

ETERNAL SECURITY? ...

... **ETERNAL SECURITY!!!**

“... It is impossible for the opposition to produce even one example of someone who has lost his salvation! ... Why might that be? ...”

*“... What could possibly cause [a saved one] to choose Hell over Heaven? ... the essential cause of this irrationality must finally be exposed and plainly stated: The opponents of ES do not at all desire this choice *for themselves!* ... So why their need to oppose ES? **Because eliminating ES allows them to pronounce that someone else has made that choice!** But no *truly* saved person can or ever would do such a thing! (1Co 12:3) ...”*

*“... How do *they* know who is saved, or who *was* saved, or who is on his second or third salvation or whatever? *Has anyone who has actually lost his salvation ever confessed this to you? Of course not!!!* Allow me to let you in on a little secret: **No one has ever confessed it to them either!!! ...***

(Note: Scriptures quoted throughout this writing are from the NIV, unless otherwise specified.)

INTRODUCTION

I am aware that the arguments presented in this writing hold the potential of causing some offense. You will undoubtedly encounter some irritation if you hold (and have decided to stick with) the contrary view, but I have necessarily and appropriately determined to represent the truth and its implications (as best as my most honest effort allows) without the influence of my desire not to upset. That said, if you do oppose the represented view and should encounter some general or stereotypical observation or criticism which does not apply to you, I encourage you to employ the age-old adage: “If the shoe doesn’t fit, don’t wear it.” But if it does, I trust you will deal with it appropriately.

Additionally, since the arguments, interpretations and conclusions are, of course, the result of human effort (mine), I urge you to investigate the matter for yourself under the Holy Spirit’s guidance in order that He might persuade you to the truth of God’s Word Himself. I have encountered many folks who express a passionate opinion on this subject without having made a corresponding investigation of it.

Obviously, it is my belief that my view has been shaped by, and is in agreement with Scriptural truth. But even if that is so, you must be convinced in your own mind - and my viewpoint is irrelevant and a wrong starting point. Nevertheless, I have provided the detailed basis and reasoning for my position as a potential benefit to you - to be received for what it is worth. My personal study and interpretation of Scripture in its specific and overall sense, along with further investigation of the matter, have led to the

strong conviction evidenced throughout this writing. The emphasis, passion, directness, confidence, bold challenges and calculated sarcasm it contains are simply the natural result of that conviction (and my personality).

From its length, you may rightly presume that it contains commentary, editorialism and digression not entirely driven by, nor usually encountered in an exclusive pursuit of the truth regarding the matter of eternal security (ES). Although the basic relevance of these side-trips will be readily apparent, their connection will be further clarified.

And while I will invest a significant effort to develop a foundation for the discussion, I assure you that I will progress to an abundance of Scriptural qualification for the comprehensive support presented. Therefore, I strongly advise you to have the Scriptures alongside for ready reference. I humbly exhort you to allow the light of God's Word to shine where it has been arranged for in order to maximize the benefit of our mutual effort. This desire reflects a sober view of the importance of this issue.

For beyond my conviction regarding the matter itself, I am equally persuaded that it is not one about which we can or should "agree to disagree." I strongly submit that ES is *not* a Dt 29:29 mystery! Furthermore, I believe that a common understanding and like-mindedness in this area is critical for two reasons: First, it shapes our own effort and mindset as we endeavor to live the holy lives God calls us to. Second, it dictates our strategy in approaching, responding and relating to both nonbelievers and fellow believers alike. This strategy - and the effectiveness of our commanded effort on God's behalf for His sake, honor and glory - are greatly affected by our understanding of ES!

Though we are familiar with the wisdom of majoring on the fundamentals and avoiding disputes on minor issues, it is not wise to be lazy-minded - relegating difficult but discernible truths to some off-limits category so as to spare ourselves from investigating and dealing with them. And in any case, ES is not some "minor" issue! Though we would agree that the evangelist and the teacher of the unsaved or newly saved would be wise to focus upon doctrine more necessary for those audiences, ES must eventually be addressed with, and understood by the maturing believer.

Finally, the study of ES is not some tangential, scholarly pursuit or philosophical quandary. It is not a stand-alone, irrelevant debate exercise. Indeed, we will discover that it is inextricably integrated with the fundamentals of systematic Christian doctrine and logically flows from the essence of true Christianity's core. The doctrine of ES is not merely *true* - it is *necessary!* It is neither irresolvable nor unimportant. Nor is it without impact on our daily Christian walk and our response to life's challenges.

God has revealed truth which resolves ES and we have an obligation to accept it. We are further obligated - because He commands it - to find ourselves in agreement with one another concerning the resolution He has provided. While it is true that we must begin with and focus on doctrinal axioms, some of what is avoided as non-axiomatic logically and necessarily follows a more complete and accurate grasp of the fundamentals. Unfortunately, many in our modern Christian culture find contentment in

an easier, elementary level of understanding. Nevertheless, a mature and proper apprehension of the tenets of Scripture's view of salvation forces us to deduce that ES is sound in its reason and accurate in its theology.

Now before we begin, let me state - with due respect to Calvin - that I resist referring to ES as Calvinism or Calvinistic theology. It did not originate with Calvin; he did not "invent" it. The integrity of ES must consist in nothing other than Scriptural support, where Calvin himself discovered it. Ironically, the label assigned to the fifth and final "point of grace" from the "TULIP" mnemonic, "Perseverance of the saints," may itself introduce part of the difficulty. When "perseverance" is considered in the modern vernacular, it is easy to see how it might be interpreted as conveying the notion of some measure of the saint's own performance as a requisite to retaining his salvation.

In fact, however, "perseverance" conjures up an entirely wrong view of the matter. It would be more appropriate to simply label this point as "Salvation's Eternality." Salvation is a permanent status or condition effected by the hand of God in the new birth - it is not something granted by Him with conditions attached (persevering at its retention). The perseverance in the faith (imperfect as it is) which does indeed follow the new birth is evidence of salvation, not an assignment undertaken under threat of having the gift of God repossessed.

Thus, the very attempt to force fit ES into a "branded" or other arbitrarily selected theological "package" is one cause of the controversy. I am not at all impugning Calvinism, but when we resort to labeling our theology with the names of men, we risk falling into the trap Paul warns of in 1Co 1:12-13. Then, should we admire some particular man's wisdom, intelligence, scholastic contribution, character, reputation or whatever - agreeing with "his" theology *mostly* - we find ourselves in a quandary if on some point we disagree. Conversely, if we hold a man in low esteem - disagreeing with him for the most part - the quandary arises when we encounter a point of agreement.

Averting this dilemma by simply accepting or rejecting the entirety of a particular school of thought on the basis of the merit or vacuity of some portion of it is irresponsible and dangerous. Scripture commands us to test our convictions; to be convinced in our own minds (1Th 5:21; 1Jn 4:1; Rom 14:5). Therefore, let us divorce our examination of ES from Calvinism, Arminianism and every other "ism" of man, thereby relieving ourselves of the burden of predisposed human allegiance or antipathy. Instead, let us explore it exclusively in the light of God's Word. We provide ourselves the greatest opportunity for proper understanding and the unity of mind called for in Eph 4:13, Rom 15:5-6 and 1Co 1:10 - whatever the particular Christian doctrine under consideration - when our allegiance is properly committed to God.

At the outset, let us agree that it is a seminal truth that every doctrine of Christianity is a teaching of Scripture. Therefore, each doctrine we claim and teach as Christian must stand the testing of Scripture (and on behalf of ES, it is precisely this opportunity for which I beg the reader's indulgence). If it does so successfully, it may properly be

included in the remaining whole of sound, systematic, Christian theology; such soundness being defined as adhering to and supported by Scripture alone.

Any other “theology” necessarily includes some amount or degree of false doctrine - or involves unknowable, unrevealed secrets of God. Squeezing some true doctrine into such a package in an attempt to force legitimacy upon it requires the true doctrine to be modified to fit and conform - either with false doctrine, or to the opinion or assumptions of a particular man, or group of men, regarding truths which cannot be confirmed.

Differently, manipulating sound systematic theology by altering or eliminating any of its true doctrinal components - or adding man-made doctrine to it - contaminates and destroys its integrity. As will become evident, opposing ES requires a choice of one of the two errors above: either the creation of a false systematic theology to accommodate the invention of salvation insecurity - or the altering or elimination of ES from the theological system of Scripture, thereby rendering the system itself impotent.

This writing will endeavor to demonstrate the Scriptural integrity of ES (along with its impeccable logic and reasonableness from the view of spiritual common sense), thereby establishing its proper place in the remainder of God’s revealed counsel because it violates none of it. It is only when ES is attached to mysteries, misinterpretations, and/or invalid assumptions that it finds itself on a foundation of sand.

Placing it upon such support makes it easy for the opposition to (appear to) cause its collapse. But when the dust has settled, we find that only the man-made support has crumbled - ES itself remains intact. Restored to its proper place, it is found to be as true as its true foundation. Conversely, placing the opposing view upon the same foundation of truth quickly reveals a clashing contrast. To properly appreciate and accept ES then, we must recognize and dismiss the attempts to place it in bad company.

Now then, every reliably true doctrine must first of all be one which has been revealed by God and is able to be satisfactorily known and apprehended by the human intellect. That statement may initially give the reader pause. However, I did not claim that *truth* is only true if it has been revealed by God and understood by men. There are, we may presume, many truths which are either unknown or not able to be satisfactorily apprehended by man. Those truths are nonetheless certainly true. What I stated is this: *Teaching* (doctrine) cannot be trusted as reliably true unless such teaching has its sole and complete origin in, and remains entirely of God - not man. Doctrine is reliably true only when, and only to the extent that its integrity is attested in God’s Word.

And while we may not *completely* understand it, it must be able to be satisfactorily and accurately perceived if it is to be represented as reliably true (but presenting it *beyond* its Scriptural support removes its reliability, though it *may* remain true). Any doctrine which fails these tests requires the addition of ingredients - to one degree or another - which disqualify it from consideration as reliably true. Such ingredients include man’s wisdom, his opinions, and anything rooted in human reasoning or philosophy apart from

Christ (Col 2:8). These encompass the contributions of the “greatest” minds, the most widely held theories, the longest standing traditions and the noblest of man’s principles.

The doctrine of ES simply states that we may be comfortably assured of the security of our salvation for all eternity *because God says so!* And He says so because *He* guarantees it! ES is alternatively referred to as “Once saved, always saved” (it cannot be lost or rejected). However, it is precisely the comfort and assurance of this Scriptural truth which evokes criticism from some who see potential danger should it be mistaught or misunderstood. Ironically, the greatest attacks come from opponents who read into it (or their concern that others may do so) the precise misteaching they fear (and which they are to be commended for opposing). However, that false teaching is not there!

ES is attacked as a doctrine of Satan because it is accused of teaching that a Christian is free to maintain any lifestyle he desires - committing any sins he pleases - and still be assured of his place in Heaven! Not so! That interpretation is merely an inference of flawed human logic and reasoning which results when man attempts to understand and explain truths which transcend human comprehension.

The plan and working of God in salvation cannot be completely fathomed by the human intellect. Believers must employ the gift of faith received of God to trust Him at His word and to resist the temptation to define and teach what He has not! We cannot presume to fill in the blanks which God has left for His own purposes. Nor can we allow ourselves to ignore or distort the Scriptural presentation of ES in order to formulate doctrine which more comfortably accommodates our finite intellectual capacity.

FRAMING THE DEBATE

Before providing the supportive case for ES, let us examine how the opposition desires and attempts to frame the debate. Basically, the contrary view seeks to serve ES with two indictments: The first (mentioned above) alleges that ES grants believers a license to sin. Immediately below are just two such examples. The second indictment (which quickly follows the inevitable dismissal of the first) brands proponents of ES as “hyper-Calvinists,” equating ES with hyper-Calvinism. I will address that below as well.

“ES equals a license to sin!”

The first example is from an article, “[The Myth of Eternal Security](#),” by Mario Derksen:

It certainly is an attractive idea to think that one only has to pray a ‘sinner’s prayer’ and can then sit back and relax, one’s salvation being guaranteed.

Is *that* what we who maintain the doctrine of ES teach? May God forbid it!

The second consists of two excerpts from Michael Fackerell at [Christian-faith.com](#):

Back in 1997 I spoke with a pastor and the subject of the eternal security of the believer came up. This pastor is a lovely, gracious man and is doing many things to reach people in the community with the gospel. He obviously loves the Lord and loves people. When I questioned him regarding the contents of one of the theological books he was reading, it came out that he believed in the doctrine that

a truly born again believer is eternally secure, no matter what he may do from that time on. In other words, if a person was truly born again of the Spirit of God, even if he or she backslides and gets into open willful sin of any kind - even to the point of becoming an atheist, a witch, a Christ-hater, and a bitter opponent of the gospel - that person will go to Heaven when they die, even if they never repent in this life and come back to Christ. All this because they at one point became part of God's family through a real spiritual birth.

A Poem by Dr. Michael Brown

*Koo-chi-koo-chi-koo-chi-koo - God loves me and God loves you
Smile sinner, don't be sad - God's not angry, he's not mad
And even if you leave the path - There's no Hell and there's no wrath!
God sees your heart, and that's enough - The judgment seat won't be that tough
You can't sin away His grace - Or take that smile from His face
Trust me, sinner, to the end - My name is Satan, I'm your friend*

There are dozens, probably thousands of equally disingenuous and intellectually dishonest representations of ES. Have you ever read or heard of ES being taught like this? No credible ambassador of Christ would do so - this is ludicrous on its face!

And so, we immediately and easily recognize how simple it is to discredit ES if it can somehow be unequally yoked to false doctrine - and the false doctrine here is shrewdly inserted! Though the technique is long-standing, it sadly enjoys great success over the unwary. Quite simply, the author has mixed a little truth with a lot of error. While it is certainly true that Scripture describes such behavior as characteristic of the Hell-bound, it also teaches that those who have been born from above *cannot* and *will not* behave like that! (see below) Will this supernatural, miraculous work of God really prove to be merely superficial, ultimately temporary and thus, unavailing? Of course not!

The author's starting premise is fatally flawed. He asserts that the "saved" folks he describes should not be allowed into Heaven. But he has raised an impossible dilemma. In the first place, "real spiritual rebirth" cannot be "proven" for *anyone* - let alone such a one. Who will claim that someone fitting the description above was once "truly born again?" How exactly will that claim be confirmed? It is impossible for anyone who "at one point became part of God's family through a real spiritual birth" to become characterized as postulated! Scripture teaches us that such behavior betrays precisely the opposite; that such folks prove by their actions that they have *not*, in fact, experienced the new birth! (Tit 1:16 - and see especially 1Jn 3:6, 9; 5:18) When someone is sinning in the manner depicted, we cannot allow the fact that he once claimed to be saved to prove that he has now lost his salvation. Lots of people claim to be saved - if all such folks actually *were* saved, what a wonderful world this would be!

So, in a clever but transparent deception, the author raises the fear that ES is tantamount to issuing a license to sin. But Scripture addresses that concern and excludes such a possibility. There is much support and reasoned logic from the whole counsel of God's Word but, for now, let us simply consider 1Jn 3:6, 9; 5:18 (mentioned

above). On one hand, the “holiness” movement misuses these verses to justify its claims of a “second blessing” whereby a believer, in this life, achieves final sanctification and perfection, no longer a sinner, never to sin again - while others misuse them to “prove” that those who sin are not saved.

However, these verses present a problem to those who reject ES because: First, 3:6 clearly teaches that those who behave in the manner described were NEVER saved; they have NEVER seen or known God. Next: 3:9 provides the quite logical and understandable reason why the saved cannot and will not sin with wanton desire and impunity: because God’s seed (Christ Himself) remains in him, and he has been born of God! And last, 5:18 silences all argument; Christ keeps the saved one safe; the evil one cannot harm him. These verses clearly address the type of sinning the author is concerned with; that is, a lifestyle of continuous, unrepentant sin by those whose consciences are not bothered much or at all by it; sin which, as much as possible within the limits of human discernment, positively indicates that one is not born again.

But, since Scripture clearly reveals that Christians will indeed continue to sin (1Jn 1:8-10 and many more), there is an obvious distinction between the unsaved sinner and the saved one (the saved one has been born again, and he does not sin in the manner of the unsaved one). God alone knows the true state of folks (we can err or be fooled), but make no mistake, no one loses his salvation by sinning. If so, either all the saved will lose their salvation, or some saved sinners retain their salvation by sinning within some imaginary boundaries; that is, if a saved one sins beyond some measure established by and known only to those who reject ES, he is no longer saved; he has lost his salvation.

But note again the reasoning of 3:9: Those who are born again “cannot” (says God’s Word!) sin away their salvation! Because “God’s seed remains in him;” “he has been born of God!” Precisely! What would be the benefit of spiritual rebirth if we could fritter it away? Our leftover sin nature would surely see to that if it could! And what kind of god would God be if He could not guarantee His work? But the essential point is worth repeating and emphasizing: The reason the saved one will not lead a lifestyle as the author has proposed is because “*he has been born of God.*” God is in control, not man.

In the interest of being complete and honest: Some maintain that the one referred to in 5:18, who keeps the believer safe, is the believer himself. However, while the believer does have a role in tending to the disciplines Scripture calls him to, and doing so is effective toward walking with God in peace, blessing and safety, the level and type of safety under consideration here is empirical; absolute. And the whole counsel of Scripture makes it clear that no believer can keep himself safe to that degree; the keeper being referenced must be Christ. And we know that while “the one who was born of God” is not referring to Jesus’ physical, human birth, it also does not mean that Jesus was “born,” as God, within the constraints of time - it is referring to the mystery of His eternally begotten nature in relation to God the Father (God’s sole begotten Son).

