



**“DOES THE NEW  
TESTAMENT TEACH -  
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ETERNAL  
SECURITY’?”**

## CHAPTER 8

# ***“DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACH – ‘CONDITIONAL ETERNAL SECURITY’?”***

*During the early days of Christianity, when a bitter persecution was being waged against many Christians, Polycarp (the aged and godly bishop of Smyrna) was brought before the Roman proconsul who commanded him to deny Christ, saying, "Consider thyself, and have pity on thy own great age." The Roman proconsul urged Polycarp to 'swear by the fortune of Caesar'- to 'repent' that he was a follower of Christ. Said the proconsul to this aged and influential Christian bishop, "Swear and I will release thee; reproach Christ." With unflinching and steadfast faith in the living Christ, Polycarp gave his never-to-be-forgotten answer: "Eight and six years have I served him, and he never once wronged me; how then shall I blaspheme my King, who hath saved me?" The proconsul again urged him, "Swear by the fortune of Caesar." Polycarp replied, "Since you still vainly strive to make me swear by the fortune of Caesar as you express it, affecting ignorance of my real character, bear me frankly declaring what I am - I am a Christian- and if you desire to learn the Christian doctrine, assign me a day, and you shall hear." Hereupon the proconsul said, "I have wild beasts; and I will expose you to them, unless you repent." Replied Polycarp: "Call for them, for repentance with us is a wicked thing, if it is to be change from the better to the worse, but a good thing if it is to be change from evil to good." Then the proconsul said; "I will tame thee with fire since you despise the wild beasts, unless you repent." Then said Polycarp, "You threaten me with fire, which burns for an hour, and is soon extinguished; but the fire of the future judgment, and of eternal punishment reserved for the ungodly, you are ignorant of. But why do you delay? Do whatever you please." After his persecutors had gathered wood for his burning, they next planned to fasten him to the stake, but Polycarp said; "Leave me as I am; for he who giveth me strength to sustain the fire, will enable me also, without your securing me with nails, to remain without flinching in the pile." His persecutors bound him without nailing him, and this courageous old man prayed: "O Father, I bless thee that thou hast counted me worthy to receive my portion among the number of martyrs." As soon as Polycarp had uttered the word "amen", the officers lighted the fire. It is then recorded: "The flame, forming the appearance of an arch, as the sail of a vessel filled with wind, surrounded, as with a wall, the body of the martyr; which was in the midst, not as burning flesh, but as gold and silver refining in the furnace." (Foxe's Book of Martyrs; pages 22-24)*

*Promises the Lord of the Church: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life!" Polycarp left his burning flesh behind, to take his place at the feet of the Savior, along with all the Christian martyrs of the ages. The aged bishop of Smyrna enjoys the ever-enlarging company of those who have chosen to sacrifice their earthly lives for Christ, rather than denying their Lord. It is reported that there were more Christians who died for 'the Faith' in the twentieth century than in all the other centuries put together! Recently it was reported that there were more than 150,000 Christians who died because of their faith in Christ - in one year alone!*

*One of the great modern martyrs was Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a key German figure who arose as a witness to Christian faithfulness against the evil onslaughts of Hitler during the Second World War. Because of his bold stand against the Nazi regime, he was imprisoned along with many other uncompromising believers among the "confessing Church" (of which Bonhoeffer was a 'key figure'). In the gray dawn of Sunday, April 9, 1945, just before the end of the War, Dietrich Bonhoeffer whispered to his fellow prisoners as he left his cell to be hanged on the Flossenburg gallows, "This is the end for me, the beginning of life."*

*As he awaited his own martyrdom in a Roman prison, the apostle Paul wrote the following words to Timothy, Paul's 'son in the Faith': "And so I solemnly urge you before God and before Christ Jesus - who will someday judge the living and the dead when he appears to set up his Kingdom- to preach the Word of God urgently at all times, whenever you get the chance, in season and out, when it is convenient and when it is not. Correct and rebuke your people when they need it, encourage them to do right, and all the time be feeding them patiently with God's Word. Stand steady, and do not be afraid of suffering for the Lord. Bring others to Christ. Leave nothing undone that you ought to do. I say this because I will not be around to help you very much longer. My time has almost run out. Very soon now, I will be on my way to heaven. I have fought long and hard for my Lord and through it all I have kept true to him. Now the time has come for me to stop fighting and rest. In heaven, a crown is waiting for me, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that great day of his return. And not just to me, but to all those whose lives show that they are eagerly looking forward to his coming back again." (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:1-8, Living Bible)*

*What is the 'key' to a truly successful life? Remaining True to the Lord Jesus, amidst all the changes and chances of life, amidst all the trials and tests and temptations and persecutions of daily living! Not only starting the race for Christ, but also finishing the race with Christ! Exhorted Paul to the Corinthian believers: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (I Corinthians 15:58)*

*Perhaps I will never forget that period in my pastoral ministry when I purposed to preach a long series of messages on the great 'Faith Chapter' of the Bible- Hebrews 11. I prepared long and hard and believed that- as the weeks came and went and I came to the end of Chapter 11 in my series of sermons - my congregation of attentive listeners was growing by 'leaps and bounds' spiritually in the 'Faith of Christ'- partly because of my 'great sermons' on Biblical Faith (faithfulness). As I finished the last message in that long series, I returned to my home after the Late Morning Worship Service, exuberant though weary because of preaching in both services. The telephone rang, and one of my parishioners - distraught, angry, and accusing – was on the 'other end of the line'. He said something like this to me: "My family and I are leaving your church!" I was dumb-founded! Here was a parishioner who (with his wife) became a believer because of a 'Home Bible Study', which I had conducted in his home a few years before! Grappling for words, I finally was able to respond to his declaration. I said, "Why, what is wrong?" He said, "We're leaving the Church because you don't preach 'Faith'! I was not present at the Service this morning, but my wife told me that you declared in your message on Faith that it is not always God's will to heal a person! I believe that if one has enough 'Faith', God will always heal a believer. It is never God's will for one of His children to be sick! The only reason why Christians are sick is that they have not exercised enough 'Faith', that they have unconfessed sin in their lives, or that they have not been taught to 'bind Satan'. We can no longer be a member of a church*

*that doesn't practice 'Faith!'" No amount of reasoning on my part, and no quotation of Scriptures (especially Hebrews 11:35b-40 and 2 Corinthians 12:7-10) could convince my angry friend that it is not always God's will to physically heal Christians. I pled with him not to leave our local church, where he had attended for several years. I reminded him that he had not even heard my sermon on 'Faith' earlier that day, and that he was reacting to information that was reported to him 'secondhand' by his wife. I told him my family felt 'close' to him and his family, and that I felt God led him into my life (after all, was it not I who took time 'to lead him and his wife to Christ?') I reminded him that some of the greatest 'saints' throughout history - persons of abounding 'faith' - were persons whom God had not willed to heal physically. Was not even the great apostle Paul- 'a giant' in the Faith- entitled with a 'thorn in the flesh'? When I mentioned Paul's 'thorn in the flesh', my now-estranged 'friend' launched into a 'verbal battle' with me, as he tried hard to convince me that Paul's 'thorn in the Flesh' was definitely not 'physical'. That conversation took place several years ago. I learned that a 'charismatic' friend, with whom he had been daily 'car-pooling' to work, shared with him some tapes on 'Faith' - tapes with a strong emphasis on the 'Name It-Claim It' brand of 'Faith'. Yes, that friend and his family left our local church and he never returned. As far as I know, for some time, he attended a large, independent, 'charismatic' church where "faith is preached", "prosperity is claimed", and "wonderful miracles regularly happen". After all these years (since he left the church), I occasionally see that former friend. We hold no bitterness towards each other, so it is rather easy to talk to one another and to express 'Christian love' to each other.*

*Allow me to share a few 'points' from the message on 'Faith', preached many years ago, to which my previously mentioned 'friend' reacted so strongly, resulting in his leaving my church. The following are a few 'quotes' from that message: Faith means trusting God regardless of whether or not our prayers to Him give us the results that we desire. Notes Paul Rees, "No faith is mature if it thinks only of answers to prayer that come in the form of escape from loss and sorrow and pain. If this shakes us and threatens to turn confidence into cynicism, we should review the Bible's magnum opus on faith, the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. True, it tells of those who 'through faith escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to fight the armies of the aliens' (verse 34). However, have you noticed the significance of a little phrase of two words that occurs twice- 'and others'? 'And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance. And others had trials of cruel mocking and scourging, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword." (Hebrews 11:35-37)*

*I continued in that sermon on 'Faith', preached several years ago, to which my 'friend' so negatively reacted: Problems come to the greatest Christians. Those in Hebrews 11:35-38 remained faithful to God, even unto death, without judging God or holding God responsible for their difficulties. Remember, when faith and prayers do not remove the mountains, God intends to use the mountains to strengthen our spiritual 'muscles' while we are climbing over the mountains! The problems may cause many tears and bring many questions to mind. Nevertheless, remember, God never allows His children to shed 'needless tears'. God is a God of perfect love - He wants what is best for you. When my brother lost his 15 year old daughter so tragically and suddenly, on August 14, 1981, he said, the very night of her death, "God makes no mistakes." His faith in God did not prevent his daughter's terrible death, but my brother did not judge his God. His faith enabled him to believe in a good God, in spite of adverse circumstances. That is the greatest miracle of all! To*

*believe, even when circumstances defy reason! Faith enables us to accept difficult circumstances, as God's gymnasium for character development! If faith seems to go unrewarded on this planet and in this life, there will be an ultimate reward granted to the persons of faith after this life (Hebrews 11:39, 40).*

*I continued that sermon on 'Faith' with great fervency, as I neared the climax of the message: Faith means being faithful to God and never judging God, regardless if the prayers of faith do not change the circumstances of the faithful one. The faithful one can be assured that faith will be ultimately rewarded in heaven and that God will be close to the faithful one during his pilgrimage on earth. "God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never I will forsake you.' So we say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?'" (Hebrews 13:5, 6) If you are going through difficult times, keep your faith in God.*

*He will not forsake you. He loves you. He is not removing your mountain or problems for a reason - a loving and redemptive reason.*

*Do not fall from God. Do not start judging God or become bitter towards God. "So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to Persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For in just a very little while, 'He who is coming will come and will not delay. But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him. 'But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.'" (Hebrews 10:35-39)*

*John the Baptist's faith resulted in John being beheaded by a wicked king! His faith did not deliver him from adversity, but his faith did keep him true rather than denying the Master, and his faith ushered him into heaven with all the rewards that heaven alone can give to the man of faith! We too often see only today with today's problems, and we fail to see the ultimate victory promised to persons of Persevering Faith. God's purpose may be to deliver his children from the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:16-18), or it may be to allow His children to burn up in the fiery furnace. Either way, the man of faith is victorious! Paul said, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." The man of faith cannot lose! It may be God's will to change our circumstances, or it may be God's will that we simply remain faithful to God in the midst of our difficult circumstances. Perhaps the greatest heroes of faith are not those who saw mighty feats through their faith, but those who remained true to God even when their faith resulted in their persecution and eventual death (Hebrews 11:35-38). Whatever the immediate result of faith, the ultimate victory always belongs to God's people of faith!*

*I then concluded my message on 'Faith' with these words: Faith can move a mighty mountain or faith can enable us to climb over our mountains! Faith can remove the darkness, or faith can give us a song during our nights. Faith, in brief, is faithfulness to God, whether or not circumstances change, whether or not we can understand the purposes in the present God-allowed circumstances. Faith does not judge God. Faith in God reassures one that God ultimately rewards all persons of faith- partially on earth and totally in heaven!*

*It was these above quoted words (and others like them) which I preached on that Sunday, at the conclusion of my long sermon series on 'Biblical Faith', which were the 'occasion' of my 'friend' to decide to 'leave my church' (and never return). I continue to believe that 'faith in God' means 'faithfulness to God' -amidst all the challenges and troubles and losses of life. I continue to believe that it is 'persevering faith' in God and in*

*God's wisdom and power and love which will 'carry' a believer throughout his life, until he passes through 'the pearly gates' of heaven!*

*Amidst all the severe trials of Paul's life, he was able confidently to declare (at the end of his courageous life): "That is why I am suffering here in jail and I am certainly not ashamed of it, for I know the one in whom I trust, and I am sure that he is able to safely guard all that I have given him until the day of his return." (2nd Timothy 1:12, Living Bible)*

*Paul believed that divine enabling power was sufficient to keep every believer from falling away from God, in spite of the great suffering which believers are called to endure. Wrote Paul "And he (God) is able to keep you from slipping and falling away and to bring you, sinless and perfect, into his glorious presence with mighty shouts of everlasting joy." (Jude 1:25, Living Bible)*

*"I know not what of good or ill  
May be reserved for me,  
Of weary ways or golden days,  
Before his face, I see.  
But 'I know whom I have believed,  
And am persuaded that he is able  
To keep that which I've committed  
Unto him against that day."  
(I Know Whom I Have Believed)*

*During my lifetime, I have known many godly persons who have consistently followed the Lord for many years, whose lives have 'stood the test of time'. They learned the 'secret' of daily victory - through prayer, and meditation, and obedience, and resistance of temptation. These precious ones demonstrated to me that they were 'single-minded' in their devotion to Christ, 'whole-hearted' in their commitment to a lifestyle of holiness.*

*As a pastor for 27 years in one local church, it was my privilege to serve several hundreds of persons, most of whom were earnest believers, persevering in their 'daily walk of faith'. At the funeral services of many older 'saints', I experienced great joy as I offered 'tributes' regarding the unusual faithfulness of these followers of Christ. Yes, I have known so many persons who 'lived well' and who 'died well'! They 'crossed the finish line of life' with the love of God as the constant and unwavering and driving 'force' of their lives! They remained faithful to their Lord, until physical death separated their spirit from their body, and now they are crowned with the 'crown of eternal life' in heaven!*

*Even though the trials are severe, the persecutions are bitter, the temptations are strong, the losses are great, the mysteries, inequities, and injustices in the world are widespread, and the sorrows of life are deep, God's grace is sufficient and His power is unmatched and His love is unconditional. God is able to guard His children from the onslaughts of the 'evil one' (devil). Wrote Paul, "The Lord is faithful; he will make you strong and guard you from satanic attacks of every kind." (2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 3, 4, Living Bible) "No temptation is irresistible. You can trust God to keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you cannot stand*

*up against it, for he has promised this and will do what he says. He will show you how to escape temptation's power so that you can bear up patiently against it." (I Corinthians 10:13, Living Bible)*

*A few months ago, one of my newest friends wrote to me and asked if I would explain what I meant by my reference to the 'Perseverance of the Saints'. The following is my written reply to her request:*

*Dear*

*I have read considerably (and written quite a bit) on the subject of the 'Perseverance of the Saints' (as it is called in Christian Theology). Suffice it to say at this point (in this brief communication) that the Bible emphasizes at least three features (regarding Salvation): (1) Promises to be claimed, (2) Conditions to be met - in initially receiving salvation and in maintaining a vital saving relationship with God, (3) Warnings - addressed to truly saved persons- to be heeded (or 'traps' of sin to be avoided). The faithfulness of God and the 'keeping power' of God are NEVER to be questioned or doubted or debated, but the on-going faithfulness (obedience) of the believer is, of course, always to be 'questioned' (i.e., the Christian must, throughout his/her entire life, continue to 'abide' in the Son).*

*The Lord declares, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." As long as a human (including a believer) has the capacity to choose (because of free will agency which God grants to all believers), there is always the possibility (if not the probability) that a believer could 'fall from grace' and go back into a life (practice) of willful sinning (called backsliding or apostasy). That is a 'horrible' thought, but the Bible definitely teaches (through the countless warnings to believers) that such is a 'possibility'. (Otherwise, the many warnings addressed to believers do not make 'any sense'.) I definitely believe in 'eternal security' for believers (but only for 'believers'- i.e., those persons who CONTINUE to believe and trust in Christ as their only Savior and who keep up to date in their confession of any sins in their lives). Therefore, I do not believe the Bible teaches UNCONDITIONAL (or 'automatic' or 'irrevocable') eternal security- but instead CONDITIONAL ETERNAL SECURITY. Of course, the Bible teaches that backslidden persons (who were one-time believers) can 'come back' to Christ in deep repentance and faith (trust), and thereby be wonderfully restored to both relationship and fellowship with Christ (1<sup>st</sup> John 1:7, 9 and 1<sup>st</sup> 2:1-2). However, it is possible for a believer to drift away from God through negligence (Hebrews 2:1-2) or through outright rebellion (continued disobedience) and eventually to sever his/her relationship with God (John 15 teaches that branches which no longer abide in Christ the Vine are eventually severed because they are withered and dead - and cast into the fire!). John 15 teaches that good branches are pruned (chastened and disciplined, etc. in order to produce even more fruit), but that fruitless branches (i.e., branches that no longer abide in obedience - no longer attached in vital union to the Vine) are cut off and destroyed. So, fruitful branches (which are vitally attached to the Vine) can become barren, severed, and destroyed branches! A fearful possibility, but hopefully not a high probability. I want to emphasize the importance of abiding in Christ and maintaining faithfulness (in response to God's constant faithfulness and keeping power). I want to emphasize the importance of a life of continuing abiding in the Son - finding 'staying power' in living the Christian life to the very end. There are many, many other Scriptures (nearly a hundred Scriptures altogether in the New Testament) which deal with 'conditional*

*eternal security'. Again, the grace of God or the keeping power of God or the forgiving love of God - none of these truths are questioned at all.*

*The only thing that is always open for 'change for the worst' is the free will of man/woman (including the will of believers). God treats believers with the greatest of dignity by allowing believers (Christians) to daily exercise a positive volition (saying 'yes' with one's will to God's daily call to 'deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me'). None of what I have said is intended to 'take away the peace and security and confidence' of true believers, but with the multitude of Promises in God's Word, there are also Conditions listed (for the fulfillment of those God-given Promises), as well as many Warnings addressed to Christians. Always remember: 'the faithfulness of God cannot cover for or take the place of the unfaithfulness of man' (even a Christian). A believer needs never 'fall from Grace', for God is able to keep him unto the end - and preserve him unto eternal life (glory!) - But a Christian must take, not only the Promises of God seriously, but must also seriously accept the Conditions and the Warnings of the Holy Scriptures. It is this 'Biblical balance', which I am 'after'. Thanks for letting me briefly share this aspect of Biblical insight with you. God bless you richly as you victoriously live for your wonderful Master.*

*With Christian Love,*

*Ron Christian* 

*Someone said that the 'biggest word in the English language' is IF. The following illustration vividly demonstrates the truth of this assertion. Freeborn Garrettson, an American-born, itinerant Methodist preacher who traversed the Atlantic seaboard on horseback, kept a journal that contains the following record of his heavenly vision, dated July 30, 1780. "Sunday 30, Brother Cromwell and family accompanied me. At seven o'clock, we had a love feast of about two hundred of brethren were present, and our Savior was in the midst. Afterwards I preached in the Dutch church. About thirty of our friends accompanied me about eight miles to another Dutch church, where I preached to many with freedom. Many went with me three miles further to Mr. Vaun's, where we had a watch night. The labors of this day were wearisome to the body, but I was strong in faith, and willing to give my little all to God. The next day a crowded audience assembled at the same place; some time before, and whilst the people were gathering, my mind was uncommonly exercised: but I found great freedom whilst enforcing, 'Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.' The cloud was dispersed and I felt myself uncommonly sweet and comfortable. This dear family drinks deeply into the blessed Spirit. I went to bed very happy: but my night visions were uncommonly strange: I thought I was taken dangerously ill, and expected shortly to be in eternity.*

*I doubt not, but I felt just as dying persons do. I appeared to be surrounded with thousands of evils, who were all striving to take from me my confidence; and for a time it seemed almost gone. I began an examination from my first awakenings - then my conversion - my call to preach - the motives, which induced me to enter this great work, my intention, and life from the beginning. In the time of this examination, every fear was dismissed, and every fiend vanished; and a band of holy angels succeeded with the most melodious*

music that I ever heard. I then began to ascend, accompanied by this heavenly host; and thought every moment the body would drop off, and my spirit take its flight. Meter ascending a vast height, I was overshadowed with a cloud as white as a sheet; and in that cloud I saw a person the most beautiful that my eyes had beheld. I wanted to be dislodged from this tabernacle, and take my everlasting flight. That glorious person, brighter than the sun in its meridian brilliance, spoke to me as follows, 'if you Continue Faithful to The End, this shall be your place; but you cannot come now; return, and Be Faithful: there is more work for you to do.'

