is the third volume of the set, as you well know. Almighty God certainly outfitted Dr. Chafer with tremendous ability. And I am so tickled to think the Spirit of God caused me to buy that set of books in order that my dim eyes could receive more of his glorious light. Actually, Lewis, I have to lay the book down at times as the richness of it is more than I can take at once. These have taught in small way what a terrific privilege it is to be a Christian, and the untold vastness of riches and blessings we have for now and eternity. How glad I am that I had nothing to do with it. I can even praise him that he generated the very action in my heart that caused me to believe. He believes that faith is a gift. For I know that if I had even the slightest bit to do with it the whole thing would be contaminated. What a God. What a creator. Yea what a savior.

And Dr. Chafer would especially like that statement about I have to lay the book down because he used to tell us, as seminary students, that often in the study of the Scriptures late at night God would just seem to give him so much truth that he used to soon have to close the book and Don’t Lord, no more. No more. I cannot take anymore.

Now, you know, that’s the way the doctrine of eternal security should affect us as Christians and I hope our studies in it lead to that. If they lead to nothing else, a deeper Christian experience because we know that we have eternal life. Let’s bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for this wonderful truth, and we pray O God that it may influence our lives to more deeply appreciate the lord Jesus Christ and more faithfully serve him.

For his namesake. Amen.