In any case, genuine rebirth by the sovereign working of the Holy Spirit precludes the result of God’s workmanship from maintaining an attitude and lifestyle such as that

which the author has conjectured. That work is a miraculous, supernatural and necessarily *eternal* metamorphosis! Its mention in Eph 2:10 can be translated as, "For we are His *masterpiece* ..." - and the original text emphasizes "*His*."

This verse further states that we have been created in Christ to enable us to accomplish the pre-ordained works which God designed and prepared for us according to His sovereign plan and pleasure. A minimal excavation of Scripture is all that is necessary to discover the irrationality of believing that God will throw us back on the hell-bound trash heap when we have finished some finite list of duties on His behalf. Of course, the opposing view holds that we can choose to toss ourselves in with that garbage!

But that raises an interesting question: Are we able to make that choice before we complete our assigned tasks? If not, why not? In either case, whether before or after our work is done, man's ability to override the plan of God exposes a glaring inconsistency in the opposing position: It requires us to concede that God is not so sovereign, powerful or wise after all! His sovereignty is dictated, His power is controlled and His wisdom is limited by the *ultimately* sovereign, powerful and wise one - man!

And so, while this writing will present overwhelming evidence which proves the case for ES, it will also dissect the claims of the contrary view (and their necessary outflow) in light of Scriptural logic. This examination will produce a consistent result, making it abundantly clear that the opposing position has no hope of salvaging any integrity.

Finally on this point, let me state that I did not select the above quotes because they were easy to debunk and obvious in their error. At the root of *all* the opposition is the same absurd ascription to, and definition of ES! Some present it with more vitriol, some with less - but it is always essentially the same. We who support ES would prefer that its opponents tackle *Scripture's* version, not Satan's! Their own convenient rendition (ES for hell-bound, God-hating, unrepentant sinners) is too easily exposed for the sheer folly that it is! And since it *should* be exposed, those with the greatest passion to do so are proponents of *true* ES. Satan's version is blasphemous! Again, the theoretical allegation above is impossible - no truly saved Christian can do what is described there!

Before I move on, let me ask you, Christian brother: Do you reject that last claim? If so, what prevents *you* from falling into such slavery to hell-bound sin? Can it be your unfailing strength of character, your infallible commitment to impeccable self-discipline aligned with your flawless interpretation and faithful application of God's Word; your exemplary godliness, steadfast obedience and undying loyalty to the One who saved you; your perfect appreciation and love for God and neighbor - and all the rest? Do you thank God you are not like that publican (Lk 18:9-14)? God help you!

Or does Scripture's scolding of such self-righteousness have no proper bearing upon the hypothetical possibility of the saved versus the used-to-be saved? Yet, perhaps you do indeed make humble confession of falling short of perfection, counting yourself a sinner. Very well! Have you discovered the Scriptural dividing line separating the saved sinner who is still saved from the one who is now lost again? Will you define it

essentially as much of the opposition does; by quoting Scripture which surely describes the lost, and then claiming to know some folks who were once saved but whom those passages have in view, thereby “proving” that salvation is not secure?

Your dividing line then, is the same line which delineates and identifies the *never-saved*! There is only one course available to avoid the obvious error of all this. Let us assume you have wisely chosen it, meekly conceding *some* level of reliance upon God; acknowledging that *His* righteousness is necessary after all! This sidesteps the error of *self-righteousness*, but it creates a new dilemma - thus forcing the second indictment ...

“ES equals ‘hyper-Calvinism!’”

When the opposition to ES succumbs to the Scriptural assurance that God sees and judges us in the righteousness of Christ (not our own) and that we need not worry about the saved taking license with sin because they cannot (God has it all under control), it switches tactics. Since ES support includes the ultimacy of God’s sovereignty (a difficult concept for the human ego and reasoning capacity), proponents of ES are labeled “hyper-Calvinists.” The very belief in God’s sovereignty as presented in Scripture - once known as traditional Calvinism by those who find it necessary to label such things - has now become conveniently branded by the opposition as hyper-Calvinism. I will address hyper-Calvinism more directly and completely after first considering the sovereignty of God, but I have raised this issue because it is clearly on the table and must be removed.

If you hold the opposing view however, you will (and *must*) disagree with the presentation of God’s sovereignty to follow, though it simply reflects the view of Scripture (Ps 115:3; 135:6; Dan 4:35; Isa 46:10-11; 14:24, 26-27; Job 42:1-2; Lk 1:37; Eze 12:28; Ecc 7:13; Lam 3:37; Pr 16:4, 9; 19:21; Act 17:24-26; Isa 45:9; Rom 9:20-21; Isa 29:16; Jer 18:1-6; Isa 64:8).

In actuality, opposing ES is rooted in, and narrows its focus to *man’s free will choice*. Those who deny ES do indeed accept the doctrine of God’s sovereignty - *except as it relates to man’s choice!* As you will see however, the strength of the ES position allows it to prevail whether or not God’s sovereignty vis-à-vis man’s choice is accepted. Therefore, review the remainder of this section, disagree if you will, and continue on. While a proper understanding of God’s sovereignty is critical for many reasons, the integrity of ES can and will be demonstrated by appealing to its remaining support.

The opposing view finds it reasonable to argue that there just *has* to be something wrong with any theology which grants God ultimate sovereign control. However, Scripture teaches that God does not need anyone to grant Him anything (Act 17:24-25) - and ultimate sovereignty is His whether or not efforts to limit it are taken up by some committee! God Himself speaks of His sovereignty and its supremacy throughout Scripture - and He has plainly demonstrated it to His creation from the foundation of the world. God’s title, “El Adonai,” in its simplest translation is “Lord,” but is accepted in virtual unanimity to convey “My Sovereign,” and without controversy, to signify “The Supreme Sovereign One.”

Anyhow, we cannot pick and choose which of God's attributes we will allow Him to retain or employ. Nor can we modify any for "political correctness" or to produce a desired result. We are not free to construct a God and theology which suit our desires! Just because we cannot understand it - or because it violates the way we would like things to work - does not mean that God's sovereignty is not what He says it is.

"But," cries the protest, "man just *has* to have a choice!" Well now, does this include the choice to inform God that His sovereignty is too supreme, too far-reaching and overly controlling; that we want our will and desires to be included somehow? Shall we endeavor to define and enforce the limits of His sovereignty, establishing and notifying God of the line where His control ends and ours begins? Though His sovereignty would then be less than ultimate, we will have at last comforted our unsettled intellect.

Will we then congratulate ourselves for having created a more likable "God" who has discovered the value of diversity and has agreed to share His sovereignty with man? Will we sleep better knowing we have replaced an intolerant, dictatorial, stubborn, incomprehensible control-freak with a kinder, gentler "God" to present to the world, thus overcoming this seemingly insurmountable obstacle to our evangelization efforts?

Or is our attempt to remake God into a more acceptable "God" the result, perhaps, of frustration over the constant need to defend His true character and nature from the mocking and criticism of lost folks which we never seem to escape? Shall we give up because such attacks emanate from the vast majority and are rooted in great human reason? Paul and many others faced death daily on God's behalf. Yet, they did not waver in their commitment to the truth!

"But if man does not have a completely free will, then how do you explain ...?" And the list of difficulties becomes endless to the opposition as they seek to make sense of God's justice, righteousness, love, "fairness" and much more - all from the viewpoint of man, and employing the best of man's wisdom, logic and reasoning.

Is it really such traumatic shock to discover that the creature is controlled by the Creator? It seems we have either forgotten, or failed to consider that the One we speak of is *God*; the *supreme* Creator and Sustainer of *the entire universe and all that is in it!* (Acts 17:25b-26) How else would we expect it? And how would we design it otherwise?

Consider and answer honestly: *If* God had wanted, at the foundation of the world, to predestine every event of time right down to the number of birds to be found at 6:02AM on August 5, 2051 on the maple tree at the corner of East Main and Clearview in Kalamazoo, MI, could He have done so? Since the answer is yes, exactly how and why may it be proposed that we who were created afterward should inform God that He exercises too much sovereign control? Who will carry our request to Him; that we would like to have (please and thanks) some of that control back for ourselves?

The only ground for objecting to the affirmative reply above would be that the exercise of God's sovereignty required by ES (a requirement of every Scriptural doctrine involving God's workings) violates His character. If He maintains His integrity - as so He does - then God's inability to do as He pleases would disqualify Him as God! But no doctrine of Scripture requiring the execution of God's sovereign control violates His character - unless *man* becomes the judge of God from *man's* point of view!

However, (claiming) to circumvent that trap, the opposition merely finds itself in another: destroying God's integrity by redrawing the boundaries of His sovereignty so that He can only do what makes sense to them or what they will allow. Their immediate and most passionate objections, of course, relate to salvation - but why stop there?

We could examine an endless list, starting with the "usual": Why do "bad" things happen to "good" people and vice versa? Why do children die? And what about this: Why has God created wildlife, pets, trees and so many other forms of life with no souls, no hope of eternal life? And what about the mountains, seas and Heavens - all scheduled for destruction? Why has God singled out man - for absolutely no reason at all but His own sovereign pleasure - to fellowship with and enjoy for all eternity? How is that fair to the rest of creation? "But at least they are not damned to suffer eternally in Hell." So then, is the essential point of opposition a contention that God's planning, thinking and doing must make sense to us, else He must undo or redo it? God's Word warns against questioning His wisdom and sovereignty (Isa 29:16; 45:9; 64:8; Rom 9:11-24; 11:33-36). What causes folks to presume to have standing to argue their case in God's court?

From A.W. Tozer's book, "The Pursuit of Man":

There is another and worse evil which springs from this basic failure to grasp the radical difference between the natures of the two worlds. It is the habit of languidly "accepting" salvation as if it were a small matter and one wholly in our hands. Men are exhorted to think things over and "decide" for Christ, and in some places one day each year is set aside as "Decision Day," at which time people are expected to condescend to grant Christ the right to save them, a right which they have obviously refused Him up to that time. Christ is thus made to stand again before men's judgment seat; He is made to wait upon the pleasure of the individual, and after long and humble waiting is either turned away or patronizingly admitted. By a complete misunderstanding of the noble and true doctrine of the freedom of the human will, salvation is made to depend perilously upon the will of man instead of upon the will of God.

However deep the mystery, however many the paradoxes involved, it is still true that men become saints not at their own whim but by sovereign calling. Has not God by such words as these taken out of our hands the ultimate choice? (Jn 6:63, 44, 65: 17:2; Gal 1:15-16)

God has made us in His likeness, and one mark of that likeness is our free will. We hear God say, "Whosoever will, let him come." We know by bitter experience the woe of an unsundered will and the blessedness or terror which may hang upon our human choice. But back of all this and preceding it is the sovereign right

of God to call saints and determine human destinies. The master choice is His, the secondary choice is ours. Salvation is from our side a choice, from the divine side it is a seizing upon, an apprehending, a conquest of the Most High God. Our "accepting" and "willing" are reactions rather than actions. The right of determination must always remain with God!

... Only by grace can we continue to believe; we can persist in willing God's will only as we are seized upon by a benign power that will overcome our natural bent to unbelief ...

... How deeply do men err who conceive of God as subject to our human will or as standing respectfully to wait upon our human pleasure ...

... We need to have restored again the lost idea of sovereignty, not as a doctrine only but as the source of a solemn religious emotion.

- Tozer, A. W. (1978). *The Pursuit of Man: The Divine Conquest of the Human Heart*. Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications.

Notice Tozer's mention of what ought to be a slam-dunk on this issue: that some would have salvation "to depend perilously upon the will of man instead of upon the will of God." Who among us, in our right spiritual minds, would desire that our salvation rely upon ourselves - while God offers to (and must) assume responsibility for it? That is spiritual insanity! As Tozer further asserts, our salvation results from *God's conquest of us; a conquering of our will by the application of His!* Salvation neither results from, nor relies for its retention upon a meritable choice resulting from intellectual consideration!

Yet, is it not shamelessly evident that the modern approach to "salvation" does indeed preclude the need and role of the Holy Spirit? And have we not presumed to seize control of the universal schedule from God, dictating to Him when and how He must respond to our own nicely-constructed systematic order of salvation?

Lastly, Tozer laments the need for a true apprehension and application of the doctrine of God's sovereignty. There are indeed vast numbers who hold the doctrine as doctrine only, assenting in word while rebelling in practice. Inexplicably, it is given no voice when it is able to speak precisely to a present dilemma.

A great illustration is provided for us in Gen 6:19-7:16. God commanded Noah to take into the ark with him 2 of every kind of unclean animal and 7 of those which were clean (for the necessary sacrifices afterward). This task was well beyond Noah's ability and control! But while 6:19 commands, "*You are to bring ...*," vs 20 states that the animals *would come to Noah*. And though 7:2 says, "*Take with you ...*," vs 8-9 state that the animals *came to Noah and entered the ark*. Obviously, God was directing the whole effort, yet vs 16 says that all of this happened "*just as God had commanded Noah*."

So what exactly did Noah do to fulfill God's command to him? This passage contains a lesson for all of us: Noah believed God and set out to do everything which *did* fall within his ability and control (6:22; 7:5). He was faithful to the duty before him; to accomplish

all that he could with what God had provided. He trusted God to do the rest - and he did not question God's wisdom in the matter. Although God had commanded Noah to "take" and to "bring," there was no way he could gather them all. Noah could not have imagined how the ark and the flood and all the rest would work out, but he believed God and did not give up or rebel at His instruction. He trusted God to do what he could not accomplish in himself; God would have to do the drawing. And so, those which God did draw were saved - because God saw to it!

So, here we have the "2-level theory" in action: God's sovereignty and man's free will working together in a mystery which cannot be fathomed. *For even the part which Noah fulfilled was itself attributable to God's faithful and wise provision!* Isa 46:10-11, included in the reference group above concerning God's sovereignty, tells us all we need to know on this subject! There is no way to avoid or refute God's ultimate sovereignty over all. To do so is to place the universe in such a precarious state that mankind is left with no hope beyond that which he can guarantee himself!

As I alluded to above, some who resist this truth of Scripture concern themselves with how all of it (and God Himself) will be viewed by others if it is accurately and fully taught. However, among many other truths of God and His Word, we proclaim Jesus' death on the cross without fear that some will wonder why God could not provide salvation in some manner more suited to human reason or desire. Oh, we know that some will certainly wonder and object, but we do not fear that. We would not think of adjusting the truth of the cross to teach that the requirement for sin's atonement was something more intellectually palatable; we know that would be utterly false and unavailing! We are obligated to represent the remainder of God's Word in similar fashion.

There are an endless number of Scriptural "difficulties" raised when we attempt to remove God's attribute of ultimate sovereignty from Him in order to present a more "reasonable" alternative to an unbelieving world which rejects unadulterated truth. The enemy exploits these difficulties with a record of success which is quite saddening. Why did God order Hosea to marry a harlot? Why did He strike Uzzah dead for merely attempting to steady the Ark of the Covenant? Why did He allow His chosen apostles to be abused and murdered? Could He not have thought of a better ending to the life of John the Baptist? We could spend eternity constructing our list of questions! What about the difficulties caused by God's command to His army to conquer land "belonging" to others, and to kill men, women, children, livestock and to destroy everything else in the process? And could God not have designed a "better" system of providing food for the animal kingdom than allowing the strong to prey on the weak?

The spiritually reborn are able to see (or confidently accept with a justified trust that which they do not or cannot see) God's sovereignty and wisdom at work in all things - without any violation of His character. The "bigger picture" is clear and consistent to them. God's right to use whatever means His wisdom dictates is not questioned because the foolishness and futility of doing so is plainly seen. Apparent difficulties are either resolved in light of a fuller contemplation of events beyond isolated historical renderings, or accepted without resolution in light of a fuller view of God (and man).

We cannot, in any case, place ourselves in the position of apologizing for God; making excuses or providing alibis for who He is and what He does - whether for His [Plan of Salvation](#) or His omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, or any other manifestation of His ultimate supremacy, including His “omnicontrol.” God cannot and will not apologize for, nor cede any of the elements of His essence - any more than we should apologize for possessing some particular or unusual skill or talent or any other useful attribute. Man consists in who he is, however God has arranged him. And he is responsible for employing that arrangement toward God’s glory and purpose.

God creates His children to be instruments for noble purposes, building inherencies into each and supplying additional blessings as needed. We use our attributes to serve Him and to minister to others - attributing the work and any glory to Him alone because, after all, our attributes are ultimately attributable to Him who creates and provides all! And although we are not to boast, it is false modesty and false humility which finds virtue in denying some truth about ourselves in order to avoid offending others.

Likewise, attempting to adjust God’s sovereignty is false wisdom - and God will not do the adjusting Himself. He sees a world struggling to accept this truth. He knows, as we do, what needs adjusting. Substituting “truth” which is simpler to understand and more likely to find acceptance is ... well, lots of bad things.

As stated, God’s sovereignty over the remainder of His workings causes the opposition no discomfort; it is solely this responsibility for salvation which must be wrestled away from Him. But Scripture specifically provides for God’s sovereignty in salvation (Lam 3:58; Mt 11:27; 22:14; Jn 6:44, 65; Rom 8:28-30, 33; Jam 2:5; Rom 9:11-12; 1Pe 1:1-2; Col 3:12; 1Th 1:4; 2Th 2:13; 1Pe 2:9; Eph 1:4-5, 11; Jam 1:18; Rom 11:5; 1Co 1:30; Rev 17:14). As I said, you may reject this glimpse into God’s sovereignty (at your own peril), but the inescapable truth of ES is demonstrated below apart from its acceptance.

Now, I do not mind, and will abide discussion and argument involving contrary views of my held convictions. However, it is frustrating and useless to debate serious matters in a less than serious manner. One key to any plausible argument is consistency. But opposition to ES requires arguing against itself and denying an abundance of Scriptural truths, some of which follow.