Immediately I awoke, and my spirit was so elevated with a sense of eternal things, that I thought I should sleep no more that night. Great and glorious discoveries have been made to me, both sleeping and waking; but all the Promises of heaven and eternal glory, Have Been Conditional. In scriptures we have a little, but significant word, If - If You Are Faithful until Death, you shall have a crown of life. I would advise all the children of God, to be very careful and watchful, and continue in well-doing until death." (Quoted in 'Discover the Secrets of Heaven' -A Guideposts Book; pgs. 24, 25)

I believe in the "power of positive thinking", but I also believe there is (rarely) such a thing as the "positive power of negative thinking". There is the 'dark side' of truth, as well as the 'bright side' of truth. Jesus came to earth to seek and to save the lost ones.

His ministry was one of positive affirmation and great comfort. He declared, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give thee rest." (Matthew 11:28) To the broken-hearted, Jesus always offered healing, and to the contrite in spirit, Jesus always offered forgiveness and peace. But Jesus did not only come to 'comfort the disturbed'; He came also to 'disturb the comfortable'. Witness this truth as you read the many "woes" which Jesus pronounced against the hypocritical Jewish leaders (as recorded in Matthew 23). The fact that there are many Warnings to be heeded and many Conditions to be met (as well as many Promises to be claimed) speaks to the fact that there is 'negative' truth as well as 'positive' truth, revealed in the New Testament.

There is the 'positive' truth which declares that all sinners who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved from their sins (i.e., they are no longer in a state of 'condemnation and guilt' before Almighty God). There is the 'negative' truth, which declares that any believer who falls into a life of sinning (apostasy) loses both his fellowship and his relationship with Almighty God, and such a person will be eternally lost if he refuses to repent and if he rejects God's offer of forgiveness and restoration and peace and reconciliation.

It has often been said: "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Spiritually speaking, it is far better for a believer never to fall into sin (i.e., into a state of backsliding), than for a believer to backslide and have to go through the painful (and often time-consuming) process of repentance and restitution and reconciliation. It is also often said: "To be forewarned is to be forearmed."

Spiritually speaking it is wise to be aware of dangers, snares, and perils, which threaten to defeat and destroy his spiritual life, than to be ignorant of such snares and to be off-guard, unprepared, and unarmed when Satan attacks! To think about the 'wiles of the devil' and 'the weakness of the human flesh' and the 'warnings against apostasy' may all seem to be 'very negative'. But this kind of 'negative thinking' is also

very wise and definitely 'Biblical thinking'. It might seem 'more positive' to entertain thoughts of a believer's 'unconditional' ('irrevocable') 'eternal security' (i.e., that it is 'impossible' for a true believer ever to 'lose his relationship with God'), but such false reasoning (and 'false security') is both unwise and unbiblical!

In my rather thorough examination of the New Testament's teaching on the 'perseverance of the believer' (and the related doctrine of the 'security of the believer'), I discovered that there are many 'perils' (snares) which every earnest believer must avoid, during his earthly pilgrimage. In summary form, the following are some of those 'perils' (snares) which every believer must avoid if he is to live a victorious Christian life: (1) Unforgiving spirit; (2) Deception by false teachings or by evil spirits; (3) Spiritual neglect and procrastination (spiritual 'drifting' or gradual hardening or 'Luke warmth'); (4) Spiritual carelessness and shallowness (lack of vigilance); (5) Yielding to temptation, leading to backsliding or apostasy; (6) Preoccupation with worldly interests and with the pursuit of material possessions and earthly riches; (7) Faithlessness and lack of spiritual endurance (disobedience and unbelief and bitterness); (8) Shallow attitude towards 'sin' and towards 'grace' (Antinomianism); (9) Insensitivity to and neglect of the spiritual 'Means of Grace'; (10) Offense by fellow believers; (11) Attitude of ingratitude, grumbling, and division; (12) Self-confidence and pride; (13) Resort to religious performance instead of embracing God's grace alone (leading to Legalism); (14) Discouragement and despair during trials and persecutions, and hardening one's heart during God's chastisements (losing of 'heart'); (15) Rejection of the 'dictates' of the Conscience; (16) Temporal irresponsibility to one's Dependents (family and relatives); (17) Spiritual 'profession' without spiritual 'performance' (lack of 'Good Deeds' and 'Good Conduct').

William Barclay notes that Jesus Himself emphasized the 'perseverance of believers' in His teaching. Says Barclay, "Jesus declared that entry to the Kingdom can never be automatic, and that it is the result and the reward of a struggle. 'Keep on striving to enter', said Jesus. (Luke 13:24) The word that is used for 'striving' is the word from which the English word 'agony' is derived. The struggle to enter in must be so intense that it can be described as an agony of soul and spirit. We run a certain danger. It is easy to think that, once we have become members of the church by profession, we have reached the end of the road, that then we can, as it were, sit back like those who have arrived and who have achieved their goal. There is no such finality in the Christian life. A man must ever be going forward or necessarily he is going backward. The Christian way is like a climb up a mountain pathway towards a peak! Which will never be reached in this world. It was said of two gallant climbers who died on Mount Everest, 'When last seen they were going strong for the top.' It was inscribed on the grave of an Alpine guide who had died on the mountainside, 'He died climbing.' For the Christian life is ever an upward and an onward way." (Daily Study Bible; Luke; William Barclay; pgs. 188, 189)

What is the 'secret' to maintaining a life of faithfulness and perseverance in the Christian life? Is it not being daily filled with the Holy Spirit, whose ministry is to 'shed abroad the love of God' in the heart of every believer? He who has a passionate love for Christ is he who remains close to the "heart of God", amidst all the changes and chances of life, amidst all the "ups and downs" of life, amidst all the successes and failures of life, amidst all the joys and sorrows of life. Love keeps him close to the heart of God, and love for others makes the believer's trials and losses bearable. A love-filled person "values the real", for love sees beyond the temporary to the eternal! Wholehearted love for God keeps one 'trucking' in life, keeps one 'in the

saddle', keeps one from 'throwing in the towel' and quitting! "Men have wondered what kept John Wesley in the saddle for fifty-three years 'contesting the three kingdoms for Christ' they have wondered what kept David Livingstone in the jungle of Africa for thirty-three years, and Peter Claver tending the poor slaves at Cartagena for thirty-eight. None of these men retired. Death alone ended their labors. It is not in normal nature to love like that; it is a 'given' love. They had sought it and received it from God and they were consumed by its scorching flame." (Daily Readings; William Sangster; pg. 134)

There is a "strange reasoning" among some earnest believers who consider themselves "Calvinist" (in terms of their theological 'persuasion'). Some 'Calvinists' believe that a backslidden believer (who is 'out of fellowship' with the Lord, but who, nevertheless, 'maintains relationship' with the Lord because he is among the 'chosen' of God) will go to heaven even if he dies while he is 'living in sin'. These persons believe that such a 'backslidden believer' will be ushered into heaven, regardless of how many unconfessed sins he has at the time of his physical death ("for he who was once saved in the past is always saved forever" irrevocably, regardless of the sins he commits subsequent to his initial conversion). Even though this appears to be a rather widespread belief among many 'Calvinist-oriented' teachers, it is doubtful (when reading from the actual writings of John Calvin) that John Calvin himself would declare that a man living in sin when he dies was ever a 'true believer' (an 'elect one'). John Calvin believed that the only ultimate 'proof that a person was among the 'elect of God' was the final perseverance in the faith of Christ of the person who claimed to be among God's 'elect'. Perseverance in the faith meant, to Calvin, faithfulness to Christ and Christ's ways. Wrote Calvin, "For God is said to give us to the Son so that each may know himself an heir of the heavenly kingdom So Long As He Abides in Christ, apart from whom death and destruction beset us on every side." (Quoted in 'Elect In the Son'; Robert Shank; pg. 216) Calvin seems to be saying that only the person (professing Christian) who truly abides in Christ to the end of life will enjoy heaven as his inheritance. This (among other similar statements by Calvin) would seem to refute anyone who claims assurance that he will go to heaven, while he is, at the same time, deliberately practicing sin and refusing genuinely to repent of his sins.

Notes Robert Shank, "Despite his erroneous definition of election, Calvin was on solid ground in his ultimate conclusion that valid assurance of election and salvation is impossible apart from conscious, deliberate perseverance in faith." (Elect in the Son; pg. 215) The 'classical' Calvinist theology - popularly taught today - believes that those whom God 'elected' to eternal salvation will inevitably persevere in the Faith to the end of life.

The 'elect' (chosen) ones must ultimately be saved in heaven, because (according to this theology) God chose them "before the foundation of the world" to be members of Christ's chosen followers. And yet, even some Calvinist teachers and writers, when they honestly study the Holy Scriptures directly (without undue influence from their Calvinist presuppositions) acknowledge that perseverance to the end in the Christian life is NOT inevitable! John Edie, a Calvinist scholar, writes, "While the perseverance of the saints is a prominent doctrine of Scripture and a perennial source of consolation, it is not inconsistent with exhortations to permanence of faith and warnings of the sad results of deviation and apostasy. He who stops short in the race, and does not reach the goal, cannot obtain the prize. He who abandons the refuge into which he fled for a season is swept away when the hurricane breaks upon him. The loss of faith is the knell of hope." (Quoted in 'Elect In the Son'; Robert Shank; pg. 214)

Strangely enough, this Calvinist scholar believes that a one-time believer can "fall from grace" (or, as he says "abandon the refuge into which he fled for a season" or has a "loss of faith"), and as a result "be swept away when the hurricane breaks upon him" and experience the "knell of hope".

This teaching by this respected Calvinist scholar does not sound like the typical Calvinist who adamantly contends for "unconditional eternal security" ("once saved, always saved" doctrine). According to this Calvinist scholar, the believer who "stops short in the race and does not reach the goal" cannot, at the same time, retain his Christian hope for eternal security!

Comments Robert Shank (regarding some earnest Calvinist scholars): "When men get close to the Scriptures, they often get far from their theology. Eadie has it right: much is suspended on Perseverance, according to the Scripture - all theology to the contrary notwithstanding." ('Elect in the Son'; Robert Shank; pg. 214) Fortunately, there are even many Calvinists who seriously disagree that so-called "backslidden believers" who die while they are living a life of sin, have Biblically based assurance that they will safely enter heaven! The doctrine of 'unconditional eternal security', based on 'unconditional particular election' of specific persons, is totally unscriptural, and (thank God) there are even Calvinist scholars (because of their direct study of the Scriptures) who are seriously questioning this erroneous doctrine!

Some sincere believers who declare with great conviction that "it is impossible for a true believer ever to ultimately fall away from God and finally be eternally lost", quote John 10:28-29 as the Scriptural 'proof'. Said Jesus, "I give them eternal life and they shall never perish. No one shall snatch them away from me, for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else, so no one can kidnap them from me." (Living Bible)

Indeed, this is one of the most thrilling and comforting Promises ever given to Christians. But, those who sincerely quote these verses as 'proof' of the 'eternal security of the believer' fail to quote the previous verse - John 10:27 - which state the Condition for the fulfillment of the Promise. To whom does Jesus promise 'eternal life' and 'protection from harm' (security)? These promises are given Only to Sheep. And who are Christ's 'Sheep'? John 10:27 answers that question: "My sheep recognize my voice, I know them, and they follow me". Only those who hear the voice of the Shepherd, who know the voice of the Shepherd, and who follow (obey) the Shepherd can justly claim 'security' and 'protection'. Can a one-time believer who no longer hears or knows the voice of the Shepherd, and who no longer follows (obeys) the Shepherd, claim 'security' and 'protection' from the Shepherd? A person who does not presently meet the conditions cannot claim the promises! He, who refuses to accept the responsibilities of being a 'sheep', cannot presently enjoy the benefits, which the Shepherd has to offer!

An internationally respected New Testament scholar, I. Howard Marshall, gives the following fitting and Biblically balanced summary to this important subject of "Perseverance of the Believer". He notes, "The believer is not told that he is one of the elect and therefore cannot fall away, nor is there any particular character of his faith which indicates that he is the kind of person who cannot fall away. He is simply told to continue in obedience, faith, and to trust in the God who will keep him from falling.

He perseveres by persevering. Perseverance is not some particular quality of faith or something to be added to faith, but the fact that faith continues. To speak of the need to develop endurance, as the New Testament does, is the same thing as saying that one must continue to believe despite every temptation to disbelieve.

"Such persevering faith is faith in God through Jesus Christ and is at all times a response to His grace. It is faith in the God who keeps, establishes, and strengthens believers, committal of oneself to His Lordship and His care. But such committal does not mean that the believer no longer needs to watch lest he stumble and fall. He must still beware of temptation. The fact that he can still fall into sin shows that he is not preserved miraculously by God from falling, although God is able to keep those who trust in Him from falling and never refuses His grace to those who seek it. God's power enables men to battle against temptation, but does not relieve them from temptation or from the necessity to fight against it. The way to victory is by constant submission to God.

"Alongside the imperatives stand the promises. We do not need to fear in the midst of temptation, for we know that if we trust in God, His power will preserve us. When the believer puts his trust in God, he is entitled to be confident. The New Testament most certainly teaches that God strengthens the faith of the believer so that he may withstand temptation; He does not forget those who trust in him. Hence, while the New Testament knows the possibility of failure to persevere, it also knows the fact of growth in grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ so that the Christian can attain to a confidence, which lifts him above the fear of falling away. It is perhaps in this idea of growth and development in faith that the key to the problem is to be found. Faith is something, which grows and becomes stronger and consequently more removed from the fear of failing. And yet this does not mean that the assurance of perseverance is for a spiritual elite; it is for the weakest believer who is prepared to cry, 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.'

"In short, we cannot go beyond the teaching of the New Testament which places side by side the possibility of failure to persevere and the greater possibility of a confidence in God and a continuing faith which, as it is sustained by God, is preserved from the fear of falling away. There is a confidence, which can grow and deepen, and hence the possibility of the faith that God will preserve us for His heavenly kingdom. It is possible, therefore, to maintain the confidence of the believer without committing ourselves to a watertight logical system of irresistible grace and unconditional election to final salvation, and at the same time to give a realistic meaning to the warnings of the New Testament.

"We can say firmly that, while it is possible for a Christian to fail to persevere after a genuine experience of salvation, yet, with all the promises of a faithful God to sustain those who trust in Him, the main emphasis of the New Testament is on confidence and assurance of final salvation." ('Kept By the Power of God'; I. Howard Marshall; pgs. 208-210)

## WEAK AND HELPLESS

Son of God, thy blessing grant;  
Still supply my every want;  
Tree of life, thine influence shed;  
From thy fullness, I am fed.

Tenderest branch, alas! Am I,  
Wither without thee and die;  
Weak as helpless infancy;  
O confirm my soul in thee!

Unsustained by thee, I fall;  
Send the help for which I call;  
Weaker than a bruised reed,  
Help I every moment need.

All my hopes on thee depend;  
Love me, save me to the end;  
Give me persevering grace;  
Take the everlasting praise.

(Charles Wesley)

Adam Clarke, a contemporary of the famous John Wesley, was the greatest Wesleyan/Armenian theologian of his time. The following constitute excerpts from his article, simply titled "Apostasy", continued in the book simply titled "Christian Theology" (pgs. 360-367):

"God uniformly treats man as a free agent; and on the principle the whole of divine revelation is constructed as is also the doctrine of future rewards and punishments." "If a man be incapable of willing God and willing evil, he is incapable of being saved as a rational being; and if he acts only under an overwhelming compulsion, he is as incapable of being damned."

"The power to will and the power to act must necessarily come from God, who is the Author both of the soul and the body, and of all their powers and energies; but the act of volition and the act of working come from the man. God gives power to will: man wills through that power; God gives power to act and man acts through that power. Without the power to will, man can will nothing; without the power to work, man can do nothing. God neither wills for man, nor works in man's stead, but he furnishes him with power to do both; he is, therefore, accountable to God for these powers."

"Christ is the author of eternal salvation to all them that obeys him." "It is not for want of holy resolutions and heavenly influences that men are not saved, but through their own unsteadiness; they do not persevere, they forget the necessity of continuing in prayer, and thus the Holy Spirit is grieved, departs from them, and leaves them in their own darkness and hardness of heart. When we

consider the heavenly influences, which many receive who draw back to perdition, and the good fruits, which, for a time, they bore, it is blasphemy to say, they had no genuine or redeeming feature. They had it, they showed it, and they trifled with it, and sinned against it; and therefore are lost."

"What a comfortable thought it is to the followers of Christ, that them but by the permission of their heavenly Father, and that he will not suffer any of neither men nor demons can act against those who trust in him to be tried above what they are able to bear, and will make the trail end in their greater salvation, and in his glory!"

"Slothfulness is natural to man; it requires much training to induce him to labor for his daily bread: if God should miraculously send it, he will wonder and eat it; and that is the whole. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate," is an ungracious word to many; they profess to trust in God's mercy, but labor not to enter that rest. God will not reverse his purpose to meet their slothfulness: they alone who overcome shall sit with Jesus on his throne. Reader, "take unto thee the whole armor of God, that thou mayest be able to stand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand." And remember that he only who endures to the end shall be saved."

"He that is self-confident is already half fallen. He, who professes to believe that God will absolutely keep him from falling finally, and neglects watching unto prayer, is not in a safer state. He who lives by the moment, walks in the light, and maintains his communion with God, is in no danger of apostasy."

"He who changes from opinion to opinion, and from one sector party to another, is never to be depended on; there is much reason to believe that such a person is either mentally weak, or has never been rationally and divinely convinced of the truth."

"Every believer in Christ is in danger of apostasy while any remains of the evil heart of unbelief are found in him. God has promised to purify the heart and the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. It is, therefore, the highest wisdom of genuine Christians to look to God for the complete purification of their souls; this they cannot have too soon, and for this they cannot be too much in earnest."

"As a preventive of backsliding and apostasy, the apostle recommends mutual exhortation. No Christian should live for himself alone; he should consider his fellow Christian as a member of the same body, and feel for him accordingly, and love, succor, and protect him. When this is carefully attended to in religious society, Satan finds it very difficult to make an inroad on the Church; but when coldness, distance and want of brotherly love take place, Satan can attack each singly and, by successive victories over individuals, soon make an easy conquest of the whole."

