

Assurance: The Inseparable Love of God

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Romans 8:28-39

“Legalism says God will love us if we change. The gospel says God will change us because He loves us.”

— Tullian Tchividjian

“The sin underneath all our sins is to trust the lie of the serpent that we cannot trust the love and grace of Christ and must take matters into our own hands”

— Martin Luther

One of the questions many Christians struggle with is: If I am saved, will God ever cast me off?

Baptists have generally believed in the doctrine of assurance. In the doctrine of assurance, a person who is saved has been given a new life in Christ. That is the concept of regeneration. The Holy Spirit makes a new spiritual being in a person. That new spiritual life is assured by the very presence and life of the Holy Spirit. I do believe this is the truth. It is sometimes known as “once saved, always saved.” There have actually been many doctrinal views among Baptists over the years since 1630, when Baptists began in England – including universalism (all get saved) and particular Calvinism (only the elect are saved).

I do believe there are supportive Scriptures to the doctrine that if we have received real spiritual life in Jesus we will endure in salvation until the end. The reason this is often questioned is because there are passages that suggest it might be possible to outright reject Christ and thus reject salvation. However, with those passages there is never any confirmation that anyone had done such a thing.

The difficult passages:

1. Hebrews 6

Hebrews 6:4-9 NASB

⁴ For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ and *then* have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame.

⁷ For ground that drinks the rain which often falls upon it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; ⁸ but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned. ⁹ But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way.

Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians who were being pressured to return to Judaism outside of faith in Christ by unbelieving Jews. The writer is warning them to not abandon faith in Christ.

He warns them that those who abandon faith find it impossible to be brought to repentance because they are living in open defiance of faith. “Crucify” and “put to shame” here are present tense verbs, meaning in the process. While a person is openly and actively rejecting Christ, they cannot hear God’s voice for repentance.

Yet, note the ending remarks. **⁹ But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way.** The writer is speaking hypothetically, not of actual departure from faith. He also notes that true salvation produces the fruit. This is in keeping with the Pauline doctrine of grace. True experience of grace results in a changed life.

2. 2 Timothy 2

2 Timothy 2:12-13 NASB

¹² If we endure, we shall also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; ¹³ If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself.

Matthew 10:33

Matthew 10:32-33 NIVO

³² "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.

³³ But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.

We must remember that Peter denied Jesus three times. Yet, Jesus did not disown him. Because Peter belonged to Christ, Jesus came back and restored him.

True salvation endures. It is not a question as much as a reality. Although it might be possible to outright deny Jesus after having faith, for some do. God is a person, not a formula. **Baptists generally emphasize that true faith endures.**

Romans 3:3 NASB

What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it?

We must remember that salvation is God's work, not ours. We respond to God, but God is the one who saves. God is faithful in His salvation. In the Old Testament, God made Israel His people. Even though they often were unfaithful, God remained faithful in keeping them as His people. In the New Testament, we Gentiles are brought into the people of God. Again, it is God who does this, not us. Our salvation does not hinge on our ability to stay perfect in faith. Our salvation is secured by God's act of Jesus' death and His work of grace in calling us to salvation.

We should not consider "once saved always saved" as a means for living in open sin. To live in willful sin is to live outside of the fellowship of God. You may get into heaven, but your rewards will be much less than those who have been faithful. Because your works have all been burnt up, you will likely smell a lot like smoke, as one who has stayed too close to the fire!

1 Cor. 3:11-15 NASB

¹¹ For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is *to be* revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. ¹⁴ If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. ¹⁵ If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.

The Inseparable Love of God

1. God keeps those who are called. 28-30

Romans 8:28-30 NASB

²⁸ And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; ³⁰ and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Most people focus on the idea that God can cause all things to be good. Yet, that is not what this says. It says that God works his plan. He works all things to his plan which is good. The emphasis should be **His purpose**. He does this for those who love him, and to those who are called according to his predestined plan. That plan has as its goal to conform us to the nature of Christ. The good is our transformation into the character of Christ.

There is much emphasis here on the identify of those who are held in God's love. They are those who:

Love God
Are called
Foreknown
Predestined
Justified (an accomplished fact)
Glorified (an accomplished fact)

The **Good** of His **purpose** is to conform us to **the image of His Son**, to be among many **brethren**.

2. Our assurance rests in God's saving love. 31-34

Romans 8:31-34 NASB

³¹ **What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? ³³ Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; ³⁴ who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.**

God, the judge, has saved us by his extreme love. Agape is extreme love. That love sent Jesus, God's Son, to the cross, rather than cut us off in judgment. The judge redeemed us instead of destroying us. How confident can we be that He will hold us in His salvation? All we need to know is that we are held in God by His extreme love. If God would not condemn us, but instead paid the penalty for our sin by His own Son's death, then how much more will God keep us in His salvation?

Who condemns? It has been the devil's work to condemn people. He condemns us before God. He speaks condemnation to our minds. He speaks condemnation of us through the minds and words of others about us. That spirit of faultfinding that seeks to place blame upon people, especially in the Christian community, comes not from God, but from the devil. Yet, God who sacrificed His own Son does not condemn us.

In fact, Jesus who sits at the right hand of God intercedes for us before the Father. When the devil charges us with shame, Jesus turns to the Father and says, "No. He is mine." "No. She is mine." God says we are holy. We are saints, even when we don't feel we are saints.

3. We are held in God's inseparable love.

Romans 8:35-39 NASB

³⁵ **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ Just as it is written, "For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered."**

³⁷ **But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

This list of things that always seem to harbor danger reveal that nothing can separate us from God's love. Neither assaults from unbelievers, physical torment, persecution, even death. Notice, that he includes things of the future. Spiritual entities like angels and demons (principalities) have no power to separate us from God's love. Can our own flesh nature separate us from God? Can we ever know the full nature of our sinful self compared to the holy nature of God? If we knew how much sin God overlooks we would be shocked.

God saved us by His love. Nothing can separate us from that love. Nothing can separate us from God.

You are held by the love of God. His love is greater than anything this world knows. All the books, and all the hymns, and all the poems could never tell the story of God's love and tell it all.

Love of God (Frederick M. Lehman) (Public Domain) Stz. 3 Aramaic poem,
"Haddamut", written ca. 1050 by Rabbi Meir of Worms, Germany.

**Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made;
Were ev'ry stalk on earth a quill,
And ev'ry man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole
Tho' stretched from sky to sky.**

*"There will always be someone willing to hurt you, put you down, gossip
about you, belittle your accomplishments and judge your soul.*

You are not what other people say you are.