How, for example, can it be conceded that man does not seek God and has no inclination toward godliness in his lost state but somehow moves himself to make a righteous choice to be saved? How can God’s sovereignty be acknowledged and accepted in the Old Testament conquests mentioned above and yet be denied in the conquest of the human heart, mind and soul? How can complete reliance upon God be true if His reliability hinges upon our choices? How can it be claimed that salvation requires being born again - and how can this rebirth involve the miraculous, supernatural, regenerative working of the Holy Spirit - when a mere human choice is all that is necessary to undo such an unfathomably powerful and profound act of God?

How is it possible to echo the Scriptural truth that God has reconciled us to Himself while teaching that it was accomplished rather through some right-thinking on our part?

The sole hope of integrity in the opposing view is to propose that man's autonomous choice to be saved causes none of the changes described in Scripture! Only then is it reasonable to advance the notion that a change in salvation status may be effected through a mere subsequent choice! This requires the opposition to contend - contrary to Scriptural teaching - that salvation's eternal changes are triggered only at some future consummation of the initial choice. (What other explanation can be offered?)

However, since they maintain that the final realization of salvation is contingent upon ensuing choices and godly performance, there exists a window of opportunity to rescind the original choice or to fail to achieve the required performance level (whatever that is). This renders the initial choice meaningless and without effect! Essentially then, this view requires salvation to hinge upon what the "probationary saved" will do in the future rather than what God has done in the past. Of course, these lines of argument are entirely nonsensical. Scripture clearly and abundantly precludes such foolishness (I will dispense with an exhaustive list and simply mention 2Co 5:17).

Yet, it is astounding - and remains a mystery to me - that all of this is not easily seen for what it is by anyone of sound reason. When one is forcing a particular view upon himself, he ought to become aware of that if he pursues it seriously. Unlike truths he has adopted at the Holy Spirit's leading, those he is coercing himself to accept cause tensions which provide ample warning. There comes a point when it is time to force open the tightly clenched fist and be rid of what is unhealthy to hang onto. The effort and energy required to hold on is being wasted and ought to be put to productive use.

Also, this addiction to a particular creed; this need to hang on with all the might in one's being is what causes so many doctrinal errors to proliferate, leading to confusion, contradiction, church splits, cults and much more. Satan enjoys using such chaos to prevent Christians from doing what they ought to be doing.

Nonetheless, in light of this quick review of God's sovereignty, let me ask: Does it cause some intellectual unsettlement to know that God controls all - including, in some mysterious manner, His commanded responsibilities to man? Sure it does! But it ought to remain a mild intellectual dilemma, limited to the extent that man will always find himself curious when he cannot understand all that he would like to.

For we are forced to consider: Is God God or is He not? Do we trust Him or do we not? Are His ways and thoughts higher than ours or are they not? Is He preeminent and supreme in all ways or is He not? On what basis will we demand of Him our share of His power and sovereignty? When we allow our unsatisfied intellect to become a taskmaster - whipping us until we meet its demand to resolve the unknowable, or to alter the knowable to either match its capacity to understand or in order to produce a preconceived result - we are forced to invent and supply theories it will accept.

When instead, we acknowledge God's sovereignty and resist attempting to solve His mysteries for Him, we find ourselves no longer unsettled - and the fear of the taskmaster is removed. But herein lies another bewildering phenomenon of the opposition: Together, we will fellowship, indulge in theological discussion, nod our heads in agreement under Scriptural teaching, sing strains clearly proclaiming ES and its elements, and affirm in each other the same views of God's sovereign working, man's helplessness and such things. Nevertheless, when the issue of ES arises, all of this agreement vanishes - because rejecting ES requires it!

In a nutshell, opposition to ES is utterly inconsistent; those who oppose ES cannot avoid contradicting themselves. Some of this results from the modern day neglect of investigative study, thus allowing argument and debate to consist entirely in the venting of unsupported opinions (with the loudest or most visible side declared the winner).

And we have another modern-day complication: The "man of conviction" has been redefined as intolerant, closed-minded, bigoted and arrogant. Respect and preference has shifted instead to the "moderate" who is praised for his willingness to listen to every side of a debate - and agree with them all! It is time that we again required one another to take a firm and reasoned stand - and to be able to defend our stand with coherent arguments rooted in God's revealed truth!

Many who reject ES share effective testimonies of God's mercy and grace in saving them from the world and the dangers of sin while they had no such inclination or awareness in themselves. In a church full of folks on both sides of this issue, agreement can be found, and humble confession heard that man is utterly depraved. In his lost state, he has no love for God; he possesses nothing good in him; without faith he cannot please God and all he does is sin. He has no interest in salvation, no concern about obedience to God's commands ... (I will forego the endless list). Since all of that is so easily supported and clearly taught in Scripture, it is not difficult at all to find agreement that lost man is entirely selfish and self-indulgent - seeking and leading an essentially hedonistic lifestyle.

Nevertheless, when we who support ES simply echo the Scriptural basis for what we all ostensibly agree upon, we become archenemy "hyper-Calvinists!" But the term "hyper-Calvinist" is misunderstood and misapplied today, having been given an erroneous redefinition. Because of this, it is being tossed around rather carelessly (or perhaps strategically). It is not hyper-Calvinistic to testify of, or teach the sovereignty of God. Neither is it so to view and interpret other truths of God's Word and His workings in the past, present and future through the prism of this necessary, consistent, spiritual common sense. Finally, it is not hyper-Calvinistic - but rather wise indeed - to predicate our efforts and strategies in all phases of our lives upon the truth of this attribute of God.

However, it *is* most certainly hyper-Calvinistic to allow this truth to cause our thinking and actions to conform to a merely human or otherwise limited view of its profound affects and implications! Doing so leads to sinful disobedience and rebellion against

many of the remaining truths of God's Word. Accepting one truth - or some number of truths - to the exclusion or rejection of the remainder is to deny it all (Jam 2:10).

A bona-fide hyper-Calvinist assumes an uncaring, fatalistic posture toward the spiritual needs around him - his own, and those of others. He develops a casual view of God and His Word, eventually finding no value or benefit in expending any effort to apply it to his everyday life. He adopts a view of sin varying from simply dismissing it from consideration to total licentiousness - all because he understands God's sovereignty in election, but ignores or discards His holiness, righteousness, justice and so much more. In the process, he also sets aside his understanding of his own ungodliness and unrighteousness, and his responsibility and accountability to God.

An unsaved hyper-Calvinist may find himself in a dangerous trap: having enough intellectual knowledge of a portion of God's Word to prevent him from ever pursuing the remainder (not to suggest that further intellectual enlightenment achieves salvation). The saved hyper-Calvinist requires God's intervention in the same manner as every Christian who is either losing a struggle with godliness or is unaware that he is transgressing it. This may take the form of Christian brothers who love him enough to confront him with correction, admonishment, rebuke and/or discipline - or God may choose to directly apply discipline Himself, gaining His child's attention through various difficulties He may arrange.

In any case, there is a world of separation between the hyper-Calvinist on one side, and on the other, the one who, while maintaining ES on its various Scriptural pillars of support (God's sovereignty being but one), also understands, accepts and endeavors to fulfill his responsibility to God and His commands.

While the truly reborn of the Holy Spirit can be confident that their salvation is eternally secure (as I will clearly demonstrate), they do not shirk their responsibility to God and others by adopting an uncaring attitude rooted in the selfish, foolish and rebellious notion that nothing is gained or lost in obeying or disobeying God! A true appreciation for the crossing over from death to life (Jn 5:24; 1Jn 3:14) prevents such blasphemous disrespect for the gift of God paid for with Christ's blood! It is grossly unfair of the opposition to place us together with the bona fide hyper-Calvinist!

Here is an example which would be no different: There exists a doctrine which could justifiably be purported to belong to, and flow from the opposing view because it shares some of its "DNA" and could be considered a distant cousin. I have had the frustrating experience of debating this with a professing Christian who would not let go of it. According to this view, entrance to Heaven is barred for anyone who dies with any particular unrepented sin. If an otherwise saved person commits a sin and dies one second later (or whenever) without specifically repenting of that particular sin, he forfeits his salvation and goes to Hell!

That doctrine is as properly ascribed to ES opponents (while, we must assume, as extreme to their view and repugnant to them) as hyper-Calvinism is to ES proponents!

However, I have not encountered even one supporter of ES seeking to lump the opposition together with this false doctrine. And yet, unless and until the opposition is able to identify and establish precisely which and how many sins cause or prove lost salvation (they cannot), they remain at risk for this undeserved association.

Anyhow, it is time for them to cease redefining and mischaracterizing ES and its proponents, directing themselves instead to the task of justifying their own view. On that note, I proceed to undertake my own responsibility toward the same ...

THE DILEMMA

Concerning the security of our salvation (but limiting it to that alone misses the larger point), upon whom shall we *ultimately* rely? In whom is our faith - truly and *ultimately*? Let us agree that Scripture does indeed lay out both man's responsibility and God's empowerment and working. We must further agree that the interworking of these obligations is a mystery (yes, a rather frustrating mystery). We cannot know or understand the interaction of these two levels of responsibility in detail. Although it may be a cute compromise (though unacceptable psychobabble) to claim that we are *both* ultimately responsible - together, as a team of sorts - we know that this poignant question must be answered more honestly. And the answer is quite obvious.

Who *ultimately* is charged with responsibility for the security of our salvation? The unavoidable truth makes the opposition as uncomfortable as the question Jesus posed to the chief priests and elders in Mt 21:25. To reject ES, the answer must be one of silence. For if *God* holds ultimate sway, it cannot be argued that any will *lose* their salvation (*that's what God says!*)! But if *man* possesses ultimate control, then it is impossible to contend that any will *retain* their salvation (*that's what the opposing view requires!*)! If *anyone's* salvation is secure, it can only be so if it is entrusted to God (*that's what God says!*)! If the security of our salvation ultimately relies upon anything else, then *no one's* salvation is secure! Worse (unless we reject Scripture's view of man), in reality *everyone's* salvation is most certainly *insecure - guaranteed to be lost!* Then in essence, there is no such thing as salvation because it is necessarily temporary, never truly realized by *anyone* (*that's what the opposing view requires!*)!

Those who reject ES attempt to navigate around all this by establishing a performance test (obviously achievable in the effort of the flesh) which qualifies us to retain our salvation - from which we derive our own assurance (*this is beyond preposterous!*)! We are left to label this performance level "well enough." But then (if this flawed hypothesis were true), the same question arises once again! Who *ultimately* is charged with responsibility for our successful attainment of the acceptable level (whatever that is)?

Irrationally, the opposing view will confess complete reliance upon God while claiming personal responsibility for the performance required to satisfy Him, thus preventing themselves from slipping from the security of His hand into what we can only assume is a stronger grip. Apparently, Satan is able to out-armwrestle God! Actually, it is worse than that; they agree that Satan is *not* powerful enough to loosen us from God's hold -

only the sinner (who is weaker than Satan) can do so! (I know, it makes no sense to me either, but you will have to ask them to explain it.)

In any case, who established the performance passing grade anyhow - and where exactly are its requirements specified? And then - if the premise is accepted - we inevitably have the absurd rejection of the poor saved sinner who missed Heaven's eternal bliss by one-thousandth of a point (or whatever) - somehow saved no more!

Tying our salvation *or its security* to *any* level of human performance makes a mockery of the accomplishment of the cross! Doing so judges the work of Christ unfinished, and deems it common enough to be mixed with a further work of sinful, corrupt man to achieve its completion! Christ's suffering for our justification would essentially have been a monumental gamble, relying on some ensuing, unpredictable performance of untrustworthy man before its success could be ascertained and declared! This is an irrational hope, and in clear violation of Scripture! (Col 2:15, e.g.)

Even if we ignore the fatal flaw in the opposition's stance as exposed by the question of ultimacy raised above, their position allows (though God's Word does not) that not only may *some* particular saint become a hell-bound reprobate, but conceivably, *every* saint could eventually lose his salvation so that, in the end, *no one* is saved! Since *man* determines his eternal fate through choice and performance, God has no way of controlling that *anyone* will actually be saved! Christ's death then would have accomplished nothing beyond perfect obedience to the Father - *with no resulting benefit to any man!* Heaven would be eternally occupied by the Trinity alone - and the rooms Jesus prepared according to Jn 14:1-3 would go unused! The comfort and assurance of vs 1 would be false, and Jesus' promises in vs 2-3 would prove empty and void.

Ultimately, the basis for imputing Christ's righteousness to the sinner, to credit atonement for his sin in finalized actuality, to newly-create and declare a reborn child of God justified would no longer rest solely upon the propitiation of the Cross, but would be forced to await some required additional payment; some unspecified level of subsequent godly performance on the part of unsaved man who is dead in his sins! (Eph 2:1-5; Col 2:13; Rom 5:6-8!) The sure hope and promise which Scripture ascribes exclusively to Christ's death and resurrection would then be, at best, an uncertainty; such surety resting instead with those who are somehow moved (though spiritually dead) to complete Christ's unfinished work - and yet, having "finished" it, and *already declared eternally justified* (demonstrated further on), are forced to retain it through the proper exercise of additional mere fleshly power! May God forbid such blasphemy!!!

Scripture clearly teaches that obedience flows from saving faith - not vice versa! We find this in Rom 1:5; 16:26 and throughout Heb 11 (over and over, it states that obedience came "*by faith*"). This formula cannot be reversed! Attempting to manufacture saving faith out of fleshly obedience insults the gift of God, and transforms the grace of God into a work of man!

Salvation's security just does not fit any of the molds into which ES opponents attempt to force it. It is no more possible to earn its security than to earn salvation in the first place! The opposition realizes, of course, that salvation by works (or security by works) is utterly unsupportable, and to buttress their case by employing that line of argument immediately forfeits the debate. Therefore, it seeks not to be identified with such blunt (though accurate) characterization of its position.

When confronted however, they find it impossible to distance themselves from this fundamental requirement of their view. And this inability to hide from its unavoidable and obvious nature leaves them extremely uncomfortable. Thus, among much other wriggling and dancing and bobbing and weaving, they attempt to maneuver around this by claiming that we can reject or walk away from our salvation - but retaining it is not the result of works! (Yes, the opposing view presents many challenges to our patience!)

If it is possible to reject or walk away from (eternal!) salvation (Heb 5:9 - see this addressed under "Misunderstanding the 'ifs' of Scripture..."), is it not fair to say then that those who do *not* do so retain it through the exercise of some decision, some goodness, some *thing* (anything) of their own? Have they not done something which causes *God to allow them to remain saved* (outrageous!) while the others did not - even if it is merely the exercise of an autonomous free will choice? But if rejecting or walking away is *not* possible, then the obvious concession must be made: Those who retain their salvation do so of God's sovereign will and working! That, of course, paints God as unable or a liar because He failed to keep His promise to secure the salvation of the others!

Does this not expose a fundamental fallacy in opposing ES? Doing so requires man to do something which causes God to allow him to remain saved! Sheer lunacy! What exactly, in addition to - and obviously short of - the righteousness of Christ, will man dare bring before God and expect it to be found acceptable? Since when has God lowered the bar to accommodate man's profane, corrupt offerings? Where then is the need of Christ's sacrifice or the indwelling presence and working of the Holy Spirit or, for that matter, the very grace and mercy of God in the provision of His gift of faith?

The opposition then, has wrought a transmutation of God's role in the salvation of man: No longer is He a seeker of the lost (the lost no longer need God to do so; they save themselves by their own choice); He is now become an ogre seeking instead to monitor the performance of the saved - *and to rescind salvation from those who fail to measure up!* And this ogre must be constantly appeased (*for the sake of our salvation!*) with continual feedings of "adequate" godly performance and obedience (a blasphemous concept!) for the remainder of our fear-filled lives, lest we be abandoned to Hell - no better off (arguably, *worse off*) than those who were never saved at all! (And what then was the point and benefit of our "salvation" - and why did God waste His effort?)

The opposition attempts to reconcile all this by submitting that those who lose their salvation have only themselves to blame: If these ex-saints would simply have made righteous choices and led God-pleasing lives (as the still-saved do), their salvation would have remained secure! (Well, at least until some contrary choice or future failing)

Still, since no one is able to define the required “adequate” level of godly performance and obedience (Scripture certainly does not), our remaining time on earth is haunted by the terror of never knowing if we are actually still saved (violating Scriptural teaching)! It must be presumed that we hold our spiritual breath until Judgment Day, hoping we have been good enough! To summarize this point then, opposing ES just cannot avoid what we all agree is abjectly absurd: that salvation is by and of works; God’s hand is moved by the will and performance of man!

I challenge the opposition to intellectual honesty: If *maintaining* salvation is by works, then *salvation* is by works! Scripture does not separately assign responsibility for the attainment and maintenance (security) of salvation. These are equally the work of the Holy Spirit. Because this is so, God’s Word unequivocally guarantees eternal Heavenly citizenship for all who are *truly* born again (and though *Scripture* finds no need to, the fact that “born again” requires constant qualification as “true” in the Christian culture of every generation sums up the essential cause of the entire controversy).

The *reason* Scripture does not delegate responsibility for salvation’s security apart from that of salvation itself is because the security of our salvation is ... *our salvation!* Salvation’s eternal nature is one of its *inherent characteristics*, not a separate, subsequent achievement contingent upon anything beyond the new birth, or requiring a further work than the sole, profound, finished duty without which the new birth itself is unfounded! Separating salvation from its characteristics (security; eternity) is as impossible as separating water from its wetness! Water is wet because it is water! Salvation is eternally secure because it is salvation! How I could wish that predicating its security upon human choice, obedience and godliness would be seen for the utter foolishness (to state it mildly) and spiritual suicide that it is!