"Here (2<sup>nd</sup> Peter; 2) is a sad proof of the possibility of falling from grace, and from very high degrees of it too. These had escaped from the contagion that was in the world; they had had true repentance, and cast up "their sour-sweet morsel of sin." They had been washed from all their filthiness and this must have been through the blood of the Lamb; yet, after all, they went back, got entangled with their old sins, swallowed down their formerly rejected lusts, and reswallowed in the mire of

corruption. It is no wonder that God should say, "The latter end is worse with them than the beginning:" reason and nature say, "It must be so;" and divine justice says, "It ought to be so;" and the person himself must confess that it is right that it should be so. But how dreadful is this state! How dangerous, when the person has abandoned himself to his old sins! Yet it is not said that it is impossible for him to return to his Maker; though his case be deplorable, it is not utterly hopeless; the leper may yet be made clean, and the dead may be raised. Reader is thy backsliding a grief and burden to thee! Then thou art not far from the kingdom of God; believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved.

"A soul cut off from the flock of God is in an awful state! His outward defense is departed from him; and, being no longer accountable to any for his conduct, he generally plunges into unprecedented depths of iniquity, and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. Reader, art thou without the pale of God's Church! Remember, it is written "Them that are without, God judgeth."

"In a state of probation, everything may change. While we are in life, we may stand or fall. Our standing in the faith depends on our union with God; and that depends on our watching unto prayer, and continuing to possess that faith that worketh by love. The highest saint under heaven can stand no longer, than he depends upon God, and continues in the obedience of faith. He that ceases to do so will fall into sin and get a darkened understanding and a hardened heart, and he may continue in this state till God come to take away his soul. Therefore, let him who most assuredly standeth take heed lest he fall, not only partially, but finally."

One of the greatest (most respected) Biblical expositors of all times, Alexander Maclaren had the following to note about the importance of maintaining one's personal faith in Christ. He definitely believed in "Conditional Eternal Security".

**"THE GRADUAL EXTINCTION OF GOD'S LIGHT IN THE SOUL!  
OUR LAMPS ARE GONE OUT." MATTHEW 25:8.**

Let us take the lesson. There is nothing in our religious emotions, which has any guarantee of perpetuity in it, except upon certain conditions. We may live, and our life may ebb. We may trust, and our trust may tremble into unbelief we may obey, and our obedience may be broken by the mutinous risings of self-will. We may walk in the paths of righteousness, and our feet may falter and turn aside. There is certainty of the dying out of all communicated life, unless the channel of communication with the life from which it was first kindled be kept constantly clear. The lamp may be "a burning and a shining light," or, more accurately translating the phrase of our Lord, "a light kindled and" (therefore) "shining," but it will only be light "for a season," unless it is fed from that from which it was first set alight" and that is, from God Himself

"Our lamps are going out." A slow process that! The flame does not all die into darkness in a minute. There are stages in the process. The white portion of the flame becomes smaller and the blue part extends; then the flame flickers, and finally shudders itself, as it were, oft the wick. Then nothing remains but a charred red line along the top; then that line breaks up into little points, and one after another, these twinkle out, and then all is black, and the lamp is gone out. And so, slowly, like the ebbing away of the tide, like the re-

luctant long-protracted dying of summer days, like the dropping of the blood from some fatal wound, by degrees the process of extinction creeps, creeps, creeps on, and the lamp that was going is finally gone out.

The infinite mercy of God is not mere weak indulgence, which so deals with a man's failures and sins as to convey the impression that these are of no moment whatsoever. And the severity which said, "No! Such work is not fit for such hands until the heart has been 'broken and healed,' are of a piece with the severity, which is love. Thou want a God that forgavest them, and didst visit them for their inventions." Let us learn the difference between a weak charity, which loves too foolishly, and therefore too selfishly, to let a man inherit the fruit of his doings, and the large mercy which knows how to take the bitterness out of the chastisement, and yet knows how to chastise." (Taken From "Music for the Soul" by Alexander Maclaren

### "KEEPING IN STEP WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT!"

Sweet. It only lasted a moment, but that moment should be described as sweet. To really appreciate this Amilestone, @ I need to travel back to 1988. The most disturbing decision my wife and I made was choosing to buy a new car after our current vehicle was on its death bed. @ The ad to which we responded claimed a guaranteed trade-in amount whether one had to push, pull, or tow the car in. Unknown to each other, Vicki and I were lifting silent prayers. All we wanted God to do was deliver us safely into the car lot. We did not care if the car fell apart at the dealership; we just wanted to get there and get rid of that old lemon.

God more than answered our prayers. Not only did we arrive safely, we were allotted more for our old car than we expected. We purchased a smaller car, but one with a solid reputation. As we drove out of the lot with our brand new Honda Civic, I noticed that the odometer was equipped with an extra space. Older model cars, when they turned over 100,000 miles would simply read zero again. I was struck by the confidence of the manufacturer to place that additional column on the odometer.

This week, our car turned 150,000 miles old. Sweet! I have never owned a car, which has traveled so well. We plan to keep this car for many years to come. To what do I attribute this taste of triumph? First, to a car well built, second, to keeping an eye on routine maintenance, and third, to fair driving habits.

Nothing is new under the sun: these three principles apply to all areas of life. What you care for will take care of you. For instance, how is your spiritual walk: is God taking care of you? Of course, perhaps He is only dealing with you as well as you are taking care of what He has entrusted to you.

Here is how to get a lot of mileage out of your relationship with God: First, realize that you are well built. As the little child said, God don't make junk. Second, have routine maintenance checks. Is your faith running in time with the Spirit? Have you been renewed by the oil of His faithfulness? Do you recharge your spiritual battery in worship and praise? And third, is your lifestyle in harmony with God's Word? Are you cruising within the vast boundaries of God's grace, or are you speeding through the dark alleys of temptations? When you take care of the things of God, He will take care of you.

**“Lord, am I guilty of not maintaining the faith You have given to me? Have I misused Your grace? Forgive me, Father, for not paying closer attention to our relationship. Check my spirit, fill me with Your Holy Spirit, and renew joy as I worship and praise Your name. Through Christ. Amen**

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: “A relationship with God is mutual. God will keep His Word if we maintain our faith in Him. Depend upon the Holy Spirit to keep your relationship fresh.” - Thomas Duckworth**

PROMISES

CONDITIONS

WARNINGS

*Hebrews 1:1-14*

*Jesus is creator and sustainer of universe (1:1, 2). Heir of God (1:1) Incarnate manifestation of God's glory (1:3, atoning sacrifice for sin (1:3), resurrected and exalted Son (1:3).*

*Jesus is superior to the angels in every way. (1:5-14) (Warranted by Scriptural support), as demonstrated by His everlasting reign (1:8) by His creative power (1:10), by His everlasting person (1:11), by His immutability (1:12), by His victorious kingly reign (1:13), angels are servants of the redeemed (1:14).*

*Message was transmitted by angels. (2:2)*

*The message was "declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him." (2:3)*

*Hebrews 2:1-4*

*"We must pay closer attention to what we have heard". (2:1)*

*... Possible to "drift away" from the message believers have heard.*

PROMISES

*The promise of entering his rest remains.” (4:1)*

*There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God”. (4:9)*

WARNINGS

CONDITIONS

*“Holy brethren, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession.” (3:1)*

*“And we are his house if we hold fast our confidence and pride in our hope.” (3:6)*

*“Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion. Etc.,” (3:7-11)*

*It is possible for believers, like as in the case of the Israelites in the wilderness, to succumb to sin and to harden their hearts (to go astray in their hearts verse 10). “Take care, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.” (3:12)*

*Just as the unbelieving rebellious, disobedient Israelites (who broke the covenant obligations laid down in the Mosaic covenant) reaped the judgment of God, so believers, whose hearts, have become hardened and disobedient, will also reap the judgment of God. Such apostates will never receive God’s promised inheritance (in the heavenly ‘promised land’ of rest). (3:12-19)*

PROMISES

CONDITIONS

WARNINGS

*"We have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens." (4:14)*

*We (Believers) have a sympathizing and merciful High Priest, (4:1- 5) and, therefore, "we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need". (4:16)*

*"...being made perfect (through suffering) he became the source of eternal salvation...being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek." (5:9, 10)*

*"Exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today', that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." (3:13)*

*"For we (believers) share in Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end." (3:14)*

*"...let us fear lest any of you be judged to have failed to reach it." (4:1)*

*The good news of the message must "meet with faith in the hearers". (4:2)*

*It is possible (like as in the case of the unbelieving Israelites) for believers to receive the good news but subsequently to fail to enter God's eternal rest (heaven) because of falling into a state of persistent unbelief (and hardening of the heart). (4:5-7)*

*It is possible for believers to fall "by the same sort of disobedience". (4:11)*

**PROMISES**

**CONDITIONS**

**WARNINGS**

*"The land can receive a blessing from God. (6:7)*

*"Let us therefore strive to enter that rest." (4:11)*

*"...let us hold fast our profession." (4:14)*

*The thoughts and intentions of the hearts of all men are exposed by God's powerful, penetrating Word; "All are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do". (4:12, 13) (Implied: Disobedience (4:11) cannot be concealed, and a final accountability must motivate the believer to "strive to enter the rest. (4:11)*

PROMISES

God will not overlook "your work and the love which you showed for his sake in serving the saints". (6:10)

Domination over the universe (putting everything in subjection under his feet." (2:5-8) (Especially verse 8)

Jesus' identification with mankind through the incarnation and Jesus' atoning sacrifice for mankind, is the basis for the believers' victory over sin (2:15) and over temptation (2:18).

CONDITIONS

"Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace." (4:16)

Jesus, the Son, is the source of salvation "to all who obey him". (4:9)

Believers' obedience (learned, as in the case of Jesus, through suffering. 5:7, 8) must be practiced in order to keep them from relapsing into spiritual infantilism (5:12, 13), and in order for them to become mature in their ability to understand the deep truths of God's word, and in order for them to be mature in their ethical discernment. (5:14)

WARNINGS

It is possible for one-time vital believers ((those who 'have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come." (6:4-6) to commit apostasy, (which is described as a condition of persistent (note the use of the Greek present participles) hostility to Christ, i.e., crucifying the Son of God by continuing 'to hold him up to contempt.' (6:6)

Note the marginal reading of the American Standard Version: "It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, the while they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame." ("The present condition of deliberate, open hostility may conceivably be remedied and the persons renewed to repentance and salvation...The ground which has yielded only thorns and thistles has already been adjudged worthless. (v. 8), and is not rejected; but it is said to be only 'near to a curse'. It awaits eventual burning; but that fate yet is only in prospect. Perhaps it may be averted." (Life In The Son; Shank; pgs. 318, 319)

**PROMISES**

*“Holy brethren, who share in a heavenly call.” (3:1)*

*Jesus “was faithful to him who appointed him.” (3:2)*

*Jesus as Son of God’s House is superior to Moses as servant of God’s House. (3:3-6)*

**CONDITIONS**

*“For land which has drunk the rain that often falls upon it, and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God.” (6:7)*

**WARNINGS**

PROMISES

CONDITIONS

WARNINGS

*"The promise of entering his rest remains." (4:1)*

*"There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God." (4:9)*

*"And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness in realizing the full assurance of hope until the end."*

*"Holy brethren, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession." (3:1)*

*It is possible for believers, like as in the case of the Israelites in the wilderness, to succumb to sin and to harden their hearts (to go astray in their hearts verse 10). "Take care, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God." (3:12)*

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PROMISES

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CONDITIONS

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WARNINGS

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*It is possible for one-time vital believers (those who "have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tested the goodness of the word of God) to become spiritually sluggish. (6:12)*

PROMISES

CONDITIONS

WARNINGS

*“So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he interposed with an oath so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us.” (6:17-18)*

*God’s trustworthy character and promises and mediatorial provisions are the basis for the believer’s steadfast hope (“sure and steadfast anchor of the soul” (6:19)*

*“...let us fear lest any of you be judged to have failed to reach it.” (4:1)*

*The good news of the message must “meet with faith in the hearers”. (4:2)*

*“...let us hold fast our profession.” (4:14)*

*“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace.” (4:16)*

PROMISES

*The lesser (Abraham, representing Levi and the total Aaronic priesthood), paid tithes to the greater (to Melchizedek, representing Jesus Christ). This shows subordination and inferiority of the Aaronic Priesthood to the priesthood of Christ, as symbolized by Abraham's ancient actions toward Melchizedek (7:9-11). The greater (Melchizedek, representing Christ) blessed the lesser (Abraham, representing the Old Testament priesthood with its human weaknesses and sins). This shows the mighty saving purposes and redemptive blessings of the priesthood of Christ which has come to replace the weak Aaronic priesthood. (7:6)*

CONDITIONS

*Jesus, the Son is the source of salvation "to all who obey him. (4:9)*

*Believers' obedience (learned, as in the case of Jesus, through suffering, 5:7, 8) must be practiced in order to keep them from relapsing into spiritual infantilism (5:12, 13), and in order for them to become mature in their believers are to be imitators if of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." (6:12)*

*Just as Abraham "having patiently endured, obtained the promise: so believers are to follow his example. (The Abrahamic Covenant was conditional: Abraham had to patiently endure if the promise was to be fulfilled!)*

*(Quote from "Life In The Son" by Shank)*

WARNINGS

PROMISES

*The superior and eternal priesthood of Christ has replaced the inferior and transient Aaronic priesthood (as shown by the fact that, humanly-speaking, Christ was descended from the tribe of Judah, not the priest-tribe of Levi) (7:12-228) The New Covent of Grace, based on Christ's superior Heavenly priesthood (8:1-6), (as foretold in Jeremiah 31:31-34) has replaced the Old Covenant of Law. The New Covenant results in the forgiveness of sins and in a change of the human heart those issues forth in willing obedience to God's commands. (8:7-13)*

*The transforming blood of the New Covenant is the blood of Christ, which blood was shed once-and-for-all as the eternally efficacious atonement for sins, in contrast to the oft-repeated blood sacrifices of animals in the Old Testament ritualistic sacrificial system (which was only a shadow of the heavenly tabernacle). Hebrews 9:1-10; 18)*

CONDITIONS

*"Patient, enduring faith, like that of Abraham, is presented (6:11 ff/) as the sole alternative of the apostasy cited in verses 4-8. Such apostasy, and present peril for the writer and his readers, was a peril also for Abraham. If he and "Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise" (11:9), had grown weary of "looking for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (verse 10) And pilgrims on earth:(verse 13) seeking "a better country, that is, an heavenly" (vs. 14, 16), they could have returned to "that country from whence they came out". (v. 15) Growing weary of setting their affection on things above, they could have returned to both the literal and the spiritual Ur of the Chaldea's, dismissing the anticipation of "an heavenly country" and a "city which hath foundations" as of no practical consequence for the present."*

WARNINGS

PROMISES

CONDITIONS

WARNINGS

*We have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God...(10:9-21)*

*...he who promised is faithful.” (10:23)*

*“Consequently (because of the superior priesthood of Christ) he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.” (7:25)*

*“...how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (9:14)*

PROMISES

CONDITION

WARNINGS

*"You knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one." (10:34)*

*"But we are not of those who shrink back." (10:39)*

*The promises and blessings afforded to the faithful are multiple (as related in Hebrews 11):*

*...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." (10:22)*

*"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering...and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." (10:23-25)*

*"For if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful prospect of judgment, and a fury of fire which will consume the adversaries." (Hebrews 10:27) Note: "The word 'sin' is in the present participle which denotes not a single act of unbelief, but a state or condition of unbelief. Those described are those who...turn away from Christ and continue...to turn away...just as long as we continue in this state of willful apostasy we put ourselves beyond the possibility of forgiveness."*

*(Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews by Daniel Shepherdson, pgs. 457-461)*

*It is possible for one-time believer to succumb to sin and to "spurn the Son of God and profane the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outrage the Spirit of grace", and as a result reap the terrible judgment of God. (10:29) (It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (10:31)*

PROMISES

*Divine approval (verse 2), approved by God as righteous (verse 4), escape from death (special case of Enoch. (v. 5), pleasing God's), becoming an heir of God's righteousness (v. 7) a God prepared city (heaven) (v. 6), etc., etc.*

*"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses..."*

*"Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God". (12:2)*

CONDITIONS

WARNINGS

*"...and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." (10:38)*

*Those who shrink back are destroyed (10:39). Perseverance in the faith (i.e., continuing to trust the Lord for everything, throughout one's entire lifetime) is the condition for the fulfillment of God's promise of final salvation to believers (10: 35-39) and is patterned for present – day believers after the exemplary faith of godly ancestors, some of whom, as a result of their faith, enjoyed victory through deliverance from death (11:1-35a), and some of whom, as result of their faith enjoyed ultimate victory in spite of physical death. (11:35b-40)*

PROMISES

*"...he (God) disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness." (12:10)*

CONDITIONS

*"But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, etc." (20:32-33)*

*Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised." (10:35-36)*

*...but my righteous one shall live by faith. (10:38)*

*"You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel." (12:22-24)*

*Believers must "have faith and keep their souls". (10:39)*

*"For by it (faith) men of old received divine approval." (11:2)*

WARNINGS

**PROMISES**

*Enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is god of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than he blood of Abel.” (12:22-24)*

*“Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken...”*

**CONDITIONS**

*“...through (faith) he (Abel) received approval as righteous, God bearing witness by accepting his gifts”. (11:4)*

*“By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death.” (11:5) Enoch pleased God through his faith. (11:5)*

*“And without faith it is impossible to please him. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” (11:6)*

*By faith, Noah saved his household from death (in the flood) and became an heir of the righteousness which comes by faith.” (11:7)*

*The success of the life of Abraham and Sarah was because of the exercise of their faith in God (obedience to God) (11:8-12, 17:19)*

**WARNINGS**

*It is possible for a “root of bitterness” to spring up and cause trouble in a believer’s life, resulting in the many becoming defiled.” (12:15)*

PROMISES

CONDITIONS

WARNINGS

*“He has said, ‘I will never fail you nor forsake you.’ Hence we can confidently say, ‘The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid what can man do to me?’ (13:6)*

*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” (13:18)*

*“Jesus also suffered*

*Outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.” (13:12)*

*The roll call of faith continues throughout the entire eleventh chapter of Hebrews.*

*...let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus...” (12:2)*

*“Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted.” (12:3)*

*“My son, do not regard lightly the disciple of the Lord, nor lose courage when you are punished by him.” (12:5)*

*“Lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.” (12:12, 13) “Strive for peace with all men, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.” (12:14) “See to it that no one fail to obtain the grace of God; that no ‘root of bitterness’ spring up and cause trouble and by it the many become defiled; that no one be immoral or irreligious like Esau.” (12 15, 16)*

*“For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.” (12:25)*

PROMISES

CONDITIONS

WARNINGS

*“Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do His will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever.” (13:20-21)*

*“Grace be with all of you.” (13:25)*

*See that you do not refuse him who is speaking.” (12:25)*

*“...and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe:...”*

*“Let brotherly love continue.” (13:1)*

*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers.” (13:2)*

*Remember those who are in prison...and those who are ill-treated.” (13:3)*

*“Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled. (13:4)*

*“...for our God is a consuming fire.” (12:29)*

*“...for God will judge the immoral and adulterous.” (13:4)*

**PROMISES**

**CONDITIONS**

**WARNINGS**

*“Keep your life free from the love of money, and be content with what you have.” (13:5)*

*“Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith.” (13:7)*

*“Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings for it is well that the heart be strengthened by grace.” (13:9)*