Salvation insecurity cannot deny that it completely reformulates God’s plan: Salvation by grace through faith becomes justification through works; the gift of God becomes an earned reward of man; and God’s promise to secure our salvation becomes a commanded duty and responsibility of the saved!

ES opponents entirely miss the role and significance of man’s “righteous” choices and “godly” obedience because they apparently fail to accurately assess their true “worthiness.” Whatever they amount to, we (ought to) know that earning and maintaining salvation is most assuredly well beyond their scope! Scripture does not allow for earning ES through performance which is “well enough” - and this should require no discussion. Scripture unashamedly teaches that no one can perform well enough - because God demands perfection! We cannot achieve that in ourselves. We are born in imperfection (sin) and we rely on Him to perfect us. We must acknowledge and submit to the obvious: *Regarding our salvation and its security*, God is only able to accept perfection! And the choices and performance of man will always fall short.

Since God has provided the means to achieve the perfect standard He demands, what is all the fuss about? Anything else we might offer Him for the purpose of attaining or

retaining our salvation deserves nothing more than to be spat upon! Why not simply approach God clothed exclusively in the righteousness of Christ? What seems to be the problem with this formula - *which God has arranged and insists upon*? What possible explanation is there for eschewing His provision and substituting our own? Since we (ought to) know that our own effort and righteousness can never propitiate God's righteous judgment regarding our sin, why do we seek to stake our hope of achieving and/or securing eternal life upon convincing God to accept the unacceptable?

To (attempt to) adjust His perfect standard to a level we are able to attain in the strength of the flesh is utterly insane! Anyone who has experienced the new birth and has a proper appreciation of it should know better! Furthermore, God's refusal and inability to accept anything short of the perfect model of His Son ought to provide great comfort and relief - and we should be abundantly grateful for this! If it were not so, what hope would there be in God's eternal promises? Heaven would be Hell in short order!

In this life, we all - like Paul - struggle to overcome sin (Rom 7:15-23). If we view ourselves honestly, and contrast our knowledge of what God has done for us with our behavior in light of it, we will each - as Paul - judge ourselves the worst of sinners (1Ti 1:16). Once more however, ES opponents use creative navigation to skirt the obvious. Though they concede that salvation requires God's drawing and enabling, ultimately the inscription on the trophy attributes the achievement to man's choice. And upon entrance to Heaven, a trophy for perseverance is awarded with a similar inscription lauding man's choices to live the holy and godly life God requires, thus enabling God to preserve man's initial choice for all eternity! Such impossible nonsense!

The opposition is so myopically focused in their effort to discredit ES that beyond the already serious error of ignoring the abundance of Scriptural teaching which refutes their view, they are (granting the benefit of the doubt) not noticing or (withholding the benefit) failing to concern themselves with the havoc they are wreaking. The Scriptures and affected doctrines will, of course, withstand the tumult unscathed - but the unsaved, the immature saved, and the spiritual growth, unity and orderly flow of Church life are unfortunately being profusely and adversely affected!

Failing to widen their focus, they are unable to see the emptiness of the arguments they offer. Consequently, they shamelessly submit such rejoinders as, "If performance does not matter, we are free to sin!" We are? Is God a liar? Is the Holy Spirit powerless to fulfill the work assigned to Him? Does Scripture misrepresent His role as it does, according to their view (as we have seen), that of Christ? Is the opposition not troubled by what their view requires; that Jesus' sacrifice was *not* once-for-all, that the Cross was *not* the complete and sole atonement for sin, that the Holy Spirit is *not* able to sanctify the saved sinner - and therefore and ultimately, that God and His Word are not true?

Next we hear, "If it is all of God, then what about my choice?" *Hey, what about God's choice!* See, this is what happens when the process of analyzing and resolving doctrinal difficulties starts with "me" instead of God! It sadly appears that a refresher in basic theology is needed: God is the eternal One; we are the created ones. He created

us; His choice preceded and supersedes ours. We would have *no* choice if it were not granted by Him! Yes, we do have a responsibility - but we can only fulfill it in Christ! And if we are in Christ, we will (*we must*) - because *God* sees to it and guarantees it! If we are not in Christ, we will not (*we cannot*)!

When “Christians” carry on lifestyles which Scripture ascribes to the lost, the conclusion drawn by the opposing view is half right (within the margin of human error): Such folks are unsaved. But the remainder of their analysis is wrong! These folks did not *lose* their salvation; *they never possessed it!* If they had, then there is no way to explain - unless Scripture is wrong again - how God failed to meet His responsibility and reneged on His promise to them!

In summary then, until and unless the lost undergo the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, they will never (they cannot!) perform a righteous act, think a righteous thought or make a righteous choice! The possibility of performing well enough to earn salvation (even if only to make the “right” choice) ought never to occur to anyone but the unsaved being courted by pious religion! Surely, the blessed recipients of God’s sovereign grace ought to know better! And once saved, we are no more charged with maintaining the security of our salvation than water is responsible for maintaining its wetness (as if either were necessary or possible)!

In any event, if the opposition objects to ES on the ground that it requires God to hold ultimate control (a silly and futile objection), how will they defend the charge that their view requires *man* to do so? It is embarrassing to watch them attempt to squirm around this. They do so by labeling man’s sovereignty over God as his “free will choice,” and offering arguments in support which posit human reason, otherwise logical, clearly opposite Scriptural truth. Somehow, if the transgression of Scripture and God’s sovereignty can be reduced to merely and only the surely logical and unavoidable (of course) truth that man has free will, and that he must therefore (of course) exercise it independent of God to choose and retain salvation or not, then there is (of course) really no violation - right? After all, man’s only responsibility for his monumentally prodigious eternal salvation is an insignificant, nebulous choice! God does all the rest, so we can still allow ourselves to say that “God does it all!” That should keep everybody happy, including God - right? Of course, none of that is right ...

THE SCRIPTURAL VIEW OF ES

The doctrine of ES, according to Scripture, is simply this: Salvation is *ultimately* - essentially and necessarily - *all of God*; at *His* pleasure - *always!* From its imputation to our souls, through sanctification, to glorification, and for all of eternity - it is *ultimately* all of Him! Because this is so, the *truly* saved are eternally secure. Thanks be to God that our salvation *and its security* are never *ultimately* contingent upon our own holiness, godliness, character, or choices! Who then would be saved?

The author of Hebrews provides us with the proper perspective in a profound reminder:

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that

*is, his body, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near to God with a sincere heart **in full assurance of faith**, (Heb 10:19-22)*

Now, if the basis of our security were our performance and obedience rather than the blood of Jesus; if it were left to us to represent ourselves before God rather than the great priest God has graciously provided, well then it would be perfectly understandable that folks are running around warning us that our salvation is tentative and insecure.

Peter also characterizes the security of our salvation in clear, easily-understood terms:

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴and into an inheritance **that can never perish, spoil or fade-kept in Heaven for you, ⁵who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.** (1Pe 1:3-5)*

Again, if we were inheriting perishable things rather than the imperishable salvation God has granted (1Pe 1:23), if all of this were predicated upon perishable means (1Pe 1:18-19) rather than upon what Christ has finished on our behalf, if we were responsible for the keeping of our salvation rather than its safeguarding in Heaven, if our weak faith and our imperfect exercise of it were responsible for successfully running the gauntlet of this world's obstacle course (in which we are our own greatest obstacle) rather than the promised and guaranteed shielding of God's very power, then, again, the great anxiety over the retention of our salvation would be logical and warranted.

However, salvation consists in the miraculous, supernatural, irrevocable, unchangeable, eternal work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration; the infusion of a new nature and a new life! It is originally all of God because no one seeks God or salvation - God seeks and saves the lost (Lk 19:10). And it continues to be, and always will be all of God because God is not foolish! He does not entrust to man *ultimate* responsibility for his salvation after the new creation is effected because He knows (as we must concede) that His time and effort would be wasted! Trusting this particular perfect work of His to the care of imperfect man would make Him an extremely unwise God (therefore, no God at all). Apart from *God* guaranteeing it - insuring the very perseverance He requires (Job 17:3) - the truly saved would be surely lost! How can this be denied?

You will have noticed repeated use of the qualifier, "ultimate." Surely we realize (again, with thanks and gratitude) that it can be no other way! God created all - He owns and controls everything! Whatever responsibility or free will He grants us, it is He who creates, bestows, owns and controls it! Everything we have, and ever will have has been freely received from Him (Jn 3:27). Why do we seek to explain some things as if they were not (1Co 4:7)? God can and will do whatever His pleasure wills!

However, no true child of God should respond to this truth by assuming an attitude of futile, fatalistic surrender leading to disobedience and rebellion. Yet, neither should he seek to circumvent it by attempting to usurp some portion of God's sovereignty. We are obligated to endeavor to obey all of God's commands - especially showing our love for

the lost by sharing the gospel with them as faithfully and effectively as possible. It is not our place to decide who should hear the message of reconciliation and who should not. We cannot know how God has designed our witness and other fruit-bearing efforts to accomplish His purposes. We only know that He desires and commands us to do so.

I could carry this on ad infinitum, but the point is this: If we are saved - and have a proper appreciation for our salvation - we will love God and will desire to please Him. We will know that He is trustworthy and we will obey Him. We will have a burning desire to share our experience and knowledge of Him with others - apart from any need to know any more than what He has revealed and commanded. We will not allow our knowledge that whatever God has willed will surely be accomplished - with or without our faithfulness - to cause us to shirk our duties and become spiritually lazy. We will neither demand explanations nor supply our own. We will delight ourselves in seeing Him glorified as He deserves. And yes, *He* will see to it that we accomplish what He requires of us, providing everything we need to do it! (2Pe 1:3; Phil 4:19; Heb 13:20-21)

All of the above is developed and supported further on. I simply desired to lay out the basics first - if not briefly, then at least in some logical flow. The bottom line? If we leave the mysteries alone, we find the peace and security God desires for us. When we tread in mystery's realm, we are forced to establish ourselves in God's place. Satan attempted to do that. If we are genuinely saved, we ought to be wiser than Satan.

THE OBJECTIONS

Virtually all who oppose ES begin with three assumptions, all of which are erroneous. First - as mentioned - if ES is true, then the truly saved retain a license to sin. Second - also mentioned - no matter how they hedge agreement that salvation is initially obtained *by grace through faith*, they insist that maintaining it is by *works*. Finally, ES is dismissed because it removes man's right to choose to be unsaved should a truly saved one ever so desire ("God will not force anyone to be saved against his will!").

Sadly, the time, energy and space consumed by this debate ought to be immediately recognized as wasted upon a simple examination of these presuppositions in light of even a most casual acquaintance with God's Word. Does Scripture really allow the possibility that the *truly* saved might exploit salvation's justification to sin wantonly? Does it make any Scriptural sense that the maintenance of salvation is attached to the independent character, godliness and choices of man? Are we merely studying too hard, or have we reached some level of insanity when we argue for the right to choose to be unsaved - *after we have experienced true salvation?*

No attempt to dismiss true ES manages to steer clear of these errors - because the opposing view makes that impossible! Since that view always begins with these assumptions, thus repudiating its *own* definition of ES, we never get an honest refutation of *true* ES! And I assure you that I have not misrepresented, exaggerated or in any way attempted to misstate the opposing view in ascribing to it the three premises above. If you hold the opposing view, you must honestly concede that you agree with

these assertions. If you are one seeking a conviction, ask those of the opposing view. Honesty compels them to confess that they maintain these claims.

The only disagreement is one which cannot be allowed: Though opponents of ES cannot deny that their view considers the maintenance of salvation works-related, once again they bristle at this justified and truthful characterization. Therefore, they avoid addressing this charge directly (because it is a lost effort) by attempting to convince us that salvation's security merely relies upon obedience to God; making right choices to live in holiness and godliness as the truly saved are called to.

They have identified the cart and the horse but they have the wrong one in the lead! Holy living is the *evidence* of true salvation, not a *condition* of its retention! That is why Paul, in opening his letter to the Romans with his usual doctrine-rich greeting, states in 1:5 that one of his ministry duties is to call believers, for the sake of God's name, to the obedience *which comes from faith*; that is, in gratitude for what God has done, out of appreciation and reverence for God, believers should be obedient to the eternally saving faith they already possess (2Co 7:1; Heb 12:28). As stated earlier, attempting the reverse (manufacturing faith from obedience) is as pointless as expecting to produce blood from a stone! And in any case, if man's disobedience was the cause of lost salvation, then the blame is clearly and squarely on man - so Paul's concern that God's name might suffer would be unfounded worry.

But godliness is an *inherency* of those reborn of God, not a *requirement* to be met afterward! Godly performance is guaranteed for the truly saved; *God* guarantees it! This is natural to the Holy Spirit who is imparted to us upon regeneration and indwells us thereafter for the expressed purpose of reminding, convicting, enabling and empowering us unto godly obedience! He is the ultimate sanctifier, not us!

However, since our old nature remains with us in this life, God's Word further guarantees that our performance will fall well short of perfection. Therefore, we (ought to) know better than to trust ourselves to maintain our salvation by our godliness and righteous choices because, once again, that would require the passing standard to be adjusted to meet man's ability to perform! Since the opposition insists that the saved are required and responsible to perform to some acceptable benchmark (even if that be their own invented criterion - though they have yet to specify it) or else lose their salvation, I label that works-related with a clear conscience!

In the final analysis, reconciling the opposition's view of man's role in obtaining salvation with their claim of his responsibility to maintain it afterward is quite perplexing and frustrating. First, when pressed, they struggle to articulate their precise view of how salvation is obtained. Attempting to nail them down elicits more uncomfortable dancing and dodging. This would be a bit humorous if it was not such a serious matter. They stutter and stammer because they claim that it results from man's choice but they do not really believe that; they know that is un-Scriptural. They only float that balloon because anyone they can convince to accept it becomes an easy customer for their flagship product: salvation insecurity. If the issue is pushed hard enough, they will eventually

abandon their “salvation by choice” claim and give in to the Scriptural teaching that it is all of God. Yet, that “concession” does not in the slightest bit mitigate their inexorable and passionate effort to unashamedly declare that man is responsible for it afterward; that some indefinable level of unsatisfactory performance causes it to be lost!

To quickly review these premises then: First, any intellectually honest interpretation of Scripture clearly precludes any *genuine* Christian from a cavalier attitude toward sin and disobedience. Scripture unambiguously and consistently associates debaucherous living and disrespect for God and His commands with those who are *not* saved! (1Co 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21; Tit 1:16) No legitimate teaching of ES includes a license to sin. Jude 4 warns us about false teaching of this specific type, and Gal 5:13; 1Pe 2:16; 1Co 6:19-20 provide further warnings. Next, the idea that maintaining salvation can be removed from the Holy Spirit’s responsibility and reduced to an effort of man is insincere and ludicrous. And finally, the preposterous notion that a genuinely saved Heaven-bound saint would, or even *could* choose to become unsaved again in order that he might instead experience eternity in Hell cannot be discussed in polite company.

So then, how have such obvious distortions of ES developed? Why is ES, an otherwise easily-understood concept, so confusing? I believe the answer is two-fold ...

First, the census of today’s “Christian” population is so heavily infiltrated with merely professing Christians (I believe legitimate Christians are, in reality, only a small percentage of those to whom Christianity is ascribed) that we do indeed have vast numbers of “Christians” living lifestyles of open and wanton sin. When some true Christians witness this and consider that the doctrine of ES allows those folks the assurance of Heaven, they are moved to a righteous indignation and anger.

But their response is misguided and in great error! Rather than tearing down the doctrine of ES, they ought to respond in whatever way God desires them to expose these “believers” as mere pretenders and/or bring them to a knowledge of the truth. Until and unless they are truly saved, they have no claim on Heavenly citizenship whatsoever! The honor and integrity of our holy and perfect God is not in danger or in need of rescue. Neither is the manifold wisdom of His [Plan of Salvation](#) (Eph 3:10-11).

God desires and intends for His true saints to enjoy the comfort and assurance of His *eternal* promise of their *guaranteed* future inheritance (2Ti 1:12; Heb 9:15; 1Jn 2:25; 2Co 1:21b-22; 5:5; Eph 1:13-14). This remains a masterfully wise blessing provided by a perfect and caring Father for His legitimate, dearly-loved children! Though illegitimate “Christians” may cause ES to *seem* foolish and dangerous, proclaiming that they have lost their salvation is not the solution. In fact, it only exacerbates the problem. Inventing a false version of ES in order to allow the true version to be identified with it so that both may be tossed on the trash heap is conspiratorial evil!

However, since contemporary culture is unable to recognize and appreciate true Christianity, it is understandable that true ES is either unknown or must be defeated. The quote from Mario Derksen above is just one example in a seemingly endless line of

evidence which proves that today's religious culture is thoroughly ignorant of what salvation is - and how it is effected. God Himself, His provision of salvation, the cost of this provision, and the eternal magnitude and significance of possessing it have been reduced in nature and stature to the limits of man's appreciation for things of this world! From man's view, they have become casual and mundane.

The second reason for this misrepresentation of ES is the lamentable and pandemic immaturity of today's otherwise genuine Christian culture; so much so, that it has become difficult to discern legitimate Christianity from its counterfeit. Individual and corporate spiritual growth, the development and appointment of local church elders (not board members, but Scripture's version), the discipling of new creations, the proverbial concept of iron sharpening iron, and a proper understanding and execution of the very life purpose of the individual Christian and the Church itself have all given way to the oxymoron of "comfortable Christianity;" mere periodic social gathering; "fellowshipping" for purposes which do not remotely resemble those modeled by the Church of Scripture!