*“Therefore let us go forth to him outside the camp, bearing abuse for him.” (13:13)*

*“Through him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.” (13:15)*

**"ITEMIZATION OF THE 'SNARES' WHICH CAN CAUSE A BELIEVER TO FALL FROM GRACE."**

1. ***Unforgiving Spirit***  
*Matthew 18:21-35*
  
2. ***Deception by False Teachings or Evil Spirits***  
*Matthew 24:4, 5, 11-13, 23-26*      *1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1:3-6*  
*Luke 11:24-28*      *1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 4:1*  
*1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:20*      *1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6:20, 21*  
*Colossians 2:8, 18, 19*
  
3. ***Spiritual Neglect and Procrastination (Spiritual Drifting, Gradual Hardening, or Luke warm-ness.)***  
*Matthew 25:1-13*      *Hebrews: 7-11, 13, 15*  
*Hebrews 2:1-3*      *Revelations 3:15, 16, 17*
  
4. ***Spiritual Carelessness and Shallowness (Lack of Vigilance)***  
*Luke 8:12, 13*      *II<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:17*  
*Hebrews 4:1, 11*
  
5. ***Spiritual Carelessness and Shallowness (Lack of Vigilance)***  
*I John 5:16*      *James 1:14, 15, 16*  
*I Corinthians 6:7-9*      *James 5:15, 20*  
*II Corinthians 12:2-13:5*      *Jude 4, 6, 7, 8-10, 12, 24*  
*Philippians 3:18-19*      *Revelations 2: 18-26*  
*1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 3-5*      *Revelations 3:5, 8-12*  
*1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 5:11-15*  
*Hebrews 6:4-9*  
*Hebrews 10:28-29*  
*Hebrews 12:16, 17, 25-29*
  
6. ***Preoccupation by Worldly Interests and Pursuits and Riches***  
*Luke 8:14*      *1<sup>st</sup> John 2:15, 16, 17*  
*1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 5:6*      *Revelations 3:4*  
*1<sup>st</sup> I Timothy 6:9-12*
  
7. ***Faithlessness and Lack of Spiritual Endurance (Disobedience, Unbelief, and Bitterness.)***  
*Luke 12:42-48*      *Hebrews 3:12, 19*  
*John 15:1-7*      *Hebrews 4:6, 11*  
*John 6:66-71*      *Hebrews 6:10-20*  
*John 8:31, 32, 51*      *Hebrews 10:23, 36, 39*  
*Acts 11:21-23*      *Hebrews 11:13*  
*Acts 14:21-22*      *Ezekiel 33:10-16*  
*Romans 11:20-22*      *Hebrews 12:1*  
*1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:23-27*      *1<sup>st</sup> John 2:17, 25, 28*  
*1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:22*      *Jude 5*  
*II<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 11:2-4*      *Revelation 2:7. 10, 11, 17*

*Galatians 6:9*  
*Philippians 2:12*  
*Colossians 1:23*  
*2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:12*

*Revelation 3:5, 10, 12*  
*Revelation 21:7, 8*

8. *Shallow attitude towards Sin and towards Grace (Antinomianism)*  
*Romans 6:11-23*                      *1<sup>st</sup> Peter: 1:5-11*  
*Romans 8:12-14, 17*                      *Jude: 4*  
*Galatians 6:7, 8*  
*Hebrews 10:26, 27*
  
9. *Refusal of or Insensitivity to the Spiritual Means of Grace*  
*John 13:8*                      *Hebrews 10:22-25*                      *1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:27-32*
  
10. *Offense by Fellow Believers*  
*Romans 13:15-23*
  
11. *Attitude of Ingratitude, Grumbling, and Division*  
*1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:10*                      *Philippians 2:14*
  
12. *Self-Confidence and Pride*  
*I Corinthians 10:11, 12*
  
13. *Resort to Religious Performance Instead of Grace (Legalism)*  
*Galatians 5:1-4*                      *1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1:3-6*
  
14. *Discouragement and Despair during Trials and Persecutions, or Chastening. (Lose Heart)*  
*1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 3:3, 4*                      *1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:7*  
*Hebrews 10:32-34; 12:11*
  
15. *Rejection of the Dictates of the Conscience*  
*1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1:19, 20*                      *1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 4:2*
  
16. *Temporal Irresponsibility to Dependents*  
*1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 5:8*
  
17. *Spiritual Profession without Spiritual Performance (Lack of Good Deeds and Good Deeds and Good Conduct)*  
*James 2:14-26*                      *2<sup>nd</sup> 1:6-10*

**"DOES THE BIBLE TEACH CONDITIONAL ETERNAL SECURITY?"**

*"The cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seemingly healthy, full heads." (Genesis 41:4-7)*

*This dream should be a warning to each of us. Yet, it is possible for the best years of our life, the best experiences we have enjoyed, the best victories we have won, and the best service we have rendered, to be swallowed up by times of failure, defeat, dishonor, and uselessness in God's kingdom. Some people whose lives offered exceptional promise and achievements have come to such an end. It is certainly terrible to imagine, but it is true. "Yet it is never necessary."*

*Samuel Dickey Gordon once said that the only safe assurance against such a tragedy is to have a "fresh touch with God daily – or even hourly". My blessed, fruitful, and victorious experiences of yesterday have no lingering value to me today. In fact, they can be "swallowed up" or reversed by today's failures, unless I see them as incentives to spur me on to even better and richer experiences today.*

*Maintaining this "fresh touch with God", by abiding in Christ, will be the only thing to keep the "ugly and gaunt...cows" and the "thin heads of grain" from consuming my life. (From Message for the Morning Watch)*

<sup>1</sup> *"Son of man, say to the Israelites, 'this is what you are saying: "Our offenses and sins weigh us down, and we are wasting away because of [a] them. How then can we live?"' Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?' "Therefore, son of man, say to your people, 'If someone who is righteous disobeys, that person's former righteousness will count for nothing. And if someone who is wicked repents, that person's former wickedness will not bring condemnation. The righteous person who sins will not be allowed to live even though they were formerly righteous.' If I tell a righteous person that they will surely live, but then they trust in their righteousness and do evil, none of the righteous things that person has done will be remembered; they will die for the evil they have done. And if I say to a wicked person, 'You will surely die,' but they then turn away from their sin and do what is just and right— if they give back what they took in pledge for a loan, return what they have stolen, follow the decrees that give life, and do no evil—that person will surely live; they will not die. None of the sins that person has committed will be remembered against them. They have done what is just and right; they will surely live. "Yet your people say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' But it is their way that is not just. If a righteous person turns from their righteousness and does evil, they will die for it. And if a wicked person turns away from their wickedness and does, what is just and right, they will live by doing so. Yet you Israelites say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' But I will judge each of you according to your own ways." (Ezekiel 33:10-20)*

*Read Ezekiel 18:21-32 for further understanding of the possibility of the recovery of the wicked person to righteousness and the possibility the degree backsliding into sin of the once righteous persons. Like the thief on the cross beside Jesus, who called upon Jesus to remember him when Jesus came into His Kingdom, there*

*will be multitudes of “death bed repentant” in heaven! Only those who repent of their sins and who exercise saving path will get to enter the “pearly gates”! God is not willing that any should perish, but there is only one “passport” to heaven – and that is true repentance and the exercise of faith in God (as best one understands Him). It is either “repent or perish” – and the wicked one who, at the last minute, repents will gain entrance into Heaven! His life will be ‘lost’, but his soul will be ‘saved’!*

*According to the 33<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Ezekiel, it is the spiritual state of one’s soul when he dies that determines that soul’s eternal destiny. Even though the majority of a man’s life has been lived in righteousness, if that righteous man is overpowered by insidious temptations (and if he consistently fails to avail himself of the graciously offered keeping power of the Holy Spirit, and thus yields himself to a pattern of deliberate sinning), then that once-righteous man will be finally lost eternally! On the other hand, if a man who has most of his life lived a very wicked life (like the ‘thief on the cross’), comes to a place in his life when he is “stopped in his tracks” with a “grand awakening by the Holy Spirit” which results in deep repentance and the exercise of simple (sincere) “saving faith” (like, again, the ‘thief on the cross’). Then God will graciously and thoroughly ‘save’ that wicked man – and, if this man “keeps the faith”, Jesus will welcome that once wicked man into the eternal paradise (the same as the ‘thief’ was welcomed by Jesus into paradise!).*

*Yes, as you probably are ‘disturbed’ by this Ezekiel passage (33:10-20), I too ‘feel’ disturbance when I think of the possibility of myself (who have tried to live for God most of my life) finally (in the end when I die) being lost from God and never seeing heaven! But, even though I personally believe that it is highly unlikely that a long-time Christian would “turn his back on God” towards the latter part of his life, I have to say that, even though such a tragedy is not ‘probable’, nevertheless such a tragedy is “possible”! Why? Because every Christian, until the end of his human life on this planet, has the continuing gift (a “frightening gift”) of “Free Will”!*

*Because Satan attempts, through temptation, to destroy the faith of every Christian, every Christian must continue (until the end of his mortal life) “to watch and to pray”, for the Adversary (though defeated by Christ’s death and resurrection) is “still on the loose”. He wants to defeat, to discourage, to divide, to devour every believer (especially those believers who have lived the longest for Christ)! At any stage of the Christian life, there is need to guard against the lusts of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life! How easy it is for a long-time believer to begin to take pride in his moral, spiritual, and ecclesiastical achievements! And, even so-called mature Christians, can be “off their guard” and begin to “think more highly of themselves than they ought to think”.*

*Mature Christians are capable of “falling into sins”, and it is possible (not probable) that a mature-type believer could “drift away” into all kinds of sins! Let me tell you of one such very sad example of a mature Christian who fell into sin! I believe he repented and that he was restored to a vital faith in Christ, before he was tragically killed in a car accident (just a few years ago). This man appeared to me to be a very mature person, for he had been a long-time pastor, then a conference superintendent, and finally a denominational Bishop! But, even though I do not know the “vivid details” regarding his “horrible fall”, this now-retired Bishop lost his “ministerial credentials” (as far as I know) – because of his “sexual immorality”! Again, I must*

*say, I believe that this man (Bishop) was repentant, and that he entered heaven (as a forgiven man) when (shortly after his spiritual disaster) he was “ushered into eternity” through a “head on car collision”. “BUT, IF SUCH A “FINE MINISTER” (Head of a holiness denomination) could dreadfully “fall into sin” (as he did), what is to say that any other believer could not fall into some type of sin (lust, pornography, pride, adultery, envy, resentment, bitterness, greed, slander, dishonesty, irreverence, and others)?*

*It is wonderful to have a personal assurance of one’s salvation, (for the Spirit does witness to our human spirit that we are sons and daughters of our loving Heavenly Fathers)! But there is no total and absolute assurance of our salvation until we arrive in Heaven (where it is impossible to “fall from grace” – praise God!)* We must, on earth, guard against “drifting away from God”. (Hebrews 2) “How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?” (Hebrews 2) There is the peril of pride, and the peril of fleshly lusts (both of which we just briefly noted). There is also the peril of worldliness, (becoming fascinated and enamored with ‘things’ and ‘possessions’ and ‘worldly pleasures’). Of course, Christianity (more than any other religion, values the material world that God created and that Christ – the Incarnate One – sanctified by His bodily presence on earth for 33 years). Christianity does not condemn the ownership of houses and lands and gadgets and possessions – IF a believer does not worship the “material realm”! “Things” all belong to God, and Christians are simply stewards of “things” – to use all “things” like houses and lands and cars to serve one’s fellowman and to honor God and to moderately enjoy themselves! But, nevertheless, there is a temptation to make a “god” out of things, and, in the process, to focus on “things” rather than to use “things” for one’s own self moderately, and to use “things” generously to enhance the lives of other needy persons, and thus gladly to bring glory and honor to the “Owner of all things”! A keen sense of stewardship must always be maintained by sincere Christians, whether they have little of this world’s “goods”, or they have much of the world’s “good”! In the material world in which every Christian lives, there is a continuing temptation to become “worldly minded” (i.e., to change one’s focus from worshipping the Creator of Matter, to worshipping matter itself!).

*Paul had many faithful companions and partners “in the Faith”, and he often names some of them in his various New Testament letters (epistles). But one such companion (very faithful at one time) apparently got his “eyes” off Christ’s work, and he put his “gaze” instead on the “things of this temporal world”! Paul says, “Demas, in love with this present world, hath forsaken me!” A backslider who forsook Paul and the “Work of the Kingdom”! How sad! How very sad! Did Demas every “get back to the Lord”? No one knows!*

*Even one of the close friends of the famous evangelist, Billy Graham, departed from “the Faith”. This young man was highly gifted in Gospel (evangelistic) preaching, and (like Graham) he was in great demand as a speaker! But something “tripped up” this promising young preacher! I don’t know all the details surrounding his “fall from grace and Christian belief”, but it is my understanding that this young evangelist (highly talented) allowed himself to become disillusioned regarding the faith of Christianity because of his serious doubts that he nourished regarding the “Problem of Human Suffering”! Doubts, which he failed adequately to deal with, drove him away from preaching the simple (but powerful) message of Christ and Salvation! He finally decisively left the “fold of God and His people”. He became so cynical regarding Christianity, that this one-true effective evangelist and now backslider agnostic (perhaps atheist) ridiculed Christianity and even-*

*tually he even wrote books that sought to repudiate the faith of Christians! Compassionate-minded Billy Graham tried to “reach out in love” to this apostate person, but apparently he and no one else was able to persuade him to “return to the Father’s house”!*

*As we have mentioned, many perils threaten to destroy the ‘faith’ of believers (perils such as pride, lust, worldliness, doubt). These perils are real, and they must be avoided! I believe that the longer one is a believer and the closer one’s “walk” is with God, the less likely is it that such a believer will be enticed by temptation and “fall from grace”! However, as long as there is such a thing as ‘free will’, there is always a possibility of sinning! This human life is a life of probation, but God is able to keep the believer until the end of his journey!*

*“...for if, after they have escaped the corrupting ways of the world through a full knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they again become entangled in them and are conquered by them, then their last condition is worse than their former one. For it would have been better for them never to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command committed to their trust. In them is verified the truth of the proverb, “A sow that has washed herself goes back to wallow in the mire.” (11<sup>th</sup> Peter 2:20-22, Williams’ Translation)*

*Only God can be the final Judge of every person, in time and in eternity, but while it is forbidden by Jesus for any of His followers to “judge” (i.e., to declare the final outcome of another person’s soul), it is permitted (and encouraged) by Jesus for His followers to “test the fruit” of those around them. Jesus said Christians are right to be ‘fruit inspectors’!*

*And it is important to note, that believing in Jesus is a progressive, continuing relationship of love, not a one-time-only experience. Those who are presently living in sin are sinners, even if their previous experience with God was truly “Christian” (characterized by “godly traits and virtues”). It is one’s present, up-to-date experience that determines one’s relationship with God. When a Christian’s occasional sins are faced and confessed to God (1<sup>st</sup> John 1:9; 2:1), then that “failed Christian” is quickly restored to fellowship with God. However, when a believer in Christ continues deliberately to sin, the day comes when he not only loses his fellowship with God, but his very relationship with God is forfeited! Eternal life is not some kind of “deposit” that a person receives at conversion, a “deposit” (gift) that is irrevocable and unconditional. It is the person who believes in Christ and continues to believe in Christ, who is saved for time and eternity! “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life!” God’s promise is to persevering believers! Eternal life is a relationship of love with the Savior, and (as in a human relationship of love) the love of a believer for his God must be nurtured and maintained for an entire lifetime! A believer who chooses no longer to commune with God in prayer, and who chooses no longer to allow his God to speak to him through the Bible, and who chooses no longer to obey God’s commands, and who chooses no longer to humble himself to learn from his fellow believers (both in positive guidance and in gentle rebuke), and who chooses to “close his heart of compassion” to suffering persons (and who decides instead selfishly to spend his money to “indulge his own desires”) – I say, such a Christian (just described) has “sold his birthright for a pot of stew”! Such a Christian*

*is well on his way to “forsaking the faith of his ancestors”! Such a Christian is fast losing his precious relationship with God! He is in a “backslidden state!”*

*It is tragically true that any believer has the capacity of making “shipwreck of his faith.” There are multiple perils that Christians must avoid – the “lust of the eyes”, the “lust for money”, and “the pride of life” (to name a few)! “So the man who thinks he stands securely must be on the lookout not to fall.” (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:12) “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit of man indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak!” This verse does not say that the flesh is wicked, but it is weak! The flesh (which represents “innocent desires” like the “sex desire”) can become the “bridgehead for sin” (that is, the “entrance for sin” into your life). For instance, the God-given “sexual desires” are meant to be the “holy directives” to lead you to a beautiful, chaste, God-centered wife, but if the “sex drive” is not disciplined and surrendered to the Creator of that “sex drive”, then this beautiful wholesome drive will be the “entrance of sin” into your life! What was intended to be a beautiful God-given gift will turn out to be the instrument that leads to misery and ugliness!*

*Probably the most basic Biblically taught truth regarding the unique creation of humans, is the truth (a glorious yet sobering truth) that God created humans with “Free Will”. God did not want “robots”; God wanted creatures (made in His own “image”) created with the capacity to enjoy the Creator in a deep loving relationship! And there is no such thing as a meaningful loving relationship without the capacity of choice (i.e., “Free Will”). You cannot “force” someone to love you; another person must freely choose to love you!*

*And the greatest exercise of human “Free choice” is the exercise of a sinner (by the enabling grace of God) choosing to repent and to believe in Jesus as his/her Savior and Lord! But, what is important to understand (from the Bible’s perspective) is this: a person’s initial choice (by God’s grace) to believe in Christ as personal Savior, must be affirmed and maintained throughout one’s entire earthly life!*

*“Be thou faithful unto her until death us do part” is the commitment of an earnest groom, when he takes his marriage vows. But one who initially enters into a “saving relationship” with God, must determine (by God’s grace) to be faithful to God for his entire lifetime!*

*But, we all know (sadly) that a large number of couples become divorced (because of lack of faithfulness, in one way or another). And, in all honesty, (as the Scriptures indicate, John 15; 2 Peter 2:20-22), we have to sadly acknowledge that there are some believers who “turn back from following their Lord”! Unfaithful to their Lord! Backsliding and apostasy are words that describe a spiritual reality that is most sad (tragic)! God can “keep” every believer from “falling away”, but not even God can “force straying Christians” to make the right choices!*

*The Holy Spirit, who strongly warns straying Christians to “guard against temptations”, and to “rush back to the caring arms of the Good Shepherd” – this blessed Holy Spirit can (tragically) be “grieved”; He can be “quenched” or “resisted”! There is no human behavior (by a believer or by a non-believer) that is more dangerous or more soul-destroying than the behavior of “resisting or ignoring the powerful and the tender Holy Spirit!” The Spirit does everything, just short of coercion, to draw a “drifting believer” back to the blessed Savior. The Spirit knows clearly where the path of sinning will lead to – namely, to an earthly life of misery,*

*and eventually (unless there is true repentance in the heart of the drifting Christian) to an eternal destruction, a destruction too horrible to imagine.*

*God's faithfulness to me cannot avail for my own unfaithfulness! God's faithfulness is established (i.e., God will never leave me, nor forsake me)! But, as long as I am a "free will agent" on this earth (in a state of testing, probation, and character building for heaven), my faithfulness to God is always "in question"! In heaven, my faithfulness to God (i.e., my faithfulness, made possible by my effort and by God's sustaining grace) will be "sealed forever"! No temptation; No testing; No trials - in Heaven! No more probation in Heaven! God will have tested my faithfulness to Him (and to my fellow-human beings) long enough on earth! The sweetest words in the Universe (for humans) will be those words from the lips of the Tri-une God when he shall give His glorious evaluation for His "faithful child": "Well done, thou good and faithful servant!"*

*A heavenly (eternal) reward given for a godly life and for "staying true" to the Living God on the probationary planet! A godly life is one that seeks God's will! When a believer realizes he has not fully done God's will (because of his mistakes or even because of his sins), he quickly "pleads the blood of Jesus Christ" as his "atoning sacrifice". He claims God's forgiveness in humility and in repentance, and he then continues with his life of faithfulness – seeking to carry out God's will for his little (but significant) human life. God rewards persons (believers) who "keep up-to-date" in their love relationship with Him (i.e., persons who keep "short accounts with God" – confessing sins quickly when believers become aware that they have "missed the mark" in their actions, in their attitudes). Only those persons get to hear God's "Well Done" at the end of their lives, who have maintained a growing "love relationship with God!"*

*This means that such a person continues to believe in Jesus until the time of his physical death. This means that such a person continually casts all of his admitted frequent failures and his occasional sins into the "cleansing stream of Jesus' powerful blood"! "The blood, the blood, O hallelujah it cleanses me!" Let the precious blood constantly cover you! Then you will have no need to worry that your name will ever be "erased from the Book of Life"! Daily confession (of shortcomings or even of occasional sins) and daily cleansing of your entire life (mind, emotion and will) gives you an up-to-date assurance that you are in a vital "love relationship" with the Tri-une God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), and that you are ready any time to receive your Lord's call to that "Heavenly Shore" where there will be to be peace and joy and love in a much larger measure than anything you have ever known on earth, ever in your closest times of fellowship with your matchless Savior and your tender Holy Spirit and your Kind Heavenly Father! Daily communion with God will prepare you for heavenly communion – a communion which could come at any time (even at an unexpected time)! Staying close to God gives you strength for life's trials and temptations and tests, and it is the best "antidote" against spiritual drifting or dangerous backsliding. Your God is able to keep you, if you are willing to be kept. His power is limitless, if you have a wholehearted willingness!*

**"SECURITY FOR BELIEVERS SUMMARY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHINGS  
ON 'PERSEVERANCE OF BELIEVERS'!"**

*There are scores of New Testament Scriptures which encourage Christians to 'persevere in the Faith' (i.e., not to succumb to temptations and other pressures in life, but to remain true to the Lord until 'the end of life').*

*Even though the theme of Christology (the doctrine of the 'person and nature of Christ') is a great theme of the Book of Hebrews, the primary theme of Hebrews is 'Perseverance of the Saints' (i.e., 'let us hold fast'). Notes Robert Shank (regarding the proper understanding of the theme of the Book of Hebrews): "The phrase 'let us go on' appears but once (Hebrews 6:1). 'Let us go on', he writes, 'unto perfection'. The writer may have reference to his intention to proceed to the advanced development of the doctrine of Christ to which he proposes to lead them in the course of his letter. Or it may be a call to his readers to advance from spiritual infancy in which he found them (Hebrews 5:11-13) toward the maturity (vs.) which is possible for all who will grasp it. Actually, both things are within the writer's purpose. Certainly, it is his intention to proceed toward the fuller development of his Christology. But the presentation of his Christology is not an end in itself. The principal burden of the letter is not 'let us go on', but 'let us hold fast'. In contrast with the exhortation 'let us go on unto perfection', which occurs but once, the exhortation 'let us hold fast our confession' occurs twice:(Hebrews 4:14; 10:23) and the epistle abounds with cognate exhortations: 'if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end' (3:6); 'if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end' (3:14); 'lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God' (3:12); 'lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin' (3:13); 'lest at any time we should slip away' (2:1); 'if we neglect so great salvation' (2:3); 'harden not your hearts' (3:8,15); 'lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief (4:11); 'show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end' (6:11); 'let us keep on drawing near with a true heart in full assurance of faith' (10:22); 'cast not away therefore your confidence' (10:35); 'for ye have need of patience, that... ye might receive the promise' (10:36); 'the just shall live by faith: but if he draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him' (10:38); 'lest ye be wearied and faint' (12:3); 'despise not the chastening of the Lord nor faint when thou art rebuked of him' (12:5); 'be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live' (12:9); 'lest that which is lame he turned out of the way' (12:13); 'lest any man fail of the grace of God' (12:15); 'lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who sold his birthright' (12:16); 'if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven' (12:25); 'be not carried away with divers and strange doctrines' (13:9); 'let us keep going forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach' (13:13).*

*Any emphasis in the Epistle to the Hebrews on going on toward spiritual maturity is secondary. The burden of the writer's 'word of exhortation', is that his readers 'hold fast the confession of their hope' in Jesus Christ as the only Savior and 'the Source of eternal salvation unto all who obey Him.'" (Life in the Son; Robert Shank; pgs. 231-234)*

*The highly respected writer (from the early 20th century), James Denney, in his well-known book 'The Death of Christ', believed the main thrust of the Book of Hebrews was 'conservation of the Faith'. He writes, "The author (of Hebrews) was not an evangelist so much as a pastor, and it is not the initiation of Christianity, but its conservation, with which he deals throughout" The internationally-known New Testament scholar, William Barclay, agrees. He writes: "When we sum it all up, we can say that Hebrews is a letter written by a great teacher, written by a man whom we would call a professor, to a little group or college of Christians in Rome. He was their teacher; at the moment he was separated from them; he was afraid that they were drifting away from the faith; and so he wrote this letter to them."*

*When studying the New Testament, it is helpful to look at larger sections of Scripture with three thoughts in mind: (1) Promises to be claimed, (2) Conditions to be met, (3) Warnings to be heeded. With these three ideas in mind, let us briefly 'scan' some of the relevant New Testament passages, all of which deal with the important subject of the 'perseverance of believers' and the 'security of believers'. Space will not permit the quotation of many Scriptures, but I will attempt a brief summary of the 'key' points in several of the New Testament passages.*

*In Matthew 18:21-25, God promises total forgiveness of one's total 'debt' to God, provided that one is willing to forgive those who have sinned against him. A lack of mercy and forgiveness of others incites the wrath of the Lord, and actually forfeits one's own forgiveness.*

*In Matthew 24:4, 5, 11-13, 23-26, the Lord promises to save those who 'endure to the end' (vs. 13). Believers are warned of the possibility of being led astray by false 'Christ's. Multiplied wickedness in the earth can cause the 'cooling' of a believer's love for God (vs. 12). In Matthew 25:1-3, in Christ's parable of the Marriage Feast, believers are warned against neglecting to purchase 'oil', thus resulting in their lamps going out when Christ comes (vs. 8), and being shut out of the marriage feast while trying too late to purchase on (vs. 10-12).*

*In Luke 8:11-15, believers are taught that spiritual fruitfulness and productivity (vs. 15) is the result of hearing the Word, holding it fast in an honest and good heart, and patiently enduring. Christians must guard against the devil stealing the Word from their hearts. They must guard against shallowness and falling away during temptation (vs. 13), and they must also guard against their lives being choked by the 'cares and riches and pleasures of life' (vs. 14).*

*In Luke 11:24-28, persons whose lives have been initially cleansed from evil must guard against evil spirits which are seeking re-entrance into the lives of those who had previously experienced deliverance. This Scripture apparently is teaching that, following one's cleansing from sin, there must be positive 'infilling' of one's life with the blessed presence of the Holy Spirit (to prevent re-entry of any 'evil spirits').*

*In Luke 12:42-46, the Master (Christ) sets believers over his 'household' and over all his possessions. Faithfulness and wise management of God-entrusted responsibilities is expected from all servants. The servants (believers) are exhorted not to become impatient at the delay of the Master's coming. Impatience can lead to mistreatment of those persons who have been entrusted to their stewardship, leading to a 'life of debauchery' (vs. 45). Such faithless stewards will be punished with a severe 'beating' and assigned to the 'place of the unfaithful' (vs. 46, 47).*

*John 6:66-71, teaches that believers must continue to follow Christ, rather than 'drawing back' and no longer going with Him (vs. 66). There is a possibility (as in the case of Judas Iscariot) of a one-time believer 'betraying' Jesus (vs. 70, 71).*

*In John 8:31-32, Jesus states that persons can be His disciples (and 'know the truth which shall set them free') if they hold to his teachings and continue in His Word. John 8:51, states that a person shall never see (spiritual) death if he keeps God's Word. Act 14:21-22, reveals that a large number of persons became disciples to the Lord. It is recorded that Paul strengthened the disciples and encouraged them to 'remain true to the faith'. Paul taught that Christians 'must go through many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God'.*

*In Paul's popular teaching in Romans 6:11-23, he teaches that it is possible for one's 'body parts' to be yielded as 'instruments of sin and wickedness' (vs. 12, 13). Paul warns against believers entertaining a shallow attitude toward God's grace, and a casual attitude towards sinning, and he exhorts believers never to claim that grace quickly provides for one's practice of sinning (vs. 15). Paul says that offering one's self to obey sin results in final spiritual death (vs. 16). In Romans 8:13, Paul says that one will die if he lives according to his 'sinful nature'.*

*Romans 11:20-22, teaches that a person enjoys a 'standing in Christ' if he has 'faith', 'humility', 'godly fear' and 'reverence' - and provided that he continues 'in God's kindness'. God will not spare those who persist in unbelief. Unbelief causes the branch to be broken off the Vine. Those who do not continue in God's kindness will be cut out (vs. 22).*

*Romans 14:15-23, teaches that a believer must act in love by carefully refraining from anything that is a source of stumbling to his fellow Christian. A Christian must guide his life and actions by 'righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' (vs. 18). It is possible for a believer to be offended by and even destroyed by a fellow believer. It is possible for a believer to destroy the work of God and to cause a fellow Christian to stumble by his insensitive and offending actions (vs. 20, 21). It is possible for a believer to sin as a result of doing things with doubt rather than with faith (vs. 23). I Corinthians 9:23-27, teaches that a person (believer) will enjoy "a crown that will last forever" (vs. 25) if he is willing to undergo God's strict training and if he runs the spiritual race with 'aim and purpose' (i.e., 'beat my body and make it my slave'). Paul (wholesomely) feared that "after I have preached to others, I myself will be disqualified for the prize" (vs. 27).*

*Serious warnings are issued to believers in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:1-22. It is possible, after a believer has experienced many spiritual blessings, for God no longer to be pleased with him (vs. 5). It is possible for one who has experienced 'spiritual food and drink' to set his heart on evil things (as the Israelites in the wilderness did- verse 6). It is possible for a believer to fall into idolatry and sexual immorality, and consequently to be destroyed by God (vs. 7, 8). It is possible for a believer to 'test' (over-tempt) the Lord and to be destroyed by the Lord (vs. 9). It is possible for a believer to fall into a life of grumbling against the Lord and to be 'killed by the destroying angel' (vs. 10). Wrote Paul, "These things happened to them (the Israelites in the wilderness) as examples and were written down as warnings for us. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" (vs. 11, 12) "I do not want you (believers) to be participants with demons." (vs. 20) "Don't arouse the Lord's jealousy." (vs. 22).*

*1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:27-32, notes that it is possible for a believer to become insensitive to the spiritual significance of 'The Lord's Supper', and consequently to sin 'against the body and blood of the Lord' and bring*

*'judgment on himself' (vs. 27, 29). Some even died in the Early Church because they insensitively partook of the Lord's Supper (vs. 30).*

*1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:1-2, teach that if one does not hold firmly to the word, which he received for initial salvation, he has 'believed in vain' (vs. 2).*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 11:2-4, teaches that a gullible believer can deceptively be led away from his pure and single-hearted devotion to Christ, into false teachings (as illustrated by Eve's deception by Satan- 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 11:3-4).*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12:21-13:5, teaches that it is possible for a one-time believer to sin grievously (impurity, sexual sin, debauchery) without being activated to repentance.*

*Paul warns believers against reverting to a life of 'legalism', after having been initially set free from sin through God's mighty grace. With great sadness, Paul writes to the Galatians Christians who had reverted to 'legalism': "You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; You have fallen away from grace" (Galatians 5:4).*

*Someone said, "If a believer takes one step towards God, God takes a thousand steps toward the believer!" God is the 'God who acts' - the God who initiates, the God who is 'eager to respond' to any person who demonstrates any degree of desire to 'know God'. Someone wisely said, "It is not hard to live the Christian life; it is impossible - unless, of course, God's Spirit indwells and empowers the believer." Philipians 2:12-16 contains both Promises and Conditions, as these relate to one's salvation. As a believer, you can be encouraged, for "God works in you to will and do what pleases Him." (vs. 13) Because of the inward work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer, he can become 'blameless and pure', a child of God 'without fault in a crooked and depraved generation', and he can be a 'shining star in the universe' (vs. 15). But, with the promises and divine provisions, there are some conditions to be met: "Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (vs. 12). Christians are to 'do everything without complaining or arguing" (vs. 14).*

*Colossians 1:21-23, speaks of both a wonderful Promise to be claimed, and a serious Condition to be met. "God has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation. If you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel.*

*Colossians 2:4-8, contains all three- the Promise (divine provision), the Condition, and the Warning. The Promise (the divinely given provision) - "You received Christ Jesus as Lord" (vs. 6). The Condition- "Continue to live in Christ, rooted and built up him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness" ( vs. 6, 7). The Warning- "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ" (vs. 8)*

*Colossians 2:18-19, warns believers against the possibility of falling 'prey' to a deceptive philosophy (vs. 18), the result of which is disqualification for the spiritual prize. It is possible for a believer to succumb to the teachings and practices of a false philosophy, and consequently to lose "...connection with the Head (Christ)". (vs. 19)*

*1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 3:1-8, teach that it is possible for believers to be unsettled by the inevitable trials and persecutions which all believers are destined to experience. (vs. 3, 4) It is possible for a believer to fade during temptation and to lose his faith, resulting in the efforts of the soul-winner becoming 'useless'. (vs. 5) Paul urges Timothy (Paul's young 'son in the Faith') to "fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience." (1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1:18-19) Paul teaches that it is possible for a believer to turn to false doctrines (1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1:3). It is possible for a believer to 'fall from grace' and to begin promoting controversial doctrines (regarding law keeping) rather than promoting the work of God, which is faith (1 Timothy 1:4). It is dreadful to think about, but it is possible for a believer to wander away from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith, and to turn to "meaningless talk". (1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1:6) It is possible (as in the case of Hymenaeus and Alexander) to reject faith and a good conscience, and thus to make 'shipwreck' of one's faith. (1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1:19-20)*

*1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 4:1-16 contains wonderful Promises, multiple Conditions, and serious Warnings. The Promises - Godliness holds "promise for both the present life and the life to come." (vs. 8) The Living God saves those who believe. (vs. 10) The Conditions - "Train yourself to be godly." (vs. 7) "Set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity." (vs. 12) "Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift." (vs. 12, 14) "Watch your life and doctrine closely. PERSEVERE in them, because IF you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers." The Warnings - It is possible to "abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons." (vs. 1) It is possible for one's conscience (apparently even the conscience of a one-time believer - according to the context of the Scripture) to become "seared as with a hot iron." (vs. 2)*

*1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 5:8, teaches that it is possible for a believer to 'deny the faith' and, as such, to become 'worse than an outright unbeliever'. 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 5:6, 11-15, contain some serious warnings for Christians. It is possible for sensual desires to overcome a believer's dedication to Christ. (vs. 11) It is possible for believers to break holy pledges, and to fall into hurtful habits, and thus to incur the judgment of God. (vs. 12-13) It is possible for a believer to turn away from the faith "to follow Satan." (vs. 15) It is possible for a believer to begin living for pleasure and thus to die spiritually. (vs. 6)*

*1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6:9-12, believers are urged to flee from the 'love of money', which is the 'root of all kinds of evil'. (vs. 10-11) Believers are urged to pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. (vs. 11) Believers are urged to "fight the good fight of the faith." (vs. 12a) Believers are urged (commanded) to "take hold of the eternal life to which you were called." (vs. 12) This portion of Scripture also contains a serious warning (especially relevant to modern-day Christians who live in a materialistically oriented society).*

*1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6:9-10 teaches that it is possible for believers to fall in love with money, resulting in "wandering from the faith and piercing themselves with many grief's", and plunging themselves into "ruin and destruction". In order for the materially wealthy believer to "take hold of the life that is truly life" and to establish "a firm foundation for the coming age", he/she is required to be generous and "rich in good deeds". The selfish and the greedy person will be judged by the Lord. (1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6:17-19)*

*According to 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6:20-21, it is possible for believers to succumb to the godless talk and foolish arguments of worldly 'knowledge' and, consequently to 'wander from the faith' ('lose their faith' - J.D. Phillips' translation).*

*"We (Christians) will live with him and we will reign with him (Christ). IF we died with him and IF we EN-DURE." (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:11-12) It is possible for a believer to "disown Him" (God), with the result, that God will disown that person (vs. 12). In such a case, the faithful character of God does not stand in question (vs. 13). "Quarrelling about words only ruins those who listen." (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:14). It is possible for a believer (as in the case of Hymenaeus and Philetus), to engage in 'godless chatter' and consequently to 'wander from the truth' and to cause others to have their faith destroyed. (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:16-18)*

*Hebrews 2:1-3, teaches that it is possible for believers to 'drift away' from 'what we have heard' (the message of faith). (vs. 1) It is possible for believers to neglect and to ignore God's 'great salvation', resulting in just punishment. (vs. 2, 3) Hebrews 3:6-19, contains Promises, Conditions, and Warnings. The Promises- "Christ is faithful over God's house" (which are believers). (vs. 6) "We are his house" (that is, Christ lives in us), and "we have come to share in Christ." (vs. 14) The Conditions "Encourage one another daily, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness." (vs. 13) "If we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast." (vs. 6); "If we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first." (vs. 14) The warnings it is possible for believers to harden their hearts, and to stray away from God's ways, with the tragic result of never entering God's rest. (vs. 7-11) It is possible for 'brothers' (believers) to have a "sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God." (vs. 12) It is possible for a believer to become "hardened by sin's deceitfulness." (vs. 13, 15) It is possible for one-time believers to disobey God so grievously that they never enter into God's rest. "They were not able to enter, because of their unbelief." (vs. 19)*

*To enter the rest which God has prepared for His people, believers must "Like every effort, so that no one will fall by following the Israelites' example of disobedience." (Hebrews 4:11)*

*Hebrews 10:19-31, is full of Comfort (blessings and provisions for believers), but there are also multiple Conditions which believers must fulfill, and there are some serious Warnings for believers to heed! The Divine Provisions - "We have confidence to enter the most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus." (vs. 23) The multiple Conditions (and commands to believers) - "Let us keep on drawing near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water." (vs. 22) "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess." (vs. 23) "Spur one another on toward love and good deeds." (vs. 24) "Let us not give up meeting together (as some are in the habit of doing)." (vs. 25) The Warnings -It is possible to deliberately keep on sinning after a person has re-*

*ceived the knowledge of the truth, with dire consequences involved - "a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God." (vs. 26-27) It is possible for a one-time believer to trample the Son of God under foot and to treat as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and to insult the Spirit of grace with the consequent punishment of dying without mercy. (vs. 28-29)*