The salvation "experience" has become the be-all and end-all. The "average" or "typical" individual Christian and local Christian congregation lack any burning desire to know God more, to grow in love for Him or His Word, to build themselves up in knowledge *for God's glory and purpose*, to see the lost glorifying God and His plan through repentance unto salvation, or to recognize, prepare for and become involved in the work of ministry! And though I am speaking of ministry work well beyond the necessary and commendable mowing of the church lawn or volunteering at the church supper, I am not referring to typical, full-time, vocational ministry. Although all Christians are full-time employees of God (including being on-call 24/7), relatively few are called to earn their living from this. Indeed, it is the very opportunity to so lucratively profit from the "work of God" which has so thoroughly corrupted it! (2Co 2:17; yet, Lk 10:7 is one example of the type and extent of "wages" to expect - and 1Th 2:1-13; 2Co 6:3-11; 11:7-9; 12:14-16a; Gal 6:9 describe the attitude we should maintain)

Furthermore, we are failing to take seriously the ambassadorship to which each believer is appointed for the stated purpose of ministering God's message of reconciliation (2Co 5:18-20). The Great Commission of Mt 28:18-20 has come to be exclusively reserved for "professional" overseas missionaries - and the employment of our spiritual gifts to administer God's grace as called for in 1Pe 4:10 is now left to those whose giftedness is either charismatic and flamboyant, or professionally developed and honed through academic achievement (as confirmed by some letters following their names).

It ought to cause us great and fearful trembling to consider how America, in particular, continues to escape God's hand of discipline and judgment (beyond what must be considered mild in view of the extent of our rebellious disrespect) when history has recorded over and over His devastating destruction of nations and peoples given over to seemingly less rampant debauchery than that which can be witnessed all around us each day! Condemning what God condemns has itself become condemned! More and greater sin continues to become "legal." It is time for the American Christian community

to wake up and repent; to humble itself before God and seek forgiveness - that He will renew in us the privilege of magnifying Him and making Him properly known!

With so many professing born-again Christians, where is the influence for Christ in families, workplaces, schools, communities, government, entertainment and all the rest? Yet, until there exists a proper influence of God's Word upon His people, there can be no hope that His people will have any proper influence upon the world! Eph 4:11-16 provides God's formula for the solution. It is time that we began to apply it! Until then, the Christian community will abide in the stagnant immaturity which elicits a scolding from the writer of Hebrews in 5:11-6:2.

And it is this immaturity which is one cause of the ES misunderstanding. By no means am I accusing all who reject ES of spiritual immaturity (a phase to be expected in every Christian's growth, by the way). However, an immature view of God and His [Plan of Salvation](#) - becoming more and more systemically entrenched in our Christian culture - is one explanation for how salvation has come to be so misunderstood and despised that the freedom to carelessly toss it about as any other temporary possession of man is undertaken by so many with shameless impunity!

THE INTELLECTUAL STRUGGLE

Let me summarize then, what I believe are the hinge points of the *intellectual* disagreement surrounding this issue. First, it is impossible to divorce it from the ultimate doctrinal mystery; one which cannot be resolved this side of Heaven: predestination; God's sovereign election. Second, the inability to understand another mystery - the interworking of God's sovereignty and man's "free will" - has caused the opposition to attempt to frame the discussion virtually entirely within the sphere of man's choice (and quite opportunely, their own assumptions regarding that), thereby excluding from consideration the *positional* nature of our salvation (developed below) once those choices, no matter how they are brought about and controlled, are executed. Though we cannot understand it completely - or even so much as to be humanly satisfied - the general relationship of God's sovereignty and man's "free will choice" must be acknowledged and accepted: Man is not in control - God is!

Nevertheless, I believe we have allowed ES - a doctrine which, as I have stated, is otherwise relatively easy to discern (both from the letter and contextual sense of Scripture) - to become mired in a conscious or subconscious effort to make sense of these others which must remain mysteries. The presence or absence of this effort governs our approach in gathering and processing the facts to achieve a conviction - and the direction of our approach makes all the difference.

Whether interpreting or understanding Scripture, discerning truth, seeking God's will, determining our responses to situations and others, attempting to grow in our personal relationships, or whatever else, it is essential that our starting point be with and from God's view, not ours. When we encounter and contemplate a difficulty, do we ask, "But then, what/when/where/why/how do I ...?" - hesitating to act until we understand (or worse, withholding obedience in other areas until we resolve the current dilemma)? Or

do we say, “Okay God, if it be your will show me what/when/where/why/how *You ...*”, and while we await clarification, step out confidently and fully in the faith He has given us in the areas we do understand? We do trust Him with the rest, do we not? Since we must, we obey first - understand later. The NIV conveys this sense in Philemon 6.

For example, prayer is another mystery to us. What affect does prayer actually have on our own lives, the lives of others, world events, etc.? Are we really able to pray long enough, hard enough, or sincerely enough to bring salvation to an unsaved loved one - or to accomplish any other change in anyone or anything, however insignificant or profound? How do we explain the “unanswered” prayer of the godly child of God who constantly and fervently prays for something most noble in nature - while the less profound, less faithful and less fervent request of a “less worthy” saint is “answered?”

We cannot begin to understand all of this. However, we do know that God calls us to pray (1Th 5:17; Eph 6:18; Col 4:2) and delights Himself in fellowship with us. We also know that we can and must trust His commands - and that He requires and deserves our obedience. So we pray. When we pray faithfully, we experience growth in our relationship with God and with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Our love for God and others increases. Our knowledge and appreciation of God and others is enhanced. We are more grateful to Him and others, and our unity is strengthened as we are drawn closer together. We experience greater confidence in our faith, comforting assurance of God’s promises, renewed strength to endure sufferings and trials, and a more profound sense of His presence and leading. We even find contentment when what we pray for does not turn out as we desire.

Perhaps that is all there is to prayer. But we need not understand any more than what God has provided on the subject to do what He has asked. And if someone should point out the theological or practical difficulties, we easily shrug it off and stay the course with confidence. We do not allow what we *cannot* know or understand to derail us from the path God has marked out for us - because that path is illuminated with the light of those truths which we *can* know and understand (Ps 119:105).

And so, when we have struggled our way to the center of some theological difficulty (such as ES), on the verge of breaking through some barrier to our understanding, do we allow God - who has brought us this far - to lead us further on? Or do we instead fall away in frustration at not being able to make sense of it all because where God is leading does not fit any of the possibilities our finite minds can conceive? Do we as much as tell God that He is lost and confused, and explain to Him how and where some of the pieces must fit, asking Him to get back to us when He has it all figured out? Or do we say, “Never mind, I will do it,” and proceed to assemble for ourselves the pieces He has provided, manufacturing from our own wisdom those we cannot find? And when we have reached a dead end, are we content to enjoy the blessing of what God has revealed and live in the light of it? Or do we attempt to pave the road beyond the limits of knowledge and understanding which God has disclosed?

In summary of the above then, it is my contention that we are able to establish and agree upon the answer to the ES question without a complete understanding of predestination and/or man's choice versus God's sovereignty. That is, the preponderance of evidence and teaching in God's Word, combined with individual and overall contextual sense, leads to a conclusion. I readily admit that this conclusion further complicates the already complicated effort to understand that which is not understandable. Perhaps we do ourselves a favor in complicating that effort enough to give it up - for we must not let go of what we do know in a futile attempt to resolve what we cannot. In a worldly analogy, it would be equivalent to forfeiting \$999,999.99 in an impossible effort to find the last penny to make it an even million.

Lastly, before we begin the detailed examination to follow, let us recognize and consider that there are only two possible answers to the question at hand: "Can someone who is saved ever become not saved?" It is a yes or no question. Therefore, it is possible to lay out the implications of each answer and to identify the tensions each causes, or seems to cause, with those areas and doctrines of Scripture which God has made plain to us; which ES proponents and opponents share a common understanding of, and confidence in. Which conclusion causes more tension; or more importantly, which one causes irresolvable tension? When we appropriately ignore those tensions which stem from the mysteries of God - because they introduce unhealthy distractions and fruitless pursuits of the truth - the picture becomes clear for us. Although this writing is partially and indirectly employing this analysis method, an exclusive commitment to this assignment is beyond the scope of our time, space and intention here. However, I urge you to consider and test it on your own to see where it may lead you.

THE PRELIMINARIES

Let us examine some preliminary considerations:

- 1) Certainly, we agree that nothing and no one beyond ourselves can steal or otherwise arrange for us to lose our salvation: Rom 8:38-39; Jn 10:27-29. No further discussion is possible with those who argue otherwise.
- 2) There cannot be a risk of losing it when we sin; that we are vulnerable to loss at those times - or that God will take it back as a consequence. *We will sin* - daily; thousands, millions of times in our lifetime! *We are sinners!* *We sin because we are sinners* - we do not become sinners *because we sin*, as if we could stop sinning and no longer be sinners! We know it; God knows it; Scripture tells us so! (1Jn 1:8-10)

This is what makes it so difficult to understand why the opposition stubbornly clings to a position which provides no support! Their only hope of solvency is to propose some level of sinning which is "normal" and "acceptable" for a saint - beyond which he somehow forfeits his salvation! Though that is impossible and absurd, we have already briefly encountered - and will explore more fully - the fatal blow to any such consideration: Forfeiting salvation requires the inconceivable invalidation and reversal of God's work of regeneration!

And aside from that, would God tease us with salvation - along with all the accompanying comforts and securities described in His Word - and then burden us with the curse of living in fear of our eternal lives, knowing we will sin? After supernaturally working in us without merit on our part, would He then leave us with the futile hope of preserving our salvation by avoiding sin, since we all know that the flesh will most certainly win its share of victories?

And drawing a distinction to ascribe lost salvation to a *season* of sin is likewise an arbitrarily-invented qualification. Many believers (most; all?) have gone, or will go through a “season of sin” (a relative term; therefore, another complication). Does this put *believers* at risk of eternal damnation? There is no Scriptural support for that!

When believers sin, especially if they allow themselves a “season of sin” - ignoring God’s leading and commands - they can and *should* lose their *confidence* in, or *sense of assurance* of salvation (1Ti 3:13 highlights the contrast). This is God’s intent and design! Just as transgression damages human relationships, fellowship with God is impaired as a result of sin.

Since a true believer cherishes this fellowship, this condition serves to cause him to take the necessary steps to return to a right relationship with God. However, this involves the *practical*, not the *positional* nature of his relationship (which cannot be affected). I will discuss this in detail further on, but for now, let us simply recognize that estrangement in a personal relationship may hinder its proper functioning (its *practice*; the *practical* element), but its *positional* nature can never be altered. A father and son who are “fighting” or not on “speaking terms” are still father and son.

The believer who finds himself “out of fellowship” with God due to sin is moved to seek restoration and reconciliation of his eternally-existing personal relationship with Him (1Jn 1:9), not to undergo a second regeneration by the Holy Spirit! Of course, God reserves the right to call such a one home if His wisdom so determines.

- 3) Virtually all who believe that salvation can be lost, rejected or walked away from maintain that the believer himself controls this - through the exercise of his free will choice. However, some refute Jn 10:27-29 by explaining that we can indeed be snatched from God’s hand due to our sin and disobedience. I will explain this later.
- 4) The logically next consideration is this: If salvation can be lost, can it be regained? If so, how many times can this be done? There is no Scriptural treatment or sense for any of this (with good reason)! If Heb 6:4-6 is held to prove that salvation can be lost (an assertion of the opposition refuted further on), it must be conceded to also prove that the lost cannot be re-saved! But if the once saved, now unsaved, cannot be re-saved, no Scriptural sense for their exclusion exists (beyond misreading the passage above). The very idea that we can place ourselves permanently beyond God’s reach by something we do

or a choice we make contradicts the sense of the whole of Scripture and the letter of it as well (Isa 59:1, e.g.).

Nowhere in Scripture can support be found for the notion that a repentant sinner will not be forgiven because he was already saved once and blew his chance! Sound Christian doctrine holds that a sinner is forgiven on the basis of Christ's shed blood upon true repentance of his sin. There is no provision for checking his file to verify that he was not previously saved! And God did not forget to include this provision in His Word - His Word clearly obviates it! So, the hypothetical ex-saved must be able to be re-saved. *But - none of this makes any Scriptural sense because ...*

- 5) Salvation requires the *supernatural work of God in re-creation* (2Co 5:17); regeneration *by the power of the Holy Spirit* (Tit 3:5) *based on the finished work of Christ!* (Jn 19:30) Will man, in his *finite* strength and wisdom, undo the work of the *infinitely* almighty and all-wise God? Will he bring into question God's wisdom in rebirthing him (Eph 3:10-11), causing it to be mocked instead (Num 14:13-16)? Will the power of the Holy Spirit be brought to naught, essentially having been wasted or misdirected? Will the finished work of Christ be proven to be somehow *unfinished* or insufficient? Will the comfort and assurance of the Scriptural promises that our salvation is kept securely for us *in Heaven*, shielded *by the power of God*, be proven wrong, trumped by the power of man's will, negated in the exercise of man's choice? Is God unable to keep His promises (1Pe 1:3-5; 2Ti 1:12; Col 1:5a; Phil 1:6)? Can the will of man actually overcome the sovereignty of God? Can one who is born of God (Jn 1:13), born of the Spirit (Jn 3:8), really find himself unborn again?

THE CAUSES OF THE DISAGREEMENT - AND SCRIPTURAL SUPPORT FOR ES

In light of the obvious conclusions drawn from the rhetorical questions just raised, how is it possible that such disagreement should still exist? One major cause is that many folks find themselves initially inclined toward the contrary view. This inclination is often engendered by one or more of the conditions discussed below. Some simply rest upon this preliminary and incomplete view, never pursuing the matter. Others allow their investigation to be encumbered with this predisposition, the strength of which varies from a significant bias to a firm conviction. Consequently, their quest for truth becomes a mission to "discover" Scriptural support for a preconceived premise, rather than the establishment of a premise from an objective, unbiased examination of Scripture.

Here then, are some of the most common stumbling blocks worth examining:

- 1) Misunderstanding the "ifs" of Scripture to be conditions of performance (which the saved must meet) rather than evidences of the salvation condition (which God promises to oversee and complete). These "ifs" are obviously practical exhortations; goals to aspire to - not empirical tests, else *no one would be saved!* (Jn 8:31; 14:15, 23; 15:10; 1Co 15:2; Col 1:22-23a; Heb 3:6b, 14; 5:9; 1Jn 2:3-6, 24, and many others - implicit and explicit)**

1Jn 2:1-2 puts this issue to rest. On one hand, John exhorts believers not to sin. But he has just declared in 1:8-10 that anyone who claims he does not sin is self-deceived and makes God out to be a liar - since it is God who plainly proclaims that everyone does sin. So, knowing that all will sin, John reminds believers where their faith ultimately lies - certainly not in their ability to perform, but rather in what Jesus has already completed, and what He and that work represent: the atonement for sin. Believers are not somehow responsible to pick up the mantle from Jesus and work out their own atonement for the sins committed after being born again. Nor is there some formula to be found in Scripture which defines when the threshold has been crossed from spiritual life back to death again. Only the reverse is discussed (Jn 5:24; 1Jn 3:14), and it says nothing about the possibility or criteria for a return trip.

The “ifs” raised in Scripture do not define absolute conditions (performance) required to confirm a premise (the salvation of a particular individual) - they are descriptions of ideal evidences which indicate a guaranteed condition. But the various evidences presented in Scripture are clearly understood to be incomplete and/or imperfect vis-à-vis even the strongest believer until that day when his glorification finally and forever ensures his separation from any further possibility of succumbing to sin.

When Scripture declares, for example, that God has reconciled us to Himself “*IF* we continue in our faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel” (Col 1:23), it is describing an evidence which, even in the ongoing life of the “strongest” true believer, will always be imperfect and incomplete. That is, though the believer does indeed possess legitimate faith and true hope, while he remains in this life his sin nature will cause him to display evidence to the contrary (sin). He will not fulfill these Scriptural “conditions” - he is hopeless to do so unless he completely rids himself of his sin nature (he will not and cannot). The true believer *generally* “continues in” and will, from time to time, exhibit a virtuous degree of establishment in and commitment to his faith. He will also, at times, display an effective and powerful testimony of steadfast hope in the Lord. But at the end of the day, he will not nearly fulfill these conditions in any manner which satisfies even himself.

Otherwise, I might seek volunteers from among the opposing camp willing to allow their salvation to rest in fulfilling this and all the other Scriptural “conditions” of retaining salvation. Yet, if such volunteers should concede the obvious (that fulfilling them perfectly is impossible), what becomes of the reasonable request to have them furnish the teachings of Scripture which define the acceptable failure rate?

Look, is it not obvious that one major reason why ES can reasonably be accepted is that the alternative is simply implausible? How will anyone fulfill the Scriptural conditions imposed on the true believer except by the power of God according to the will of God at the sovereign pleasure of God? Since God promises to sanctify us (1Th 5:23-24 and so many others), then who must be the target of the judgment and accusation should a true believer truly lose his

salvation? Must it not be God Himself? Of course it must! After all, who is the One *fully* responsible for providing it in the first place? And has He not conditioned all His promises concerning it upon Himself alone; upon His character and the efficacy of the work which enabled and guarantees it all, and which He has declared *finished*? So who will dare to prosecute the above indictment of God? Yet, this is what logically follows when we take that which is of God and attempt to remake it so that it is instead of man.