*Hebrews 10:32-39, teaches that a believer needs to PERSEVERE in the faith in spite of severe persecution (public exposure to insult, and imprisonment for the faith, and confiscation of personal property), (vs. 32-34). Maintenance of confidence and PERSEVERANCE in the faith is necessary in order to "receive what God has promised." (vs. 36) A believer must choose to believe and thus to be saved, rather than to shrink back from the faith and finally be destroyed. (vs. 39)*

*Hebrews 11 is called the 'Faith Chapter' of the Bible (listing the 'heroes of the Faith'). "All these people were still living by faith when they died." (vs. 13) (It is very important to read Ezekiel 3:10-16).*

*In Hebrews 12, believers are commanded to throw off everything that hinders them and the "sin which so easily entangles them." (vs. 1) Believers must run with PERSEVERANCE the race marked out for them. (vs. 1) Believers must fix their eyes on Jesus, who is the Pioneer and Perfecto of the Faith and who is the believer's Intercessor before the Father. (vs. 2) As a believer you must "consider him (Christ) who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." (vs. 3) The believer must 'struggle against sin'. (vs. 4) A believer must willingly receive the Lord's discipline in his life (vs. 5) and he must submit to the Father in order to live. (vs. 9) The believer must endure hardship as discipline. (vs. 7) If a believer expects to share in God's holiness, he must be willing to receive discipline from the Lord. (vs. 10) There is a 'harvest of righteousness and peace' for those believers who have been trained by the painful discipline of the Lord (vs. 11) "Strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. Make level paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed." (vs. 12, 13) "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord." (vs. 14) "See to it that no one misses the grace of God." (vs. 15) "See that no one is sexually immoral." (vs. 16) Serious Warnings are here also. It is possible for the lame Christian to become disabled rather than to be healed. (vs. 13) It is possible for a believer to 'miss the grace of God'. (vs. 15) It is possible for a 'root of bitterness' to spring up in a believer's life, causing trouble and defilement to many. (vs. 16) It is possible for a believer to become godless (like Esau) by selling out his spiritual inheritance. (vs. 16, 17) According to Hebrews 12:25-29, God speaks to mankind from heaven, revealing His holy will and nature, and warning men to follow the Lord of Heaven. (vs. 25) "We are receiving a Kingdom that cannot be shaken." (vs. 28) Christians are commanded: "See to it that you do not refuse him (God) who speaks." (vs. 25) It is possible for us believers to "turn away from him who warns us from heaven", rather than continue to "worship God acceptably with reverence and awe", with the result that we will be punished by God who is "a consuming fire". (vs. 28, 29)*

*According to Hebrews 13:9, it is possible for believers to be "carried away by all kinds of strange teachings." Christians must be on their 'alert' during times of temptation. Jesus said "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit (of man) indeed is willing, but the flesh (of man) is weak." It is possible for a be-*

*liever to be tempted, to succumb to 'his own evil desire', and to be 'dragged away and enticed', and to indulge in outright sin (which, when it is full-grown, gives birth to spiritual death). (See James 1:14-15)*

*It is possible for a believer to fall into the evil pleasures and friendships of the unsaved world. A one-time believer who "chooses to be the world's friend makes himself God's enemy" (James 4:4).*

*The often-overlooked last two verses of the Book of James contain some vital (and sometimes misunderstood) truths. Writes James (the half-brother of Jesus): "Dear brothers, if anyone has slipped away from God and no longer trusts the Lord and someone helps him understand the Truth again, that person who brings him back to God will have saved a wandering soul from death, bringing about the forgiveness of his many sins." (James 5:19-20, Living Bible) As in the case of Simon Peter who denied the Lord three times (and thus, fell into a terrible 'backslidden' condition), so it is possible for any believer to 'fall into sin' and to wander away from the Lord (thus destroying his 'fellowship' with the Lord, and eventually severing his 'relationship' with the Lord). However, according to James, it is possible for such a backslidden believer (as in the case of Simon Peter) to repent of his sins and to be restored to relationship with Christ. However, if it is possible to be restored, it is also possible not to be restored! It is possible for a believer to slip away from the Lord and no longer to trust the Lord, and ultimately (if the backslider is not turned back to the Lord) to experience spiritual death!*

*God's promises to believers are real, and those promises are most wonderful, but promises cannot be fulfilled unless certain conditions are met by believers. This fact is well established, time and time again in the New Testament. Take 1st Peter 1:5-9, 13 as an example of this repeated truth. "You are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time ... THROUGH FAITH." (vs. 5) The faith of believers must be proved genuine (at the time of Christ's return), through suffering all kinds of trials. (vs. 7) Believers are being filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, because they are being saved "THROUGH THEIR LOVE AND FAITH IN THE SAVIOR. (vs. 8, 9) You Christians must "prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed." (vs. 13) Promises and Conditions are inseparably connected!*

*According to 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1:5-11, a person (sinner) finds his 'standing in Christ' (justification) by Saving Faith. However, faith is only complete and effective when one increasingly adds to it the other great qualities of goodness, knowledge, self-control, PERSEVERANCE, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. (vs. 6, 7) If a believer does not possess these listed ethical qualities, "he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins." (vs. 9)*

*According to 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:16-17, a believer enjoys a 'secure position' in Christ. But, a believer is to be on his guard against the 'error of lawless men'. It is possible for a believer to relax his watchful guard and consequently to "be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from his secure position." (vs. 17)*

*1<sup>st</sup> John 1:5-2:11, contains very precious truths regarding God's provisions for believers, but these provisions are not given automatically. Certain conditions must be met. We (Christians) have fellowship with one an-*

*other and the blood of Jesus cleanses from every sin. If we walk in the light, as he is in the light (vs. 7); God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. IF we confess our sins to God and IF we continue to maintain an attitude of constant need for God's forgiveness (Note: 'Confess' is in the 'present tense' in the Greek language, and therefore 'confession' is an ongoing and continuing attitude which must be maintained for all life). "Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did." (vs. 6) He who claims to be a 'Christian' must continue to walk as Jesus walked- in humble dependence on the Heavenly Father, and in daily obedience.*

*According to 1<sup>st</sup> John 2:15-28, believers are given the promise that they will live forever, IF they "PERSEVERE in doing God's will" (vs. 17, Williams' translation) "See that what you have heard from the beginning REMAINS in you. IF it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father." (vs. 25) "And now, dear children, CONTINUE in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming." (vs. 16) It is possible for believers to be 'led astray' (vs. 26) by 'antichrists'.*

*1<sup>st</sup> John 2:29, teaches that the reality of the 'New Birth' is evidenced by the practice of righteous actions. One can only remain a child of God as he CONTINUES ('present tense' in the Greek language) to love his brothers. (I John 3:10)*

*Can a person claim to be a 'Christian' if he is 'living in sin' (i.e., if he is habitually practicing sin -living a 'sinful lifestyle')? The answer is rather 'obvious'.*

*Wrote John:*

*"So if we stay close to him, obedient to him, we won't be sinning either; but as for those who keep on sinning, they should realize this: They sin because they have never really known Him or become His." (1<sup>st</sup> John 3:6, Living Bible) The Greek 'perfect tense', properly translated, refers to persons whose present practice of sinning shows that their 'profession of faith' was false from the beginning. By implication, I believe that this Scripture also refers to persons whose present practice of sinning reveals that they are apostates who have departed from true saving faith in Christ. I believe that this verse teaches that the believer who does not stay close to Christ and who does not remain obedient to Christ is the person who will (by his 'denial' of Christ) 'be sinning'. He who 'practices' sinning is he who cannot, at the same time, be 'born of God'. The two conditions (i.e., the condition of 'standing begotten of God' and the condition of 'habitually sinning') are totally incompatible and contradictory and cannot exist in a person at the same time. (vs. 9) A person (a one-time believer) who reverts to a 'practice of sinning' (and who fails to repent of his sins) destroys his relationship with God (i.e., he is no longer 'begotten of God' or 'saved'). These above-stated truths are rather clearly stated in God's Word! A 'sinning Christian' is a 'contradiction in words'! This is not to say that a Christian will never sin but when he sins, he quickly repents and confesses his sins to Christ, and he is quickly restored to fellowship and relationship with Christ. He does not allow the re-entry of a 'life of sinning' (i.e., a practice of a sinful lifestyle), for he daily 'short accounts' with His loves God. When He sins, he 'claims the blood of Christ' as His immediate (constant) remedy. Thus, he remains 'cleansed from all sin', for*

he 'keeps himself under the blood of Jesus'. Wrote John to Christians: "If we (believers) are living in the light of God's presence, just as Christ does, then we have wonderful fellowship and joy with each other, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from every sin." (1<sup>st</sup> John 1:7, Living Bible) He continues: "My little children, I am telling you this so that you will stay away from sin. But if you sin, there is someone to plead for you before the Father. His name is Jesus Christ, the one who is all that is good and who pleases God completely. He is the one who took God's wrath against our sins upon himself, and brought us into fellowship with God; and he is the forgiveness for our sins, and not only ours but the entire world's." (1 John 2:1-2, Living Bible)

In 2<sup>nd</sup> John 1:8, Christians are told to "watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully."

Jude is a small book with big warnings! Those whom God honors and delivers, He can later destroy because of their persistent unbelief (vs. 5), or because of their rebellion against God's authority (vs. 6), or because of their indulgence in gross sin (vs. 7). It is possible (as in the case of the apostates that Jude warns against) for one-time believers to become "godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord." (vs. 4) The actions of apostasy are most brazen and violent and deceptive (vs. 4, 8-10), but these actions will invoke God's ultimate destruction and judgment (vs. 10). Notes Robert Shank, "'Twice dead' (vs. 12) can only refer to the fact that men who once were alive in Christ have again become spiritually dead by severing their union with Him 'who is our life'." (Life in the Son; pg. 174) It is gloriously possible for believers to experience eternal life (vs. 21). Through Christ's mighty power, believers can be kept from falling into sin (vs. 24). But, it is not only God who is able and responsible to 'keep believers from falling into sin'; it is also the responsibility of believers to 'keep themselves from sinning'. It is a cooperative relationship between the Almighty God and the obedient believer. Commands Jude to Christians: "Stay always within the boundaries where God's love can reach and bless you. Wait patiently for the eternal life that our Lord Jesus Christ in his mercy is going to give you." (Jude 1:21, Living Bible)

God will "give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God...to him who overcomes." (Revelation 2:7) Believers need not be afraid during times of suffering (Revelation 2:10). Believers will be given the 'crown of life'. If they are faithful "even to the point of death". (Revelation 2:10) Believers will "not be hurt at all by the second death". If they will be over comers. (Revelation 2:11) 'Hidden Manna' and 'a white stone with a name written on it' will be given to the believer who overcomes. (Revelation 2:17) Christ commands Christians to "hold on to what you have until I come" (Revelation 2:25) Says Christ to believers: "I will give authority over the nations to him who overcomes." (Revelation 2:26) However, it is tragically possible for believers to tolerate compromise, and it is possible for even God's servants to fall into sexual immorality, causing intense spiritual suffering and eventual spiritual death, "unless they repent". (Revelation 2:20-23)

Believers "will walk with Christ, dressed in white, for they are worthy", IF they do not "soil their clothes" (Revelation 3:4-5).

*The believer will be 'dressed in white', and his name will remain in the Book of Life, and his name will be acknowledged before the Father and His angels. IF he continues to overcome. (Revelation 3:5)*

*God places before the believer "an open door that no one can shut", but believers must keep God's Word and not deny God's name. (Revelation 3:8)*

*God will keep believers from the hour of trial. IF they keep God's commandment "to God will keep believers from the hour of trial. IF they keep God's commandment "to endure patiently". (Revelation 3:10) Christians are told to "hold on to what you have so that no one will take your crown." (Revelations 3:11) Christ will make the believer "a pillar in the temple of my God", and the believer will never leave it, and the believer will have the name of God and the name of the Holy City written on him. IF he continues to overcome. (Revelation 3:12)*

*It is dreadfully possible for believers to become 'lukewarm' spiritually, invoking God's anger, and the possible judgment of being 'spit out of God's mouth'. (Revelation 3:16) Believers are greatly loved by God, but they must be willing to receive God's rebukes and His discipline, which are meant to lead them to earnestness and to repentance. (Revelation 3:19)*

*It is possible for one-time believers to become self-sufficient, proud, and self-deceived (not realizing that they have become "wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked"). (Revelation 3:17) Christ will give the believer the right to sit with Him on His throne, IF he continues to overcome. (Revelation 3:21)*

*The believer "will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son ". IF he continues to overcome. (Revelation 21:7) "But the cowardly that turns back from following me and those who are unfaithful to me, their doom is in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur. This is the Second Death." (Revelation 21:8, Living Bible)*

*God promises a share in the 'Tree of Life', and in the 'Holy City'. "IF the believer does not add or subtract from "the words of the prophecy of this book." (Revelation 22:18)*

*Many times, in the forgoing Scriptures, where we have looked at the 'perseverance of the believer' and the 'security of the believer', the 'contingency word' IF has appeared. "IF you will do this", says the Lord, "then I will do that". Fulfilled promises because of kept conditions! No person becomes a Christian initially without meeting certain 'conditions', and no one remains a Christian without meeting certain 'conditions' (and all the 'conditions' are God-given). Spiritual life (both in 'obtaining' and in 'maintaining') is based on 'contingencies'. Salvation, while it originates with God alone, is nevertheless a cooperative relationship between the initiating Savior and the responding believer.*

**"SUMMARY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHINGS ON 'PERSEVERANCE OF BELIEVERS'"**

*There are scores of New Testament Scriptures which encourage Christians to 'persevere in the Faith' (i.e., not to succumb to temptations and other pressures in life, but to remain true to the Lord until 'the end of life').*

*Even though the theme of Christology (the doctrine of the 'person and nature of Christ') is a great theme of the Book of Hebrews, the primary theme of Hebrews is 'Perseverance of the Saints' (i.e., 'let us hold fast'). Notes Robert Shank (regarding the proper understanding of the theme of the Book of Hebrews): "The phrase 'let us go on' appears but once (Hebrews 6:1). 'Let us go on', he writes, 'unto perfection'. The writer may have reference to his intention to proceed to the advanced development of the doctrine of Christ to which he proposes to lead them in the course of his letter. Or it may be a call to his readers to advance from spiritual infancy in which he found them (Hebrews 5:11-13) toward the maturity (vs. 14) which is possible for all who will grasp it. Actually, both things are within the writer's purpose. Certainly, it is his intention to proceed toward the fuller development of his Christology. But the presentation of his Christology is not an end in itself. The principal burden of the letter is not 'let us go on', but 'let us hold fast'. In contrast with the exhortation 'let us go on unto perfection', which occurs but once, the exhortation 'let us hold fast our confession' occurs twice:(Hebrews 4:14;10:23) and the epistle abounds with cognate exhortations: 'if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end' (3:6); 'if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end' (3:14); 'lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God' (3:12); 'lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin' (3:13); 'lest at any time we should slip away' (2:1); 'if we neglect so great salvation' (2:3); 'harden not your hearts' (3:8,15); 'lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief (4:11); 'show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end' (6:11); 'let us keep on drawing near with a true heart in full assurance of faith' (10:22); 'cast not away therefore your confidence' (10:35); 'for ye have need of patience, that... ye might receive the promise' (10:36); 'the just shall live by faith: but if he drawback, my soul shall have no pleasure in him' (10:38); lest ye be wearied and faint' (12:3); 'despise not the chastening of the Lord nor faint when thou art rebuked of him' (12:5); 'be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live' (12:9); 'lest that which is lame be turned out of the way' (12:13); 'lest any man fail of the grace of God' (12:15); 'lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who sold his birthright' (12:16); 'If we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven' (12:25); 'be not carried away with divers and strange doctrines' (13:9); 'let us keep going forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach' (13:13).*

*Any emphasis in the Epistle to the Hebrews on going on toward spiritual maturity is secondary. The burden of the writer's 'word of exhortation', is that his readers 'hold fast the confession of their hope' in Jesus Christ as the only Savior and 'the Source of eternal salvation unto all who obey Him.'" (Life in the Son; Robert Shank; pgs. 231-234)*

*The highly respected writer (from the early 20th century), James Denney, in his well-known book 'The Death of Christ', believed the main thrust of the Book of Hebrews was 'conservation of the Faith'. He writes, "The author (of Hebrews) was not an evangelist so much as a pastor, and it is not the initiation of Christianity, but its conservation, with which he deals throughout" The internationally-known New Testament scholar, William Barclay, agrees. He writes: "When we sum it all up, we can say that Hebrews is a letter written by a*

*great teacher, written by a man whom we would call a professor, to a little group or college of Christians in Rome. He was their teacher; at the moment he was separated from them; he was afraid that they were drifting away from the faith; and so he wrote this letter to them."*

*When studying the New Testament, it is helpful to look at larger sections of Scripture with three thoughts in mind: (1) Promises to be claimed; (2) Conditions to be met; (3) Warnings to be heeded. With these three ideas in mind, let us briefly 'scan' some of the relevant New Testament passages, all of which deal with the important subject of the 'perseverance of believers' and the 'security of believers'. Space will not permit the quotation of many Scriptures, but I will attempt a brief summary of the 'key' points in several of the New Testament passages.*

*In Matthew 18:21-25, God promises total forgiveness of one's total 'debt' to God, provided that one is willing to forgive those who have sinned against him. A lack of mercy and forgiveness of others incites the wrath of the Lord, and actually forfeits one's own forgiveness.*

*In Matthew 24:4, 5, 11-13, 23-26, the Lord promises to save those who 'endure to the end' (vs. 13). Believers are warned of the possibility of being led astray by false 'Christ's. Multiplied wickedness in the earth can cause the 'cooling' of a believer's love for God (vs. 12). In Matthew 25:1-3, in Christ's parable of the Marriage Feast, believers are warned against neglecting to purchase 'oil', thus resulting in their lamps going out when Christ comes (vs. 8), and being shut out of the marriage feast while trying too late to purchase on (vs. 10-12).*

*In Luke 8:11-15, believers are taught that spiritual fruitfulness and productivity (vs. 15) is the result of hearing the Word, holding it fast in an honest and good heart, and patiently enduring. Christians must guard against the devil stealing the Word from their hearts. They must guard against shallowness and falling away during temptation (vs. 13), and they must also guard against their lives being choked by the 'cares and riches and pleasures of life' (vs. 14).*

*In Luke 11:24-28, persons whose lives have been initially cleansed from evil must guard against evil spirits which are seeking re-entrance into the lives of those who had previously experienced deliverance. This Scripture apparently is teaching that, following one's cleansing from sin, there must be positive 'infilling' of one's life with the blessed presence of the Holy Spirit (to prevent re-entry of any 'evil spirits').*

*In Luke 12:42-46, the Master (Christ) sets believers over his 'household' and over all his possessions. Faithfulness and wise management of God-entrusted responsibilities is expected from all servants. The servants (believers) are exhorted not to become impatient at the delay of the Master's coming. Impatience can lead to mistreatment of those persons who have been entrusted to their stewardship, leading to a 'life of debauchery' (vs. 45). Such faithless stewards will be punished with a severe 'beating' and assigned to the 'place of the unfaithful' (vs. 46, 47).*

*John 6:66-71, teaches that believers must continue to follow Christ, rather than 'drawing back' and no longer going with Him (vs. 66). There is a possibility (as in the case of Judas Iscariot) of a one-time believer 'betraying' Jesus (vs. 70, 71).*

*In John 8:31-32, Jesus states that persons can be His disciples (and 'know the truth which shall set them free') if they hold to his teachings and continue in His Word. John 8:51, states that a person shall never see (spiritual) death if he keeps God's Word. Act 14:21-22, reveals that a large number of persons became disciples to the Lord. It is recorded that Paul strengthened the disciples and encouraged them to 'remain true to the faith'. Paul taught that Christians 'must go through many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God'.*

*In Paul's popular teaching in Romans 6:11-23, he teaches that it is possible for one's 'body parts' to be yielded as 'instruments of sin and wickedness' (vs. 12, 13). Paul warns against believers entertaining a shallow attitude toward God's grace, and a casual attitude towards sinning, and he exhorts believers never to claim that grace quickly provides for one's practice of sinning (vs. 15). Paul says that offering one's self to obey sin results in final spiritual death (vs. 16). In Romans 8:13, Paul says that one will die if he lives according to his 'sinful nature'.*

*Romans 11:20-22, teaches that a person enjoys a 'standing in Christ' if he has 'faith', 'humility', 'godly fear' and 'reverence' - and provided that he continues 'in God's kindness'. God will not spare those who persist in unbelief. Unbelief causes the branch to be broken off the Vine. Those who do not continue in God's kindness will be cut out (vs. 22).*

*Romans 14:15-23, teaches that a believer must act in love by carefully refraining from anything that is a source of stumbling to his fellow Christian. A Christian must guide his life and actions by 'righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' (vs. 18). It is possible for a believer to be offended by and even destroyed by a fellow believer. It is possible for a believer to destroy the work of God and to cause a fellow Christian to stumble by his insensitive and offending actions (vs. 20, 21). It is possible for a believer to sin as a result of doing things with doubt rather than with faith (vs. 23). 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:23-27, teaches that a person (believer) will enjoy "a crown that will last forever" (vs. 25) if he is willing to undergo God's strict training and if he runs the spiritual race with 'aim and purpose' (i.e., 'beat my body and make it my slave'). Paul (wholesomely) feared that "after I have preached to others, I myself will be disqualified for the prize" (vs. 27).*

*Serious warnings are issued to believers in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:1-22. It is possible, after a believer has experienced many spiritual blessings, for God no longer to be pleased with him (vs. 5). It is possible for one who has experienced 'spiritual food and drink' to set his heart on evil things (as the Israelites in the wilderness did- (verse 6). It is possible for a believer to fall into idolatry and sexual immorality, and consequently to be destroyed by God (vs. 7, 8). It is possible for a believer to 'test' (over-tempt) the Lord and to be destroyed by the Lord (vs. 9). It is possible for a believer to fall into a life of grumbling against the Lord and to be 'killed by the destroying angel' (vs. 10). Wrote Paul, "These things happened to them (the Israelites in the wilderness) as examples and were written down as warnings for us. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful*

*that you don't fall!" (vs. 11, 12) "I do not want you (believers) to be participants with demons." (vs. 20) Don't arouse the Lord's jealousy (vs. 22).*

*1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:27-32, notes that it is possible for a believer to become insensitive to the spiritual significance of 'The Lord's Supper', and consequently to sin 'against the body and blood of the Lord' and bring 'judgment on himself' (vs. 27, 29). Some even died in the Early Church because they insensitively partook of the Lord's Supper (vs. 30).*

*1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:1-2, teach that if one does not hold firmly to the word, which he received for initial salvation, he has 'believed in vain' (vs. 2).*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 11:2-4, teaches that a gullible believer can deceptively be led away from his pure and single-hearted devotion to Christ, into false teachings (as illustrated by Eve's deception by Satan- 2 Corinthians 11:3-4).*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12:21-13:5, teaches that it is possible for a one-time believer to sin grievously (impurity, sexual sin, debauchery) without being activated to repentance.*

*Paul warns believers against reverting to a life of 'legalism', after having been initially set free from sin through God's mighty grace. With great sadness, Paul writes to the Galatians Christians who had reverted to 'legalism'; "You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; You have fallen away from grace" (Galatians 5:4).*

*Someone said, "If a believer takes one step towards God, God takes a thousand steps toward the believer!" God is the 'God who acts' - the God who initiates, the God who is 'eager to respond' to any person who demonstrates any degree of desire to 'know God'. Someone wisely said, "It is not hard to live the Christian life; it is impossible - unless, of course, God's Spirit indwells and empowers the believer." Philippians 2:12-16 contains both Promises and Conditions, as these relate to one's salvation. As a believer, you can be encouraged, for "God works in you to will and do what pleases Him." (vs. 13) Because of the inward work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer, he can become 'blameless and pure', a child of God 'without fault in a crooked and depraved generation', and he can be a 'shining star in the universe' (vs. 15). But, with the promises and divine provisions, there are some conditions to be met: "Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (vs. 12). Christians are to 'do everything without complaining or arguing" (vs. 14).*

*Colossians 1:21-23, speaks of both a wonderful Promise to be claimed, and a serious Condition to be met. "God has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation. If you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel.*

*"Colossians 2:4-8, contains all three- the Promise (divine provision), the Condition, and the Warning. The Promise (the divinely given provision) - "You received Christ Jesus as Lord" (vs. 6). The Condition- "Continue*

to live in Christ, rooted and built up him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness" ( vs. 6, 7). The Warning- "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ" (vs. 8)

Colossians 2:18-19, warns believers against the possibility of falling 'prey' to a deceptive philosophy (vs. 18), the result of which is disqualification for the spiritual prize. It is possible for a believer to succumb to the teachings and practices of a false philosophy, and consequently to lose "connection with the Head (Christ)". (vs. 19)

1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 3:1-8, teach that it is possible for believers to be unsettled by the inevitable trials and persecutions which all believers are destined to experience. (vs. 3, 4) It is possible for a believer to fade during temptation and to lose his faith, resulting in the efforts of the soul-winner becoming 'useless'. (vs. 5)

Paul urges Timothy (Paul's young 'son in the Faith') to "fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience." (1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1:18-19) Paul teaches that it is possible for a believer to turn to false doctrines (1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1:3). It is possible for a believer to 'fall from grace' and to begin promoting controversial doctrines (regarding law keeping) rather than promoting the work of God, which is faith (1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1:4). It is dreadful to think about, but it is possible for a believer to wander away from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith, and to turn to "meaningless talk". (1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1:6) It is possible (as in the case of Hymenaeus and Alexander) to reject faith and a good conscience, and thus to make 'shipwreck' of one's faith. (1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1:19-20)

1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 4:1-16 contains wonderful Promises, multiple Conditions, and serious Warnings. The Promises - Godliness holds "promise for both the present life and the life to come." (vs. 8) The Living God saves those who believe. (vs. 10) The Conditions - "Train yourself to be godly." (vs. 7) "Set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity." (vs. 12) "Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift." (vs. 12, 14) "Watch your life and doctrine closely. PERSEVERE in them, because IF you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers." The Warnings - It is possible to "abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons." (vs. 1) It is possible for one's conscience (apparently even the conscience of a one-time believer - according to the context of the Scripture) to become "seared as with a hot iron." (vs. 2)

1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 5:8, teaches that it is possible for a believer to 'deny the faith' and, as such, to become 'worse than an outright unbeliever'. 1 Timothy 5:6, 11-15, contain some serious warnings for Christians. It is possible for sensual desires to overcome a believer's dedication to Christ. (vs. 11) It is possible for believers to break holy pledges, and to fall into hurtful habits, and thus to incur the judgment of God. (vs. 12-13) It is possible for a believer to turn away from the faith "to follow Satan." (vs. 15) It is possible for a believer to begin living for pleasure and thus to die spiritually. (vs. 6)

*1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6:9-12, believers are urged to flee from the 'love of money', which is the 'root of all kinds of evil'. (vs. 10-11) Believers are urged to pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. (vs. 11) Believers are urged to "fight the good fight of the faith." (vs. 12a) Believers are urged (commanded) to "take hold of the eternal life to which you were called." (vs. 12) This portion of Scripture also contains a serious warning (especially relevant to modern-day Christians who live in a materialistically oriented society). 1 Timothy 6:9-10 teaches that it is possible for believers to fall in love with money, resulting in "wandering from the faith and piercing themselves with many grief's", and plunging themselves into "ruin and destruction". In order for the materially wealthy believer to "take hold of the life that is truly life" and to establish "a firm foundation for the coming age", he/she is required to be generous and "rich in good deeds". The selfish and the greedy person will be judged by the Lord. (1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6:17-19)*

*According to 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6:20-21, it is possible for believers to succumb to the godless talk and foolish arguments of worldly 'knowledge' and, consequently to 'wander from the faith' ('lose their faith' (J.D. Phillips' translation).*

*"We (Christians) will live with him and we will reign with him (Christ). IF we died with him and IF we EN-DURE." (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:11-12) It is possible for a believer to "disown Him" (God), with the result, that God will disown that person (vs. 12). In such a case, the faithful character of God does not stand in question (vs. 13). "Quarrelling about words only ruins those who listen." (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:14). It is possible for a believer (as in the case of Hymenaeus and Philetus), to engage in 'godless chatter' and consequently to 'wander from the truth' and to cause others to have their faith destroyed. (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:16-18)*

*Hebrews 2:1-3, teaches that it is possible for believers to 'drift away' from 'what we have heard' (the message of faith). (vs. 1) It is possible for believers to neglect and to ignore God's 'great salvation', resulting in just punishment. (vs. 2, 3)*

*Hebrews 3:6-19, contains Promises, Conditions, and Warnings. The Promises- "Christ is faithful over God's house" (which are believers). (vs. 6) "We are his house" (that is, Christ lives in us), and "we have come to share in Christ." (vs. 14) The Conditions "Encourage one another daily, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness." (vs. 13) "If we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast." (vs. 6); "If we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first." (vs. 14) The warnings it is possible for believers to harden their hearts, and to stray away from God's ways, with the tragic result of never entering God's rest. (vs. 7-11) It is possible for 'brothers' (believers) to have a "sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God." (vs. 12) It is possible for a believer to become "hardened by sin's deceitfulness." (vs. 13, 15) It is possible for one-time believers to disobey God so grievously that they never enter into God's rest. "They were not able to enter, because of their unbelief." (vs. 19)*

*To enter the rest which God has prepared for His people, believers must "Like every effort, so that no one will fall by following the Israelites' example of disobedience." (Hebrews 4:11)*

*Hebrews 10:19-31, is full of Comfort (blessings and provisions for believers), but there are also multiple Conditions which believers must fulfill, and there are some serious Warnings for believers to heed! The Divine Provisions - "We have confidence to enter the most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus." (vs. 23) The multiple Conditions (and commands to believers) - "Let us keep on drawing near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water." (vs. 22) "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess." (vs. 23) "Spur one another on toward love and good deeds." (vs. 24) "Let us not give up meeting together (as some are in the habit of doing)." (vs. 25) The Warnings -It is possible to deliberately keep on sinning after a person has received the knowledge of the truth, with dire consequences involved - "a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God." (vs. 26-27) It is possible for a one-time believer to trample the Son of God under foot and to treat as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and to insult the Spirit of grace with the consequent punishment of dying without mercy. (vs. 28-29)*

*Hebrews 10:32-39, teaches that a believer needs to PERSEVERE in the faith in spite of severe persecution (public exposure to insult, and imprisonment for the faith, and confiscation of personal property), (vs. 32-34). Maintenance of confidence and PERSEVERANCE in the faith is necessary in order to "receive what God has promised." (vs. 36) A believer must choose to believe and thus to be saved, rather than to shrink back from the faith and finally be destroyed. (vs. 39)*

*Hebrews 11 is called the 'Faith Chapter' of the Bible (listing the 'heroes of the Faith'). "All these people were still living by faith when they died." (vs. 13) (It is very important to read Ezekiel 13:10-16).*

*In Hebrews 12, believers are commanded to throw off everything that hinders them and the "sin which so easily entangles them." (vs. 1) Believers must run with PERSEVERANCE the race marked out for them. (vs. 1) Believers must fix their eyes on Jesus, who is the Pioneer and Perfecter of the Faith and who is the believer's Intercessor before the Father. (vs. 2) As a believer you must "consider him (Christ) who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." (vs. 3) The believer must 'struggle against sin'. (vs. 4) A believer must willingly receive the Lord's discipline in his life (vs. 5) and he must submit to the Father in order to live. (vs. 9) The believer must endure hardship as discipline. (vs. 7) If a believer expects to share in God's holiness, he must be willing to receive discipline from the Lord. (vs. 10) There is a 'harvest of righteousness and peace' for those believers who have been trained by the painful discipline of the Lord (vs. 11) "Strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. Make level paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed." (vs. 12, 13) "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord." (vs. 14) "See to it that no one misses the grace of God." (vs. 15) "See that no one is sexually immoral." (vs. 16) Serious Warnings are here also. It is possible for the lame Christian to become disabled rather than to be healed. (vs. 13) It is possible for a believer to 'miss the grace of God'. (vs. 15) It is possible for a 'root of bitterness' to spring up in a believer's life, causing trouble and defilement to many. (vs. 16) It is possible for a believer to become godless (like Esau) by selling out his spiritual inheritance. (vs. 16, 17)*

*According to Hebrews 12:25-29, God speaks to mankind from heaven, revealing His holy will and nature, and warning men to follow the Lord of Heaven. (vs. 25) "We are receiving a Kingdom that cannot be shaken." (vs. 28) Christians are commanded: "See to it that you do not refuse him (God) who speaks." (vs. 25) It is possible for us believers to "turn away from him who warns us from heaven", rather than continue to "worship God acceptably with reverence and awe", with the result that we will be punished by God who is "a consuming fire". (vs. 28, 29)*

*According to Hebrews 13:9, it is possible for believers to be "carried away by all kinds of strange teachings." Christians must be on their 'alert' during times of temptation. Jesus said "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit (of man) indeed is willing, but the flesh (of man) is weak." It is possible for a believer to be tempted, to succumb to 'his own evil desire', and to be 'dragged away and enticed', and to indulge in outright sin (which, when it is full-grown, gives birth to spiritual death). (See James 1:14-15)*

*It is possible for a believer to fall into the evil pleasures and friendships of the unsaved world. A one-time believer who "chooses to be the world's friend makes himself God's enemy" (James 4:4).*

*The often-overlooked last two verses of the Book of James contain some vital (and sometimes misunderstood) truths. Writes James (the half-brother of Jesus):"Dear brothers, if anyone has slipped away from God and no longer trusts the Lord and someone helps him understand the Truth again, that person who brings him back to God will have saved a wandering soul from death, bringing about the forgiveness of his many sins." (James 5:19-20, Living Bible) As in the case of Simon Peter who denied the Lord three times (and thus, fell into a terrible 'backslidden' condition), so it is possible for any believer to 'fall into sin' and to wander away from the Lord (thus destroying his 'fellowship' with the Lord, and eventually severing his 'relationship' with the Lord). However, according to James, it is possible for such a backslidden believer (as in the case of Simon Peter) to repent of his sins and to be restored to relationship with Christ. However, if it is possible to be restored, it is also possible not to be restored! It is possible for a believer to slip away from the Lord and no longer to trust the Lord, and ultimately (if the backslider is not turned back to the Lord) to experience spiritual death!*

*God's promises to believers are real, and those promises are most wonderful, but promises cannot be fulfilled unless certain conditions are met by believers. This fact is well established, time and time again in the New Testament. Take 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:5-9, 13 as an example of this repeated truth. "You are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time ... THROUGH FAITH." (vs. 5) The faith of believers must be proved genuine (at the time of Christ's return), through suffering all kinds of trials. (vs. 7) Believers are being filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, because they are being saved, THROUGH THEIR LOVE AND FAITH IN THE SAVIOR. (vs. 8, 9) You Christians must "prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed." (vs. 13) Promises and Conditions are inseparably connected!*

*According to 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1:5-11, a person (sinner) finds his 'standing in Christ' (justification) by Saving Faith. However, faith is only complete and effective when one increasingly adds to it the other great qualities of*

*goodness, knowledge, self-control, PERSEVERANCE, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. (vs. 6, 7) If a believer does not possess these listed ethical qualities, "he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins." (vs. 9)*

*According to 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:16-17, a believer enjoys a 'secure position' in Christ. But, a believer is to be on his guard against the 'error of lawless men'. It is possible for a believer to relax his watchful guard and consequently to "be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from his secure position." (vs. 17)*

*1<sup>st</sup> John 1:5-2:11, contains very precious truths regarding God's provisions for believers, but these provisions are not given automatically. Certain conditions must be met. We (Christians) have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus cleanses from every sin. IF we walk in the light, as he is in the light (vs. 7); God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. IF we confess our sins to God and IF we continue to maintain an attitude of constant need for God's forgiveness (Note: 'Confess' is in the 'present tense' in the Greek language, and therefore 'confession' is an ongoing and continuing attitude which must be maintained for all life). "Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did." (vs. 6) He who claims to be a 'Christian' must continue to walk as Jesus walked- in humble dependence on the Heavenly Father, and in daily obedience.*

*According to 1<sup>st</sup> John 2:15-28, believers are given the promise that they will live forever. IF they "PERSEVERE in doing God's will" (vs. 17, Williams' translation) "See that what you have heard from the beginning REMAINS in you. IF it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father." (vs. 25) "And now, dear children, CONTINUE in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming." (vs. 16) It is possible for believers to be 'led astray' (vs. 26) by 'antichrists'.*

*1<sup>st</sup> John 2:29, teaches that the reality of the 'New Birth' is evidenced by the practice of righteous actions. One can only remain a child of God as he CONTINUES ('present tense' in the Greek language) to love his brothers. (1<sup>st</sup> John 3:10)*

*Can a person claim to be a 'Christian' if he is 'living in sin' (i.e., if he is habitually practicing sin -living a 'sinful lifestyle')? The answer is rather 'obvious'. Wrote John:*

*"So if we stay close to him, obedient to him, we won't be sinning either; but as for those who keep on sinning, they should realize this: They sin because they have never really known Him or become His." (1 John 3:6, Living Bible) The Greek 'perfect tense', properly translated, refers to persons whose present practice of sinning shows that their 'profession of faith' was false from the beginning. By implication, I believe that this Scripture also refers to persons whose present practice of sinning reveals that they are apostates who have departed from true saving faith in Christ. I believe that this verse teaches that the believer who does not stay close to Christ and who does not remain obedient to Christ is the person who will (by his 'denial' of Christ) 'be sinning'. He who 'practices' sinning is he who cannot, at the same time, be 'born of God'. The two conditions (i.e., the condition of 'standing begotten of God' and the condition of 'habitually sinning') are totally incompatible and contradictory and cannot exist in a person at the same time. (vs. 9) A person (a one-time believer) who reverts to a 'practice of sinning' (and who fails to repent of his sins) destroys his relation-*

ship with God (i.e., he is no longer 'begotten of God' or 'saved'). These above-stated truths are rather clearly stated in God's Word! A 'sinning Christian' is a 'contradiction in words'! This is not to say that a Christian will never sin but when he sins, he quickly repents and confesses his sins to Christ, and he is quickly restored to fellowship and relationship with Christ. He does not allow the re-entry of a 'life of sinning' (i.e., a practice of a sinful lifestyle), for he keeps daily 'short accounts' with His loving God. When He sins, he 'claims the blood of Christ' as His immediate (constant) remedy. Thus, he remains 'cleansed from all sin', for he 'keeps himself under the blood of Jesus'. Wrote John to Christians: "If we (believers) are living in the light of God's presence, just as Christ does, then we have wonderful fellowship and joy with each other, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from every sin." (1<sup>st</sup> John 1:7, Living Bible) He continues: "My little children, I am telling you this so that you will stay away from sin. But if you sin, there is someone to plead for you before the Father. His name is Jesus Christ, the one who is all that is good and who pleases God completely. He is the one who took God's wrath against our sins upon himself, and brought us into fellowship with God; and he is the forgiveness for our sins, and not only ours but the entire world's." (1<sup>st</sup> John 2:1-2, Living Bible)

In 2<sup>nd</sup> John 1:8, Christians are told to "watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully."