Every believer progresses in spiritual development and maturity as in numerous and various other aspects of the human condition. Will every believer who dies spiritually immature be declared to have lost his salvation on the basis that he has not fulfilled what the opposition sees as Scriptural conditions for its retention? On the other hand, will the mature believer arrogantly claim and rest in some self-achieved security on the basis of his advanced development? Paul did not; that is, he did indeed rest in salvation's security, but not on the merits of his exemplary application of spiritual truth. No, he found his security in the finished work of God on his behalf and in God's guaranteed promises to believers which are rooted in *that*, not predicated upon a justified sinner's performance. And Paul maintained this confidence while, *at the same time*, considering himself the worst of sinners (1Ti 1:16) and acknowledging that he had not yet attained his goal! (Phil 3:12-13a) How can that be? This is easily explained: When salvation's security rests where God says it does (with Him), we need not fear its loss by erroneously convincing ourselves (and others) that it rests where some men say it does (with us).

And what should we make of the Scriptural admonitions to be perfect and holy - even as God Himself? (Mt 5:48; 1Pe 1:15-16; 2Co 13:11; Heb 12:14 and more) Is it not easy to see the difference between practical exhortation and empirically-commanded requirement? Just as Scripture's calls to perfection and holiness are loving, motivational reminders and encouragements, so Scripture's warnings about tending to our spiritual health are practical exhortations, not dire warnings of eternal demise should we fail to meet some unspecified performance level. It is God who works in us (Phil 2:13; Heb 13:21), not ourselves who work to appease God - and God has promised to complete what He has started (Phil 1:6; 2Sa 23:5).

When we begin our investigation of truth from God's end, we either resolve it consistent with His view or, with peace and contentment which can only be ascribed to God and our secure relationship with Him, accept it as irresolvable. On the other hand, when we start our search from our end, we *always* resolve *all* the dilemmas - and we do so consistent with the limits of *our* wisdom and understanding, whether they are consistent with God's Word or not.

The work of God in Col 1:22 (re vs 23 above) is irrefutably presented as finished. And this work is clearly that which relates to our reconciliation with God, our very salvation. Scripture is replete with didactic passages which ought to preclude any argument over this matter. Just as clearly, that work is presented as finished *in* us on the basis of the work Christ finished *for* us.

Since that is so, is it not also obvious that verse 23 is a practical exhortation, not an empirical test? How could God allow Himself to declare the work of verse 22 completed if our fulfillment of verse 23 was a contingency? And what does the opposing view do with Phil 1:6; 2Co 1:21-22; 1Th 5:23-24; Eph 3:20b and all the rest (to follow)? And this is merely one logical presentation of just one aspect of ES which is found over and over in Scripture.

Look, it is *not* that salvation's security is precariously balanced upon a saved sinner's fulfillment of various conditions (yes, he is still a *sinner!*). Thank God this is so - because Scripture says, and our experience confirms, that every true believer must certainly fall far short! Quite tellingly, as touched on above, while it is obvious and agreed that no one will ever perfectly meet whatever conditions the opposition may propose, those conditions - the performance threshold dividing the retention of God's sovereign, supernatural, *eternal* work of regeneration from its undoing at the hand of His finite and feeble human creation - have yet to be defined. Why has this essential, begging component of eternal insecurity been neglected or avoided? Again, we can thank God that there is no such performance barometer! If there was, God would be forced to rely upon individual, potentially temporary saints to perform to some acceptable level (which even He is unaware of) in order to determine whether or not the regenerating work He did in them actually "took." *Man* would control and determine whether the eternal work of God was merely temporary or not.

A particular frustration to me in my discussions of this with honorable men of the opposing view is this: They will "win" the debate with a statement such as: "I simply refuse to discuss or consider how salvation can exist apart from holy living. The Scriptures call believers to holy and godly living." Fair enough! But, where do the Scriptures then teach that the consequence of falling short is losing salvation? And, of course, we see how quickly and easily we face the ever-present dilemma: How far short is too short, since we know that perfection is impossible? Beyond that, of course, is the larger question addressed by this writing in the whole: Where does Scripture *ever* teach at *all* that salvation can be lost for *any* reason?

As parents, we attend our child's baseball game, for example, and exhort him to get a hit, or successfully execute a defensive play. Yet, the best hitter will fail more than he succeeds, and the best defensive player will still commit errors. So, when the child falls short, do we renounce and disown him? Of course not - and yet, we continue to exhort him to a higher level of performance. Why? Does our exhortation carry a threat of expulsion from the family? What batting average must the child maintain in order to retain the family name? How many errors cut him off from his inheritance? Is not our exhortation merely a show of encouragement and support for a child we are proud of and who will always be ours? Oh, but what if the child strikes out or muffs a play because he did not follow our advice and direction? What if attempting to do it his *own* way led to his failure? Surely, we are then justified in kicking him out of the family, no? Look, do we not get it? The child is ours forever and always! We love him

through it all! Can a *child of God* expect any less of a commitment from a perfect, Heavenly Father? Of course not! (Lk 11:13)

Obviously, the “ifs” of Scripture are practical exhortations which, when successfully implemented, will manifest desired evidences which serve to indicate the salvation condition. True salvation is a condition which *must* and *will* produce various evidences. Some of these are more immediate, concise and obvious - others involve long-term growth, development and application. But clearly, no man will ever manifest them all, nor even any particular one in perfection. Salvation is not (*cannot* be) a premise which man strives to legitimize, prove and guarantee through some effort to attain to its conditions. Even Paul said, “Not that I have already obtained all this ...” (Phil 3:12). This ought to be obvious not only from the whole counsel of Scripture, but also from the overwhelming preponderance of specific passages, many of which are clearly didactic. But when man attempts to force the transcendent truths of a transcendent God into the boundaries of his finite intellect, violating the obvious is not an obstacle.

Scripture’s exhortations to Christian *practice* do not in any way imply that our *position* in Christ (item 6 below) is placed in abeyance (1Co 3:14-15). Just as a criminal investigator may not find all the evidence of a crime, and just as some may be damaged, weak, or missing altogether - yet, he proves his case with what is available - so the Christian, due to the still existing sinful nature, will not exhibit all the evidence of salvation described in Scripture. Surely we realize that we *all* fail *all* the tests when we acknowledge that the passing standard is nothing short of perfection! (And let us not fall for Satan’s deception that we are somehow within approaching distance or acceptable range!)

And though the evidence of our salvation which *can* be detected will neither be pure nor, at times, readily discernible, there must and will be enough to make the case (from *God’s* view - *man’s* view is limited, prone to error, biased and corrupted). This is not to suggest that God looks for proof to determine our salvation status (as if He needs it in order to know). God knows who the saved are because He is the One who saved them. The only evidence He needs to see is that which He supplies: a changed heart, and spiritual life where once there was death. God does not *respond* to the evidence; He is the *cause* of it! God does not save us *after He detects the evidence*; the evidence is manifested *after He saves us!* God does not save us *because we exhibit the fruit of the Spirit*; we produce such fruit *because He saved us!* (Mt 7:16-20) God does not secure our salvation as our reward for living holy lives; we live (imperfectly) holy lives because our salvation has been secured!

In any event, God *must and will* find proof of salvation in a *true* believer because it is inherent in, and flows from the work *He* did - *and continues to do!* (Phil 2:12b-13; 2Co 1:21-22; 5:5; Eph 1:13-14) We must concede, of course, that *no one* would be saved if salvation relied upon perfectly fulfilling any (let alone all) of these Scriptural “ifs!” Seeking to circumvent this by reducing God’s standard of perfection to a more reasonably attainable level in order that man

might assume and fulfill the responsibility for securing his salvation himself violates God's Word and insults the person and work of Christ! However, this error is *required* by salvation insecurity!

Ironically, a major purpose of John's first letter is to provide salvation assurance to the saved. Yet, if our salvation relied upon perfectly fulfilling, in their literal sense, the conditions he presents, we would have to assume that his intent was to *discourage* rather than encourage! Since even the godliest saint will always fall far short of Scripture's demands, we all share a common need of Christ's atoning sacrifice, God's loving mercy and grace, and the *permanence* of both the *regenerating* work of the Holy Spirit and His *maintenance* of that work!

Perhaps Heb 5:9 best illustrates the point: "*and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.*"

First, to avoid confusion, "once made perfect" does not imply that Christ was once imperfect. "Perfect" is employed here, as in many other places in Scripture, to speak of "completion." In the context of Heb 5, it refers specifically to Christ's obedience in completing His work of sacrifice required in His role as High Priest; thus, He became "complete" or "perfect" in that role. In this, the author is demonstrating Christ's superiority to the earthly high priests whose work and role were never completed.

Returning to our point, this verse teaches that the perfection of Christ allows Him to provide *eternal* salvation - but *seems* to condition that upon an implicit "if": *for all who obey Him*. Let us examine the possible interpretations:

- A) We obey Him, receive eternal salvation as a result, and must continue to obey Him in order to retain it.
- B) We obey Him, receive eternal salvation as a result, and retain it whether we continue to obey Him or not.
- C) We obey Him, but receive eternal salvation only upon our death or entrance to Heaven; therefore, there is no possibility of it being granted prematurely (in error) or losing it.
- D) We receive eternal salvation, obey Him as our chosen response, but lose it if we later choose to respond differently (disobey Him) because the responsibility lies with us, God's justification of us awaits and relies upon our continuing response, and eternal salvation is not guaranteed.
- E) We receive eternal salvation, obey Him as the natural result, and cannot lose it because the responsibility lies with God, His justification of us is complete and final on the basis of Christ's atoning sacrifice, and He guarantees our salvation.
- F) We do not obey Him, but receive eternal salvation anyhow.
- G) We receive eternal salvation, but do not obey Him.

Okay, starting from the top: Immediately, the first three share two initial errors: First, no one obeys Him. No one obeys Him perfectly *after* salvation - and no

one obeys Him *at all* prior to salvation! Theoretically, the saved *are* able to obey Him perfectly (since the power of the Holy Spirit is available to them), but Scripture confirms what we all know through experience: we will not - and anyone who claims that he does is a liar (says God's Word)! Second, earning salvation through obedience is, by definition, a salvation of works. Beyond Scripture's direct rebukes of such a notion, salvation by works is untenable on the basis that God's Word provides no direction whatsoever as to how much obedience or how many works of which types earn salvation. In addition, salvation by works must be dismissed out-of-hand because it relegates the necessity and purpose of the cross to unspeakable blasphemy.

We can eliminate the first three based on the above alone, but for further clarification: (A) would allow something eternal to become temporary; lost. (B) would arguably be true if it did not contain the two errors already mentioned. We do, in fact, retain salvation whether we obey or not, but not with the attitude such language conveys. Salvation precludes a commitment to disobedience or, less harshly, a lack of concern regarding it. No saved person will always obey, but neither will he entertain the notion that obedience is irrelevant.

(C), (F) and (G) are included merely to fill out the list of logical possibilities. (C) contains the first two errors, and its provision is hopelessly inane - as are (F) and (G). These require no further consideration.

(D) denies the supernatural complexion of God's work in salvation, eliminates the role of the Holy Spirit, supersedes God's will with man's choice, illogically attaches a contingency to something eternal, and directly violates an abundance of Scripture; most obviously: *God* is responsible for our salvation (before and after), justification rests upon Christ's finished work on the cross, and God most assuredly does guarantee our salvation.

(E) is the only possibility which expresses the Scriptural view without error. ES opponents are stuck with (A) or (D).

Though Heb 5:9 is an example of an *implicit* "if" of Scripture, analyzing any of the *explicit* "ifs" must return the same result if Scripture is faithful to itself and God is true. Look, this verse states that what Christ provides is *eternal* salvation! Eternal salvation is *eternal!* What more needs to be said? Even if it were true that the granting of eternal salvation hinged upon something of man, to rescind it afterward - for *any* reason - without eliminating or changing the meaning of the word "*eternal*" is impossible! Can *eternal* salvation really be granted on a contingent basis? Can it actually expire or be lost? Why does such a simple concept cause such confusion?

Now, the nature of this issue will naturally have us examining the NT more than the OT - since this doctrine cannot be fully appreciated apart from the NT fulfillment of Christ's role as prophesied in the OT; that is, until the work of salvation was completed, the notion of salvation was only ambiguously grasped - and its eternal nature was understandably a foreign concept. (Yet, Job's

declarations regarding his Redeemer and other eternal considerations remain an amazing testimony to the Holy Spirit's inspiration of that book - and of God's presence with, and supernatural infusion of wisdom in Job!) But here is how the OT states Heb 5:9:

Ps 37:28 For the LORD loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones. ***They will be protected forever,***

Of course, as already pointed out - and as we will see in exact detail further on - the opposition argues that the Lord will only forever protect those who are saved *IF* they are faithful. And, as we have already seen and will explore more fully, if that were true, Jesus could have spared Himself all the humiliation, persecution, and suffering unto death - *because no one would then be saved!* It is impossible to even begin constructing all the ancillary doctrines required if salvation insecurity were true. Where will we find - as the foremost need - Scriptural treatment of what "faithful" means vis-à-vis the retention of our unmerited, freely-received salvation? How does Scripture reconcile the *temporary* bestowment of God's *eternal* grace and mercy? Can eternal salvation truly be reduced to a program with some sort of trial offer?

2) Erroneously ascribing past salvation to someone who now claims, or appropriate judgment concludes, that he is *not* saved (Mt 13:1-23; 1Jn 2:19; 2Jn 9; Lk 8:18).

Although 2Co 6:14 calls us to make judgments concerning the salvation status of others, we must realize that their accuracy can never be assured. Some who hold the opposing view will state with downright certainty that they positively know that someone who is now lost was once absolutely saved (thus, they lost their salvation)! However, the greatest effort of the godliest Christian can never escape human fallibility. The best we can achieve is a tentative, potentially imperfect judgment based on the evidences described in Scripture - as accurately as we can discern and interpret them. God, on the other hand, pronounces and executes absolute and final judgment! He alone knows the heart of man (Heb 4:12-13). He cannot be deceived by the unbeliever, nor will He overlook the meek and humble true believer.

No matter how much genuine emotion is displayed or how great an initial spurt of interest results (Mt 13:5-7), God alone knows who truly belong to Him; those who are His legitimate children and are under His protection. And actually, it is usually not the unbeliever who sets out to deceive anyone about the genuineness of his spiritual rebirth anyhow. He is in no position to understand or evaluate it - and would not (or *should* not) be able to get away with faking it.

Much of the fault lies with the modern Christian culture. The gospel message (Tit 1:9), its call to true repentance (Mt 3:8; Acts 26:20b), obedience (Jn 14:15) and holy living (2Co 7:1; 1Th 4:7; 2Pe 3:11, 14; Eph 4:1), and the spiritual works which accompany true faith (Jam 2:14-22) have been greatly watered down or eliminated altogether. And no one seems concerned with inspecting fruit (Mt 7:20) or evaluating evidence (2Th 1:3-5). Combine all that with natural

human excitement to see new births into the family and we have a climate where misjudgment or the omitting of proper discernment easily occurs.

So, an unbeliever has an emotional experience at church or some Christian event or wherever and is welcomed into God's family, informed that he is now saved! Whether or not he actually understands or has truly experienced this is ignored. He is briefed on all of the benefits, but little, if any, of the responsibility. The welcoming committee has fulfilled its duty and this brand new "child of God" is left to fend for himself. Meanwhile, another checkmark is added to the tally of souls reached for Christ - to be reported in the next church bulletin or ministry newsletter. From the human sense, an opportunity was just missed. This individual was willing to give audience to, and perhaps receive the truth. A "teachable moment" was passed up because it was easier to simply welcome him. That requires a lot less training, eliminates the investment of time and effort, and involves far less responsibility.

Consequently, a large portion of the need to account for folks who have "lost their salvation" results from improperly ascribing salvation to them in the first place! Much of this would be prevented if, as the Scriptural example of the early church teaches, we were constantly increasing the pool of mature members who are able and willing to take the newly "saved" under their wing. It is not that this would save the merely professing believer. Rather, it would identify their need of evangelization and weed out the disinterested. There would be far less false "decisions for Christ" reported and thus, less need to explain how and why they proved false.

Compounding this problem is another disappointing contemporary phenomenon: The sport or movie star, or other celebrity who experiences a momentary brush with religious emotion is fawned over by the media and thrust into the spotlight by "Christian" organizations seeking publicity and benefit. Even in our godless culture which recognizes and understands Christianity less and less, the opportunity for financial profit in the sagas of popular headliners who "find religion" still remains.

We have heard of many famous folks who have "become Christians." If these folks were truly saved, we would expect that their pastors and other close Christian family would disciple and counsel them before sending them forth to represent the gospel so inaccurately. Generally, their representation of Christ and their salvation experience is an embarrassment - and much of it is done with their pastors and fellow church members alongside!

This point is epitomized by my most recent encounter with a superstar Christian. A church pastor happened to mention to me that Ray Lewis, a linebacker for the Baltimore Ravens NFL team who has had a "troubled past," now claims to be a Christian. I had been unaware of that, but just a few days later I was in a public library working on this very writing when a 2-month old copy of Sports Illustrated which had been abandoned nearby caught my eye (the November 13, 2006 issue). The cover picture was of Ray Lewis, but it was

the article's headline, "The Gospel According to Ray Lewis," which I could not resist. If you have not read it, you may find it worthwhile to do so.

As with most of these testimonies, the article is void of even the slightest hint of the Holy Spirit's regenerating work or presence. Nevertheless, because "religion" is still considered cultured, intriguing and/or cute, the secular media, among others, still enjoy and benefit from providing us with these glimpses of the rich and famous.

During the recent deplorable saga involving Don Imus, I witnessed an interview with Charles McCord, Imus' right-hand man and on-air partner throughout his career in radio. Notwithstanding the prevalence of this sad phenomenon and my familiarity with it, I was nonetheless quite taken aback when McCord was identified as a "born-again Christian!" How exactly does a born-again Christian participate in such a reprehensible undertaking as the Don Imus show? The answer is quite obvious: He cannot and does not! The identification of McCord with Christianity, in all likelihood, must be false! Whatever virtue or redeeming value some may attach to the goings-on of Imus and his show, we must realize that such attachment can be applied only from a worldly view - for it is readily apparent that none of it originates or flows from any concern for honoring, obeying or being led by God or serving His purposes.