Jude is a small book with big warnings! Those whom God honors and delivers, He can later destroy because of their persistent unbelief (vs. 5), or because of their rebellion against God's authority (vs. 6), or because of their indulgence in gross sin (vs. 7). It is possible (as in the case of the apostates that Jude warns against) for one-time believers to become "godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord." (vs. 4) The actions of apostasy are most brazen and violent and deceptive (vs. 4, 8-10), but these actions will invoke God's ultimate destruction and judgment (vs. 10). Notes Robert Shank, "'Twice dead' (vs. 12) can only refer to the fact that men who once were alive in Christ have again become spiritually dead by severing their union with Him 'who is our life'." (Life In The Son; pg. 174) It is gloriously possible for believers to experience eternal life (vs. 21). Through Christ's mighty power, believers can be kept from falling into sin (vs. 24). But, it is not only God who is able and responsible to 'keep believers from falling into sin'; it is also the responsibility of believers to 'keep themselves from sinning'. It is a cooperative relationship between the Almighty God and the obedient believer. Commands Jude to Christians: "Stay always within the boundaries where God's love can reach and bless you. Wait patiently for the eternal life that our Lord Jesus Christ in his mercy is going to give you." (Jude 1:21, Living Bible)

God will "give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God...to him who overcomes." (Revelation 2:7) Believers need not be afraid during times of suffering (Revelation 2:10). Believers will be given the 'crown of life'. IF they are faithful "even to the point of death". (Revelation 2:10) Believers will "not be hurt at all by the second death". IF they will be over comers. (Revelation 2:11) 'Hidden Manna' and 'a white stone with a name written on it' will be given to the believer who overcomes. (Revelation 2:17) Christ commands Christians to "hold on to what you have until I come" (Revelation 2:25) Says Christ to believers: "I will give authority over the nations to him who overcomes." (Revelation 2:26) However, it is tragically possible for believers to tolerate compromise, and it is possible for even God's servants to fall into sex-

ual immorality, causing intense spiritual suffering and eventual spiritual death, "unless they repent". (Revelation 2:20-23)

**"BELIEVERS "WILL WALK WITH CHRIST, DRESSED IN WHITE, FOR THEY ARE WORTHY".  
IF THEY DO NOT "SOIL THEIR CLOTHES" (Revelation 3:4-5).**

*The believer will be 'dressed in white', and his name will remain in the Book of Life, and his name will be acknowledged before the Father and His angels. IF he continues to overcome. (Revelation 3:5)  
God places before the believer "an open door that no one can shut", but believers must keep God's Word and not deny God's name. (Revelation 3:8)*

*God will keep believers from the hour of trial. IF they keep God's commandment "to God will keep believers from the hour of trial. IF they keep God's commandment "to endure patiently". (Revelation 3:10) Christians are told to "hold on to what you have so that no one will take your crown." (Revelations 3:11) Christ will make the believer "a pillar in the temple of my God", and the believer will never leave it, and the believer will have the name of God and the name of the Holy City written on him. IF he continues to overcome. (Revelation 3:12)*

*It is dreadfully possible for believers to become 'lukewarm' spiritually, invoking God's anger, and the possible judgment of being 'spit out of God's mouth'. (Revelation 3:16)*

*Believers are greatly loved by God, but they must be willing to receive God's rebukes and His discipline, which are meant to lead them to earnestness and to repentance. (Revelation 3:19)*

*It is possible for one-time believers to become self-sufficient, proud, and self-deceived (not realizing that they have become "wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked"). (Revelation 3:17)  
Christ will give the believer the right to sit with Him on His throne. IF he continues to overcome. (Revelation 3:21)*

*The believer "will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son ". IF he continues to overcome. (Revelation 21:7) "But the cowardly who turns back from following me and those who are unfaithful to me...their doom is in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur. This is the Second Death." (Revelation 21:8, Living Bible)*

*God promises a share in the 'Tree of Life', and in the 'Holy City'. IF the believer does not add or subtract from "the words of the prophecy of this book." (Revelation 22:18)  
Many times, in the foregoing Scriptures, where we have looked at the 'perseverance of the believer' and the 'security of the believer', the 'contingency word' IF has appeared. "IF you will do this", says the Lord, "then I will do that". Fulfilled promises because of kept conditions! No person becomes a Christian initially without meeting certain 'conditions', and no one remains a Christian without meeting certain 'conditions' (and all the 'conditions' are God-given). Spiritual life (both in 'obtaining' and in 'maintaining') is based on*

*'contingencies'. Salvation, while it originates with God alone, is nevertheless a cooperative relationship between the initiating Savior and the responding believer.*

### **"SECURITY FOR BELIEVERS!"**

*I was eighteen. I had a great desire to study about my faith. So I enrolled in a correspondence course distributed through A Bible institute in Los Angeles. I scored perfectly on each of the rather easy tests.*

*One lesson was labeled "The Position of the Believer." It taught an irreversible (eternal) security for anyone who accepted Christ. I gave the expected answers on the test. But I also wrote a letter expressing my objections to the teaching. I received a short letter assuring me that if I read the enclosed brochure I could not fail to be convinced.*

*The brochure said there were two views about the security of one's salvation.*

*One view was illustrated by the way a cat carries its young. The other view was illustrated by the way the monkey carries its young.*

*My Calvinistic friends who advocated irreversible and eternal security said their view was illustrated by the cat. A cat carries its kittens by mouth. If the kitten falls, it is the mother cat's fault.*

*The other view (supposedly mine) was illustrated by the monkey. If the little fellow fell off the back of its mother, it had no one to blame but itself. It should have hung on and been more careful.*

*That presentation demanded my response. So I wrote that the cat illustration probably was adequate for the view they taught. But the monkey illustration would never do for that which others and I believed.*

*Illustrations are helpful aids to understanding. But they must be carefully selected and carefully used. The Bible uses many illustrations. Often a single word or term is in fact an illustration, metaphor, or analogy. "Born again" is one of those illustrating words.*

*With this caution regarding illustrations or analogies in mind, I suggested to my teachers that their cat illustration taken seriously was a violation of plain biblical teaching. There could be no view of salvation, which relieved the individual believer of resistibility for his relationship to God. Nor is it biblical or reasonable to blame God for our sins, apostasy, and neglect of Him. Indeed, one cannot save themselves, but neither can one be saved apart from himself. We were created by God to be responsible and respond-able."*

*Grace is the picture of Gods givingness, of His reach out to savingly touch us. Faith is my response to His reach. My faith response is an acknowledgment of my sin, my inability to save myself, my need of a Savior. "As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so live in Him, rooted and built up in him and established in*

*the faith." (Colossians 2:6) What was required of me to "receive" Jesus is always required to continue and live (walk) in Him.*

*The cat illustration taken seriously makes God responsible for any break in the relationship with God. It relieves the individual of responsibility for continuing to respond to the grace of God. In many forms, this error is spread today by well-intentioned but misled teachers. The Bible never relieves the individual believer of his responsibility for constant response to the grace (givingness) of God.*

*But what about the monkey illustration? It was a complete misunderstanding of what the Bible taught and of what I believed. Certainly, I know of no evangelical who believes that my security is dependent alone on what I can do. But indeed my security is dependent on my response to what God can do for me. The monkey illustration is a distortion. God does not force me to be a believer or a receiver of Christ. But once I receive Christ and thereby begin a relationship with Him, I am not a little monkey hanging on for dear life. The illustration fails to indicate the believer's relationship to Christ.*

*I suggested an alternative illustration for what I and multiplied thousands believe. I said that while understanding the limitations of illustrations I would prefer that of the willing handclasp.*

*God offers His hand. He takes the initiative (grace). I respond by willingly placing my hand in His (faith). A new relationship is begun. He holds me as long as I want my hand to be in His. My security is illustrated by this common interlocking of hands by friends. The Bible vividly portrays the reconciliation which makes God and me friends.*

*But to suggest that God, having taken my hand, now says to me, "Ah, now I've got you; just try to get away; nothing you can ever do again can get you loose from me," is clear violation of the total biblical thrust and of the nature of relationships. My security in the sustaining of our relationship, which has most of the characteristics of a human one except there is one party to the covenant who is un failing and unchanging. God is constant and unchanging in His attitude and acts of "steadfast love." The constancy of our Lord does indeed beget a growing constancy in us as we "walk" or "live" in Christ.*

*I believe in the security of the believer. But it is conditional rather than unconditional. I am secure while I keep on believing, trusting, and responding. To be secure in any other fashion would violate all that is meant by personal relationship and covenant.*

*I believe in the "perseverance of the saints" if they persevere in their relationship with Jesus as both Savior and Lord. I believe that all the resources for persevering that were available to Jesus - the Holy Spirit, communion with the Father - are available to us. Indeed, we have the Word of God, the grace of God, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and the church to help us persevere. We should most certainly be secure. But at no point in our personal history does God intend to depersonalize us by destroying our will, our power to choose, our capability of responding positively or negatively to our relationship with God.*

*The Bible beautifully uses marriage as an analogy of relationship to Christ. Christ, the Bridegroom, wants to give himself fully to the bride - the church. The meaning is both corporate (church) and individual. Commitment is two-way. The resulting covenant is two-way. The Bible also speaks of the violation of this relationship. Israel's going a whoring is an eloquent though horrible illustration of the facts of life. No one is unconditionally secure until he is ushered into the presence of Jesus to be with Him forever.*

*The teachers of unconditional security hold out false security in the name of the Bible. They appeal to illustrating Bible words. So they argue if you are once "born", you can't be "unborn." But "born" is used to beautifully illustrate the newness of life which the Christian experiences in a saving relationship with Jesus, not to erect a doctrine of false security. Once in a family as a son or daughter, always a member of the family is a similar distortion of analogy. In our natural life, we had nothing to say about being born or becoming a member of a family. In our spiritual life we do, in fact, have the final say. We must be alert to the misuse of analogy, metaphor, and biblical illustration.*

*Proponents of unconditional security often appeal to John 10:27-29. The clincher is "shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand." True. No force outside the person can break the relationship. The same applies to their appeal to Romans 8:38-39. Indeed nothing can separate us from the love of God - except ourselves. (Read the previous verses and discover that the words are addressed to "more than conquerors," not violators of a relationship with Christ.)*

*Appeal is also made to the theory of imputation of righteousness. That means that we are not responsible for righteousness but that Christ's righteousness is by religious magic made ours despite our own flaws, sins, or apostasy. This makes a farce of the Christian faith by removing it from reality. Advocates say, "When God looks at you He does not see you, for Christ stands between you and God. So your dirty rags are never seen, only the white raiment of Jesus." The trouble is that God sees us as we are at all times. We are not saved merely oppositionally. We are either really saved, transformed, and made new, or Christianity is hypocrisy. The righteousness of Christ is continually imparted to me as I respond to Him and permit the Holy Spirit to work within me. I can have a clean heart!*

*There are Bible passages, which should shock those still clinging to the error of unconditional eternal security. Look at a few.*

*Examine the strong attack of Peter against false teachers who once clearly knew Jesus as Savior and Lord. II 11<sup>th</sup> Peter 2:20-22 is a direct and conclusive contradiction of the teaching of unconditional security. Christians "escaped" but became "entangled" again in the "defilements of the world," and their "last state has become worse for them than the first." Compare this with II Peter 1:9-11, "...if you do this you will never fall." Clearly, "to fall" is so possible that warnings are necessary. One need not fall "if"!*

*The book to the Hebrews was written as a check against threatening apostasy. Genuine Christians are addressed (6:10 and 10:32-34), nevertheless warning is appropriate. Note especially 10:23 which urges holding*

*"fast the confession of our hope without wavering" and follows up with a severe picture of punishment if they do not (10:26-29).*

*Apostasy - utter and final - is possibly for "those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit" (6:4-6). No wonder the writer concludes "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (10:31). Jesus twice said, "He who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:22; 24:13).*

*We observe Paul is anxiety for his converts who had received the Spirit (Galatians 2:2-5) and were running well yet later were not obeying the truth (5:7). He was alarmed. His labor could be in vain (4:11). See also I Thessalonians 3:5). Paul did not doubt the reality of his own conversion, but he still disciplined himself lest he should fail or fall (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:27).*

*And finally, the words to the church at Ephesus found in Revelation 2:4, 5 should cause us to reject reliance in false security: "I will come to you and remove your lamp stand from its place, unless you repent." The Bible teaches conditional security. But what a wonderful security it is. God is always for me - every moment. Christ died for me. Christ rose for me. Christ sits at the Father's right hand praying for me. The Holy Spirit is for me. The Bible is given to me as my guide. The church was instituted of God for me. What security! But Bible and reason tell me if I ignore all that is for me, I have no right to expect God to treat me as though He had given me a lifelong irrevocable life insurance policy.*

*If we walk in the Spirit by faith and obedience - if we maintain our relationship with Christ - God and heaven is ours forever! Biblical quotations from Revised Standard Version. Light and Life Series, No .1 Writer: Lloyd H. Knox.*

#### **"THE DOUBLE WILL OF GOD!"**

*God's perfect will is the salvation of all, but the exercise of God's perfect will is not determinative, absolute, irresistible, inevitable, and unconditional. God's perfect will (i.e., the salvation of all persons) must always be studied with God's permissive will in view (i.e., God permits any man to reject His salvation, and, as a result, reap God's judgment), Is God's perfect will ever frustrated? Yes. For if, it were not, all men would be saved! His perfect will is frustrated to the extent that wicked men, who are capable of repentance~ refuse to repent! When men refuse to repent (or when I, a believer, refuse to resist the devil and instead succumb to sin even though divine resources are available to me), God's perfect will is frustrated and God's permissive will is operative. God limits Himself by permitting the genuine exercise of human will.*

*God has foreknowledge of my sins, but He does not in any way determine my sins. His perfect will is holiness of life for every man, but His permissive will allows men to disobey and to sin and ultimately to be lost!*

*God wills that all men be saved! He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (11<sup>th</sup> Peter 3:9). When the Bible describes God's will for universal salvation, the 'universal I must not be*

*reduced in meaning to "some". God wills to save all; Christ died for all; the Holy Spirit calls all to' repentance. Why are not all going to be saved in the end? Because God 'permits' man to exercise free will in rebellion against God's saving purpose. God's perfect will is the salvation of all, but the exercise of God's perfect will is not determinative, absolute, irresistible, inevitable, and unconditional. The realization of God's perfect will is determined by the reception of God's universal offer of salvation by all men.*

*Calvin's doctrine of predestination of the righteous necessarily involves God's predestination of the wicked! The God of Calvin is arbitrary, unjust, cruel, and tyrannical when God's actions are not concealed behind the cloud of 'God's inscrutable purposes'. Much is incomprehensible concerning God, but not God's universal saving purpose and Christ's unlimited atonement! Every man can be saved if he will. Christ is able to save to the uttermost - and this includes everyone! God cannot desire the salvation of all persons (the Biblical teaching regarding God's desired or perfect will) and at the same time determine the sin and perdition of some men! Notes Robert Shank: "Calvin's thesis of unconditional particular election and reprobation is predicated on a misapprehension of the import of Romans 9:6-29 which is in radical contradiction of both context (9:30 - 11:36) and the central thesis of the Epistle to the Romans, 'The just shall live by faith! (1:17).'" (Elect in the Son; pg. 223) From the fatal misapprehension of Romans 9:6-29 is derived the assumption of monotheism - determinism, the concept so apparent in Calvin's definition of election ... Calvin's doctrine of election and the unwarranted assumptions of monotheism - determinism - monergism on which it is predicated must be rejected. Confounding predestination with election, denying the authentic agency of Christ in election in full dimension, positing as in abstracted election in which the atonement is symbolic and accessory, Calvin's doctrine of election rests on serious misapprehensions and misconstructions of scripture." (Elect In The Son; by Robert Shank; pgs. 223, 224, 226)*

*"It is difficult to read at length from Calvin without concluding that he was master at eating his cake and having it too. The left hand giveth, and the right hand taketh away. Calvin's difficulty stemmed from the fact that he labored under an erroneous fundamental assumption. His cardinal error was his failure to acknowledge that the will of God has more than single aspects which led to his consequent denial that God desires to have all men to be saved. It is apparent from his writings that Calvin reasoned thus: If God truly wished all men to be saved, and then all men would be saved. But most men are not saved. Therefore, we must conclude that God does not wish all men to be saved. Calvin's logic is unassailable; but it is based on the erroneous assumption that the will of God has but a single aspect.*

*"Calvin deplored the fact that his opponents 'recur to the distinction between will and permission, the object being to prove that the wicked perish only by the permission, but not by the will of God'. Certainly, anything within His permission is within God's will. But this does not establish the fact that His will has but a single aspect. All that occurs in the universe is within the permissive will of God. Neither men nor angels nor devils can go beyond the limits of God's permissive will. But it is by no means true that all that occurs is in accord with the perfect will of God.*

*"One may argue that, since the world is filled with greed, lust, violence, debauchery, hatred, and impenitence. God evidently wishes it to be so and is well pleased. But the scriptures declare otherwise. Although*

*God allows these things to exist in the world, He has revealed His displeasure and wrath with respect to all such things and has commanded all men to repent. Thus, it is evident that there are two aspects of the will of God with respect to sin: His permissive will allow it; but His perfect will forbid it and will bring all sin into judgment.*

*"There are two aspects of the will of God for men with respect to salvation. Numerous scriptures reveal God's perfect will to have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth' (I Timothy 2:4); but the fact that not all men are saved reflects Gods permissive will. If a man is saved, it is in accordance with God's perfect will that all men should be saved; if a man is lost, it is in accordance with God's permissive will that men, being free moral agents rather than mere puppets, may refuse to obey Him. The latitude between God's perfect will and His permissive will is the area within which men function with freedom as responsible moral intelligences accountable before God in solemn judgment. God is at work in humanity 'bringing many sons unto glory' (Hebrews 2:10) through the redemptive process rooted in His grace and wrought in Christ. But as moral intelligences created in His image, men must of their own free will concur in God's redemptive process if they are to share His everlasting glory as His sons. The fact that men are responsible, as free moral agents, is a corollary of the fact that the will of God has two aspects, rather than one.*

*"The fact that the will of God has two aspects, rather than one, is fully apparent in numerous passages of scripture. Consider the following: 'If any man wills to do His will, he shall know.' (I John 7:17). 'Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father I (Matthew 7:21). 'But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel (boule, purpose) of God for them, being not baptized of John' (Luke 7:30). According to the scriptures, much that happens is contrary to the will of God; it is evident that the will of God has two aspects, rather than one." (Life In The Son, by Robert Shank, pgs. 347-349)*