And once again, we are left to wonder: Where are the elders of McCord's local church and the remainder of his church family? What have they to say to him about his claim of salvation in light of his participation in such ungodliness? If consistent with what is sadly typical of the Christian culture of our day, the answer is: nothing. In fact, they may actually encourage him; they may enjoy rubbing shoulders with such "celebrity" - proudly boasting of their association with him (and therefore, Imus)!

True Christians find it quite unsettling when confronted with examples of born-again Christians such as these. And this has spawned an even worse and more troubling trend. We see more and more "Christian ministries" marketing themselves in their advertising efforts by including promotional appearances and endorsements from representatives of the rich, famous, superstar and otherwise politically or financially powerful communities. It does not seem to matter if, or how deeply these folks have been influenced by the Holy Spirit. The only consideration is the desired influence they will add to the ministry's effort to promote itself or raise funds or whatever.

When news circulates that one of these famous folks has encountered God, it invariably triggers a frenzied assault by the "Christian ministry community" as a morsel encountered by a school of piranhas! I have witnessed this first-hand during a short stint of ministry to one of the professional sports communities. One of the ministry leaders was thrilled to announce to us that he had landed a commitment from one of the "big names" to have a Christian memorabilia card commissioned. There was no discussion or evidence of any real testimony that

the Holy Spirit had done a work in the life of this famed star - just the vain celebration of adding another big name to the card collection!

This is the type of fraudulent abuse of the Christian label which provides great pause for the righteously indignant true Christian who is justifiably concerned that God and His [Plan of Salvation](#) are being misrepresented. But again, our response must be supported in Scripture and flow from our faith in God. Attempting to fill the role of the Holy Spirit in an effort of our own is not only certainly doomed; it will only make matters worse. Anyhow, when these high profile "Christians" subsequently make headlines of a different sort - reflecting behavior reserved for God's enemies - it is ludicrous to attempt to cover all of that under the "lost salvation" umbrella.

Finally on this point, it is not a "cop-out" to claim that all who "prove" by their actions (or simply state for themselves) that they are not now saved *never* were saved. The opposing view sees this argument as specious, but it is not; that is what 1Jn 2:19 teaches! Barnes' Notes provides a thorough and illuminating treatment of the issue:

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. (KJV)

[They went out from us] From the church. That is, they had once been professors of the religion of the Saviour, though their apostasy showed that they never had any true piety. John refers to the fact that they had once been in the church, perhaps to remind those to whom he wrote that they knew them well, and could readily appreciate their character. It was a humiliating statement that those who showed themselves to be so utterly opposed to religion had once been members of the Christian church; but this is a statement which we are often compelled to make.

[But they were not of us] That is, they did not really belong to us, or were not true Christians. ... This passage proves that these persons, whatever their pretensions and professions may have been, were never sincere Christians. The same remark may be made of all who apostatize from the faith, and become teachers of error. They never were truly converted; never belonged really to the spiritual church of Christ.

[For if they had been of us] If they had been sincere and true Christians.

[They would no doubt have continued with us] The words "no doubt" are supplied by our translators, but the affirmation is equally strong without them: "they would have remained with us." This affirms, without any ambiguity or qualification, that if they had been true Christians they "would" have remained in the church; that is, they would not have apostatized. There could not be a more positive affirmation than that which is implied here, that those who are true Christians will continue to be such; or that the saints will not fall away from grace. John affirms it of

these persons, that if they had been true Christians they would never have departed from the church. He makes the declaration so general that it may be regarded as a universal truth, that if "any" are truly "of us," that is, if they are true Christians, they will continue in the church, or will never fall away. The statement is so made also as to teach that if any "do" fall away from the church, the fact is full proof that they never had any religion, for if they had had they would have remained steadfast in the church.

[But they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us] It was suffered or permitted in the providence of God that this should occur, "in order" that it might be seen and known that they were not true Christians, or in order that their real character might be developed. It was desirable that this should be done:

- a) in order that the church might be purified from their influence—compare the notes at John 15:2;
- b) in order that it might not be responsible for their conduct, or reproached on account of it;
- c) in order that their real character might be developed, and they might themselves see that they were not true Christians;
- d) in order that, being seen and known as apostates, their opinions and conduct might have less influence than if they were connected with the church;
- e) in order that they might themselves understand their own true character, and no longer live under the delusive opinion that they were Christians and were safe, but that, seeing themselves in their true light, they might be brought to repentance.

For there is only a most slender prospect that any who are deceived in the church will ever be brought to true repentance there; and slight as is the hope that one who apostatizes will be, such an event is much more probable than it would be if he remained in the church. People are more likely to be converted when their character is known and understood, than they are when playing a game of deception, or are themselves deceived. What is here affirmed of these persons often occurs now; and those who have no true religion are often suffered to apostatize from their profession for the same purposes. It is better that they should cease to have any connection with the church than that they should remain in it; and God often suffers them to fall away even from the profession of religion, in order that they may not do injury as professing Christians. This very important passage, then, teaches the following things:

- 1) That when people apostatize from the profession of religion, and embrace fatal error, or live in sin, it proves that they never had any true piety.
- 2) The fact that such persons fall away cannot be adduced to prove that Christians ever fall from grace, for it demonstrates nothing on

that point, but proves only that these persons never had any real piety. They may have had much that seemed to be religion; they may have been zealous, and apparently devoted to God, and may even have had much comfort and peace in what they took to be piety; they may have been eminently "gifted" in prayer, or may have even been successful preachers of the gospel, but all this does not prove that they ever had any piety, nor does the fact that such persons apostatize from their profession throw any light on a question quite foreign to this-whether true Christians ever fall from grace. Compare Matt 7:22-23.

- 3) The passage before us proves that if any are true Christians they will remain in the church, or will certainly persevere and be saved. They may indeed backslide grievously; they may wander far away, and pain the hearts of their brethren, and give occasion to the enemies of religion to speak reproachfully; but the apostle says, "if they had been of us, they would have continued with us."
- 4) One of the best evidences of true piety is found in the fact of continuing with the church. I do not mean nominally and formally, but really and spiritually, having the heart with the church; loving its peace and promoting its welfare; identifying ourselves with real Christians, and showing that we are ready to cooperate with those who love the Lord Jesus and its cause.
- 5) The main reason why professing Christians are suffered to apostatize is to show that they had no true religion. It is desirable that they should see it themselves; desirable that others should see it also. It is better that it should be known that they had no true religion than that they should remain in the church to be a burden on its movements, and a reproach to the cause. By being allowed thus to separate themselves from the church, they may be brought to remember their violated vows, and the church will be free from the reproach of having those in its bosom who are a dishonor to the Christian name. We are not to wonder, then, if persons apostatize who have been professors of true religion; and we are not to suppose that the greatest injury is done to the cause when they do it. A greater injury by far is done when such persons remain in the church.

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The reluctance to accept this often results as follows (for example): A man partners with another in business absolutely convinced the other is a believer. This other one eventually demonstrates that he is *not* saved and perhaps the first man and his business suffer harm as a result. Rather than admitting he misjudged the status of the partner originally or - particularly if that judgment was undertaken with great care - failing to grant God His right to allow the

misjudgment for purposes unknown, the first man arrives at the conclusion that the partner lost his salvation.

Applying the assignment mentioned earlier: Which causes irresolvable tension with the text and sense of Scripture: deciding that the partner lost his salvation, or that the previous judgment was wrong? The protest to this will include all the evidence “proving” that the original judgment just had to be accurate but the truth is we know this is not so! We cannot read the heart as God does. All the evidence we weigh is external - just like that of the Pharisees (Mt 23:25).

And this cuts both ways. Because of the neglect of discipling and the lack of emphasis on individual Christian growth and maturity, it is easy and tempting to conclude that someone who *is* saved is not. Someone who appears to have “lost” his salvation may simply be exhibiting a dysfunctional, non-age-appropriate version of it. I am embarrassed by the immature faith I displayed after my early years in Christ (though if I am still here, I will probably be disappointed when I look back at my current version 5 or 10 years from now).

3) Failure to consider the whole of Scripture when difficulties are encountered (Mt 10:22b/24:13; Heb 6:4-12; 10:26-29, 36; 2Pe 1:10-11; Gal 5:4; 1Ti 1:18-19; 4:1).

Many of the opposing view are commendably sincere in their seeking of the truth in this matter. Some however, have tossed aside or simply let go of previous study and conviction in order to strengthen their grip on their desired view of this issue.

For example, let us briefly examine another doctrine: We know that Christians are not immune from sin. In fact, we are assured in 1Jn 1:8-10 (and elsewhere) that Christians will indeed sin. Therefore, when the same author in the same book (3:8-10; 5:18) states that Christians will *not* continue to sin, we are able to easily and quickly reconcile the truth we know with John’s inspired, intended point (that the truly saved will not live *lifestyles* of sin; that their lives will not be *characterized* by continual, wanton sin unaffected by conscience).

And yet, there are “Christian” denominations which teach that once we are saved (after a further unsupportable “second work of God’s grace”), we are finally and completely sanctified - never to sin again! In opposition to an abundance of direct teaching from God’s Word - and the clear sense of the whole of Scripture - they have created an entire doctrine from a few isolated verses taken out of context.

In the same way, 1Co 9:27 is said to prove we can be disqualified from God’s promises after we are saved - it does not. And Rev 3:5 is said to prove that some “ex-believers” will have their names blotted out of the book of life - likewise, it does not (explained further on). These two passages, and many more which are cited, no more teach that salvation can be lost than the two passages quoted from 1John teach that Christians do not sin.

Accepted hermeneutics (Scriptural interpretation, explanation) seeks didactic (teaching, instructive) passages to establish doctrine. There are no passages of Scripture which *teach* that salvation can be lost - only isolated verses which seem to present difficulty for the ES position before studied reconciliation.

Absent didactic passages to the contrary, it is not inappropriate to establish doctrine from what is available in such verses or from an overall Scriptural sense, though this is done in rarity and demands great and sober care. The doctrine of the Trinity is such a doctrine. However, there are numerous didactic passages from various of the inspired authors which teach ES (1Pe 1:3-5; 2Pe 1:3; Jn 10:27-29; 14:2-3; Rom 8:28-39; Phil 1:6; 2Co 5:5; 2Co 1:21-22; Eph 1:13-14; 2Ti 1:12; Heb 6:17-20; 7:25 and so much more!). Building a doctrine from isolated verses which cannot be honestly stated to *teach* it while there exists an abundance of Scripture which teaches the contrary is irrational!

Although many “problematic” passages are cited, Heb 6:4-8 and 10:26-29 are the most predominant - employed in virtually every effort to dismiss ES. Reminded that our present consideration is the failure to consider the whole of Scripture when faced with such “difficulties,” let us consider these “problems.”

First, from a quick glance, if ES was not addressed so extensively in Scripture, if the true sense of ES could not be confidently ascertained from the abundance of Scriptural treatment of the issue, if the overwhelming spiritual logic which simultaneously confirms ES and refutes the opposing view were not available, then perhaps the confusion might be understandable. However, it is precisely the attempt to reconcile these passages apart from the influence of the remainder of God’s counsel which causes them to appear problematic.

I will not provide a comprehensive exposition of these verses here. There are various commentaries, numerous books and studies and, of course, a wealth of internet offerings for those who desire an exhaustive presentation. I will simply propose some avenues of thought to help place them in proper perspective.

The opposing view sees these passages as “smoking guns;” absolute “proof” that salvation can be lost. However, if we view them in light of the remainder of God’s Word, the offerings below are far more reasonable than their alternatives. In reality, one great cause of all the controversy is the perceived opportunity (and ensuing attempt) to turn these passages into proof texts. Another is the seemingly unparalleled and extreme over-examination and microscopic dissection of each and every phrase, word, jot and tittle of the original text - driven by the hope that in these passages there may finally be found the treasure the opposition seeks!

If you investigate this for yourself, you will find that keeping pace with the scholarly disagreement surrounding these verses becomes overwhelming and counterproductive. It is not unlike the frustration experienced by a trial jury when “expert” witnesses are paraded to the stand. The “experts” for each side interpret the evidence and circumstances in diametrical opposition to the other!

Of course, we immediately encounter the convenient argument that the New Testament was written to believers; therefore, these passages obviously and clearly state that believers can fall away and lose their salvation. Nonsense. Since when have we determined that the entire New Testament is addressed exclusively to believers? With these particular verses, centuries of debate among the experts has yielded no consensus as to whom exactly the author is referring (and the word studies and arguments offered as proof for all the possibilities are the epitome of the “expert witness” dilemma mentioned above!).

Further, even more so than the remainder of the New Testament which was/is addressed *primarily* to believers while aiming its truth at mere professors and outright unbelievers as well, the book of Hebrews is clearly appealing to Jews of every spiritual and religious state; at every step of the process of considering the “old religion” and the new, covering the numerous possible evaluations and conclusions they might reach, and anticipating the variety of logical responses which might result. There is perhaps more mingling and switching of target audiences in Hebrews than in any other New Testament writing. Determining the author’s intended target and true meaning just cannot (and therefore, should not) be done apart from the light of God’s remaining revelation.

In any case, it is perplexing that the opposition chooses to place so many of its eggs in these types of baskets when, for all the necessary Scriptural gymnastics, such weak and inconclusive support for their view results. There are telling contrasts between the tasks of establishing the case for ES versus that of the opposition: The ES effort is one of great ease; the opposition’s involves great difficulty. ES passages are unambiguous and didactic; at best, those employed by the opposition provide vague, controversial and tangential support for their view. Scripture appealed to by ES provides excellent and strong support; the opposition’s appeals are comparatively empty and leave us nonplussed. ES support is systematic and whole; the opposing view consists of isolated offerings lacking integrity.

Returning to these passages, they contain no language or phraseology empirically establishing that true believers and lost salvation are in view. If the author intended to warn us that we could lose our salvation, why did he not just say so? Why beat around the bush with “once enlightened,” “tasted,” “shared,” “partakers,” “knowledge of the truth,” and such? If he meant the truly saved, he could simply have said so! And what about “fall away” (and the battle over whether “if” belongs there or not)? If this is lost salvation - given the critical nature of the matter - why the intrigue? Here, as in every opportunity to directly state the opposing view unambiguously (Rom 6:11-14; Mt 18:15-17; 2Th 3:14-15), we find Scripture strangely passing up the opportunity! Why might that be?

Next, the “impossibility” of 6:4 is defined in vs 6 as that of being renewed or brought back to *repentance*, not salvation (the word used there is the same one used for repentance throughout the New Testament - *metanoia*). The choice of wording which I just criticized above as confusing and insufficient for a discussion of salvation makes abundant sense if they are instead referring to,

and graphically describing elements conducive to repentance. And the all-encompassing nature of vss 4-5 serves two purposes: First, it leaves no doubt that the atmosphere and opportunity for repentance were abundantly developed - well beyond sufficiency. Second, it leaves no room for sympathy toward the one who, in spite of such provision, would fall away in preference to a life of sin.

If the saved and their salvation are being addressed, would we not expect the author to have used the word *salvation* instead of repentance in vs 6? After all, if salvation insecurity were true and we were to admonish one deemed to be saved, would we warn him against undoing his *repentance* - or losing his salvation? One very reasonable interpretation therefore, is that those described in vss 4-5 are folks who come to the brink of repentance and - with condemning knowledge and assessment of the gospel and Christ Himself, having been enlightened, having tasted, sampled, witnessed and shared in the corporate presence and working of the Holy Spirit while temporarily associating with the saints - decide to continue living in unrepentant sin!

The “impossibility” of vs 4 consists in the absence of any additional evidentiary or sensory persuasion unto repentance! If these folks balk at repentance having such knowledge and experience, where is there any other hope for them? Since the road to salvation must pass through repentance, what will persuade them to consider repentance ever again? They have weighed all there is and found it undesirable!

10:26 is similarly explained. If, armed with the truth, someone makes the deliberate choice to reject the atoning sacrifice of Christ and continue in sin, what other means of reconciliation remains for him? Since there *is* nothing else, he merely awaits the Judgment (vs 27). If, on the other hand, these passages have salvation in view, then it must be conceded that someone who loses his salvation cannot be saved again. Given the proposition, they plainly state as much. That makes no sense, of course - but allowing multiple salvations of the same soul makes even less.

Another interpretation offered is that the author is employing a literary and logical technique; postulating an impossible dilemma (losing salvation) to introduce, describe or assert an equally impossible course (being saved again). So, as a matter of solemn exhortation, the author is merely stating that *IF* a true believer should reject his salvation - though it be impossible - then there would be no practical hope of regaining it (though the concern is merely hypothetical).

Additional “difficulty” is discovered in 10:29: The man there is said to have been “sanctified.” ES opponents claim that this proves he was saved. However, Scripture uses “sanctified,” “consecrated” and “made holy” in several contexts, including that of simply being “set apart” for, or according to God’s purpose. One example of many: The “holy” nation of Israel was set apart, consecrated unto God, sanctified for His purposes - but no one would claim this to mean that the entire nation was saved.

The sanctification referred to must be that which all mankind experiences as a result of what is being described: the shed blood of the New Covenant. That is, by the blood of Jesus all men are sanctified - or "set apart" - unto the opportunity for salvation (Tit 2:11; Heb 2:3-4). The man of 10:29 despises that opportunity and tramples upon the One whose holy blood has provided it! Further, by rejecting God's gracious offer of atonement, he shows disrespect for the Holy Spirit who would regenerate him unto eternal spiritual life.

Now then, have I wearied you with so much of what may be dismissed as mere conjecture? Well, every other attempt to interpret these verses apart from the remainder of God's counsel must be judged likewise. Since the offerings above are perfectly reasonable, the opposition's hope to discredit them and make its own case must rest elsewhere. These verses do not state anything so plainly as to be employable as proof texts upon which to build a doctrine. However, I firmly believe that when the error we are considering is properly avoided - when we consult the whole of Scripture and discover its consistently conveyed sense on this subject - the intent of these passages becomes plain enough.

Still, it is implausible that the opposition expects to establish their doctrine upon such passages as these while criticizing ES for appealing to numerous others which are clearly didactic, unambiguous, and precise in both their support of ES and exclusion of the contrary view. I could offer many (referenced above), but 1Pe 1:3-5 is my favorite. Put *its* clear teaching up against their interpretation of Heb 6 and 10 (and *all* of their arguments) and there is no contest! By the way, why is it that the opposition cannot effectively refute 1Pe 1:3-5 (and other impenetrable ES support)? (As mentioned earlier however, I *have* actually stumbled upon some embarrassing attempts to discredit the ES claims of Jn 10:27-29. I will share those with you later.)

On their own then, these passages do not resolve the matter for one side or the other. Apart from the remainder of God's Word, their true meaning might be somewhat difficult to discern. When considered in light of the whole of Scripture however, they are not addressing the possibility or impossibility of losing *attained* salvation at all! They are warning all who would hear and experience the fullness of truth - as depicted in 6:4-5 - not to despise and forego the *opportunity* to attain salvation in such a way as to preclude any future, practical hope of overcoming the roadblock they will have erected for themselves; that is, from the human view, there *will* be and *can* be no other or greater opportunity for salvation!

Yet, the "impossibility" is a human limitation, not an absolute one. (Some "word-study scholars" disagree, others do not. However, undertaking word studies without consulting the whole sense of Scripture leads to error. Can a word not be used uniquely - especially by an arguably unique author? And if a word study produces an interpretation which conflicts with Scriptural sense, which one ought to be accepted?) Thus, the qualifiers "practical" and "human" at the end of the paragraph above because, as a matter of spiritual fact, God is able to remove even this barrier - and such an individual could indeed still be

eventually saved. Nonetheless, as in every case, the Holy Spirit's work of regeneration would be required to enable this one to re-evaluate his previous conclusions and adjust his attitude and response.

Before I move on, let us apply some interpretation of God's remaining counsel (though if you oppose ES, you must reject this application). Beyond the fact that 6:6 has repentance in view, vss 7-8 provide us with justification for interpreting vss 4-5 as speaking of the unsaved. Those under consideration in vs 7, and then vs 8, have received equivalent enlightenment and opportunity (vss 4-5). Those in vs 7 are described in Mt 13:23 as good "soil" producing an abundant and fruitful crop, receiving and enjoying God's blessing. Those of vs 8, from the same seed, bring forth unfruitful and worthless thorns and weeds. The folks of vs 7 have been born again, and therefore produce fruit in keeping with spiritual life. Those of vs 8 are unregenerate; spiritually dead - and though "planted with the same seed" (vss 4-5), produce results in keeping with what should be expected when good seed is sown in an environment of death; where necessary nutrients cannot be found. Vs 7 represents those who do not "fall away" (vs 6); vs 8 reflects those who do. If true believers and salvation were in view, the possibilities of vs 8 - producing thorns and thistles, and the danger of being cursed - would be excluded. The "falling away," therefore, must refer to balking at repentance, not rejecting salvation.

4) Failure to recognize our salvation as past, present and future (Rom 8:30).

God sees our salvation outside of time - from an eternal view. Nothing can change that view! As eternal, it is forever the same; unchangeable! *If we have been saved, we are being saved and will be saved.* In justification, we *have been* saved from the penalty of sin; freed from its guilt. In sanctification, we *are being* saved from the power of sin; we need not live under its control. In glorification, we *will be* saved from the very presence and possibility of sin.

When Scripture speaks of believers as *being* saved, or as those who *will be* saved, it is referring to this doctrine - not implying that their salvation is incomplete or insecure, essentially sitting in God's "pending" file awaiting some further validation. Neither is it identifying a need to be justified continually or multiple times (*been* saved: Eph 2:4-5, 8 - *being* saved: Act 2:47; 1Co 1:18; 2Co 2:15 - *will be* saved: Mt 10:22; 24:13; Mk 16:16; Jn 10:9a; Act 2:21; 11:14; Rom 10:9, 13). Nor is salvation tentatively bestowed, then fully and permanently granted only upon subsequent worthy performance. That would be a "works" salvation; we would have to earn it! And how would we know when we had *permanently* earned it? Would that even be possible? What does that do to the security and comfort God desires for us to rest in (2Co 1:21-22; 5:5; Eph 1:13-14 - and many more)?

1Jn 5:13 says believers may know (indeed, they *ought* to know) that they *have* eternal life - and Jn 20:31 teaches that we know this merely on the basis of our genuine belief! Eternal life is *eternal!* (Mt 25:46; Jn 3:15-16, 36; 5:24; 6:40, 54; 10:28; Rom 6:22-23; Gal 6:8; 1Ti 1:16; Tit 3:3-7; Heb 5:9; 1Jn 5:11-13) If it was

contingent on anything which risked its loss, it could not be guaranteed and represented as eternal! (1Jn 2:25!!!)

And then, Jesus' warning in Mt 7:23 - plainly stating, "I never knew you!" - would have to be addressed to some folks a bit differently: "I knew you once (or twice or three times?), but then you changed your mind and decided not to have anything to do with me anymore, so now I no longer know you."

And God's promise to remember our sins no more (Heb 8:12; 10:17) - i.e., *to forgive us* - would really mean He forgets them only until we lose our salvation! Then He remembers them again (*unforgives us*)! Or, in a tortured effort to make this fit, will it be submitted that our previously forgiven sins are indeed forgotten forever, but we are condemned for (God remembers) the sins leading up and subsequent to our choice to walk away from our salvation? And yet, if we choose to be saved again, these new sins will be forgotten forever also?

Wow! Why complicate what God has made simple? It cannot be possible that while the one who lost his salvation was saved, God still remembered his sins (a saved person with unforgiven sins?). Setting aside the fact that this would make God a liar for the period of time the believer believed (Is this not becoming ridiculous?), this would require more intellectual torture. We would have to argue that either God knew the believer was going to walk away - so He simply remembered his sins anyhow - or God waited to forget his sins until He was sure that the sinner's choice to be saved was final! (Really now, is it not so much wiser to simply accept the security of our salvation as God intends?)

Assuming we agree that this is all foolishness and that God's promise to forget the sins of believers must be true, what possible purpose would have God forget (forgive on the basis of *Christ's shed blood*) some of the sins of those who will eventually be lost (the sins of the saved before they lose their salvation)? Where in Scripture do we find any sense other than either all our sins are forgiven or none of them are? Why would the Holy Spirit waste the supernatural work of regeneration on a soul He knows is destined for Hell (or does He not know that)? What would be the point of imputing a temporary righteousness to an eventual unbeliever?

That righteousness is *in Christ* - on the basis of *His perfect obedience to death on the cross!* (Phil 2:8; 1Pe 2:24) It is an *eternal* righteousness! (2Co 9:9) It is ludicrous to consider such a profound righteousness in temporary terms, subject to the whim of man! (Rom 3:21-22; 10:4; 2Pe 1:1) *Christ Himself* is our very righteousness! (1Co 1:30) Is He (our righteousness) so fleeting, elusive or weak as to be lost if we are not careful? Are we actually able to undo God's imputation of Christ's righteousness to our soul by merely choosing to go to Hell instead? Is it really possible that God may see us as righteous one day - and unrighteous the next?

God's justification for saving us originally was not anything of us; it was entirely on the basis of the finished work of Christ! Our salvation was then

consummated in the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit! So, what part of Christ's work did God later reject as defective or unacceptable? Perhaps it was not finished after all? Or was it the Holy Spirit's work which was sub-par; inferior to God's perfect standard?

This causes great wonder however, for we must ask: Why did God forgive us in the first place? Did He not know what was going on all along? Why did He not catch the mistake - whatever it was - before saving us initially? Or did Christ and/or the Holy Spirit do something afterward to cause God to change His mind? Why should we suffer for the ineptness or duplicity of the Holy Spirit and/or Christ? Just plain nonsense, you say? Of course it is! But it ought to be plain by now that the possibility of losing salvation cannot be discussed apart from such absurdity! And there will be plenty more to follow ...

5) An attempt to allow the free will of man to completely, or at least *ultimately* govern his choice to be saved.

First, even if it were possible for a man to choose to be saved entirely (or ultimately) of his own free will (clearly contrary to Scripture - Eph 2:8-9; Rom 3:10-18 and much more - but this is developed in item 6 below), as already stated, salvation involves being newly created (2Co 5:17) by a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit!

When the genuine believer subsequently exercises his free will to choose *not* to be saved any longer (still subject, I suppose, to another mood swing), who or what power will undo the work of regeneration previously completed? Will the new heart be removed or uncircumcised (Eze 36:26; Rom 2:29) along with the transformed mind of Christ (1Co 2:16)? How will the new nature (Eph 4:22-24) be repossessed by God? Who will serve the Holy Spirit with an eviction notice informing Him that His home (1Co 3:16) is no longer His? Since the saved belong to Christ (Rom 1:6; Gal 3:29; 5:24), who will approach Him to recover one of His possessions? Exactly where and how is it recorded in the spiritual journals that this child of God is now His ex-child - and how does God feel about losing one of His children?

Obviously, all of the above is manifestly inane! Yet, forced to consider such lunacy, we find confirmation of my earlier point; that the "integrity" of opposing ES requires the outcome of man's choice of salvation to be emptied of any saving power; it must be devoid of any supernatural or miraculous element! Essentially, it produces results commensurate with any other casual human choice; *nothing profound actually happens* - at least, nothing which cannot be undone with a mere do-over!

Opposing ES then, requires one of two things to be true: Either the supernatural elements of the new birth described in God's Word do not really occur (God's Word is wrong) and therefore, a Heaven-bound saint's decision to amend his choice so as to go to Hell instead makes sense (because Scripture does not) - *OR*, the miraculous work of God *does* occur and God's Word *is* inerrant and *does* make sense ... We simply underestimate the power man unleashes in the

exercise of his do-over! He actually *is* able to undo the supernatural work of God! (Do we suppose that ES opponents will ever tire of their futile attempts to accommodate salvation insecurity?)

Can we agree that it is rather haughty and arrogant for man to presume that such things respond to his changing desires; that their control rests upon the whim of his choice? And do we not recognize the false virtue, false modesty and false humility in blaming oneself; claiming that only the believer can separate himself from God? The Scriptures say *no one* and *nothing in all creation* (that includes ourselves) can do this! (Jn 10:27-29; Rom 8:35-39) In his book, "Once in Christ, In Christ Forever," William MacDonald states:

"... 'No one else can pluck them away, but a believer himself can do it.' This is bizarre - that a true Christian has more power than anyone else in the universe. No one - and that includes the sheep - can remove himself from the Shepherd's strong grip... In view of such marvelous assurance, it is perverse that people should object that a true sheep of Christ should decide that he doesn't want to be a sheep any longer, and could thus remove himself from his Father's hand. The argument will not stand. The words 'no one' are absolute. They do not allow for any exception. The inspired text does not say 'no one except a sheep of Christ himself' - and neither should we."

- MacDonald, W. (1997). *Once in Christ in Christ forever: with more than 50 biblical reasons why a true believer cannot be lost*. Grand Rapids, MI: Gospel Folio Press.

However, is it not abundantly clear that the view of ES opposition requires the establishment of man's power and will over the ultimate governing power and sovereign rule of God? And yet, though it ought to be equally obvious that this approach is encumbered with (at least) two grave errors, its proponents persist.

First, they propose an insurmountable dilemma as a 2-step solution to man's sin: Step one - Man must make an autonomous choice to be saved! Step two - Though still a sinner, he is compelled, *yet able - of his own independent free will and choice* - to placate God with holy living and godliness! Obviously, both steps are fatally flawed (because they are Scripturally unsound). One, the unsaved are spiritually dead (Eph 2:1, 5; Col 2:13; Rom 5:6) - and a dead man cannot bring himself to life! Two, the propitiation of our sin debt before God - and the maintenance of Christ's righteousness imputed to us as a result - cannot involve anything short of perfection.

Since, on behalf of believers, a perfectly completed atonement has already been presented and accepted; since God has already pronounced His judgment of righteousness upon the saved; since He has already reserved their place in Heaven; since He has already granted them eternal spiritual life; and *since God has promised and guaranteed all this*, to then claim that He requires *man* to assume responsibility for avoiding eternal condemnation himself makes God out to be a liar!

The second error - created to allow the first - is a misstatement of man's problem. Refusing to accept Scripture's teaching that lost man is spiritually dead in his transgressions (because that deals a fatal blow to their "solution"), the manufactured diagnosis of ES opponents concludes that the unsaved are merely spiritually sick - *and able to make themselves well!*

Unfortunately, it is impossible for man to recognize and avail himself of God's gracious and merciful provision of the guaranteed (and only) solution to his problem as long as he maintains an inaccurate view of it - or, in stubbornness or pride, simply refuses to acknowledge it. As long as he continues to ignore and deny his malady, he likewise ignores and denies its cure.

Yet, should he finally and honestly confront his weakness, he is no better off than before if he rejects *God's* remedy and seeks to apply his own. An accurate diagnosis *and* an application of the proper treatment are equally required. God has provided both, but ES opponents have painted themselves into a corner. Having rejected God's diagnosis in favor of their own, they are compelled to reject God's provision of the necessary cure. Denying man's helplessness, they have replaced the only true solution (regeneration and sustenance by the Holy Spirit alone) with a false one (the added godliness and righteousness of man's autonomous choices).

While God's Word clearly states that man is spiritually dead and must be born again of the Holy Spirit, and that his independent "righteousness" is as filthy rags, the opposing view irrationally grants man the power to bring *himself* to life (and to secure that life) through the exercise of his autonomous free will choices and "godliness!" God's sovereign and omnipotent saving power is transcended by the free will choice of a spiritually dead man!

Furthermore, God's perfect standard is then satisfied by the righteous choices and godliness of a far-from-perfect sinner until physical death releases him from the uncertainty and stress of attempting to meet that monumental responsibility!

Still, until the subject of ES is raised, there is unified consensus among Scripture, ES proponents and the opposition's own confession: Man is helpless to independently control his choice of good and evil! Once ES is on the table however, the opposition quickly, but inconsistently, changes its tune!

And so, while ES opponents dare to claim control in the spiritual realm, they are somehow unable to exert their will in the mundane and much less powerful physical realm. Man cannot bring himself to *physical* life, yet he is able to achieve his own, unfathomably greater *spiritual* rebirth! He cannot sustain his *physical* well-being, but he is able to secure his eternal *spiritual* existence which is exponentially more taxing and profound!

Really now, how is it possible that man has no power over *physical* life and death, yet possesses the supernatural strength to conquer and control *spiritual* life and death? While those who deny ES offer what they consider great hope

in man's ability to control his own eternal destiny, none of it is founded in reality; man does not possess the power and virtue their view requires (self-birth and self-maintained righteousness)!

The truth is, however, that God will indeed hold us responsible for how we exercise our will. And absent spiritual rebirth, we are hopeless. As already stated, we are unable to choose not to sin in our lost state (Gen 6:5; 8:21b; Rom 3:10-18 - and if we disagree with the severity of God's assessment of man in these verses, we are sadly and dangerously mistaken). That leaves us where we start out in this life - under God's wrath; facing judgment for our sin.

Our only hope to avert this is to transfer control of our will from the old sin nature to the new spirit nature (essentially ceding control to the Holy Spirit). And that cannot and will not happen until we have been made new; regenerated by the Holy Spirit in the first place! While I am sure you see how that touches on the mysteries of predestination and sovereign election, my hope is that you also realize that we can tidy up the ES issue without going there.

Though I will now proceed to delve more deeply than I would like into this mysterious matter of man's choice, let me state in advance that you may disagree with this entire discourse and, as explained in item 6, it matters not to the argument for ES.

Most who hold the opposing view concede that the power and will of God are required in drawing sinners unto Him. But whatever their view of God's role in salvation, they claim that it ultimately relies upon man's choice (the saved make an effectual choice to be saved; the unsaved choose not to be).

However, Jn 1:13 says we are spiritually born not out of human decision, but *of God!* The context there seeks to differentiate the husband's desire and choice to physically procreate from God's will to do so spiritually. And yet, this verse also forces us to recognize that from the standpoint of the one being born, *he has no influence in either case!* Furthermore, it plainly illustrates that God allows (under His control) man's involvement in physical birth (still, this miraculous provision is ultimately of God), but spiritual birth is exclusively *His* domain (necessarily so)!

The obligatory nature of this truth is so obvious that any thought of debating it ought to be banished outright! Yet, some insist that it be denied. Why? In order to grant man's autonomous "right" to choose salvation, thereby opening the door to his "right" to subsequently reject it! But this is no more rational than demanding the "right" to choose whether or not to be *physically* born!

Think about it! Imagine an unborn person choosing to be born! Or consider how an unborn person could decide to remain unborn! (Go ahead, try it!) Now, try picturing a born person choosing to be (*and actually becoming*) unborn! I challenge you to contemplate that last possibility for a minute or so and then come away with a belief that salvation can be rejected!

Perhaps the butterfly may help us understand this more easily: We can no more choose to become spiritually unborn than a butterfly can choose to revert to a worm. The cocoon is both the sepulcher which entombs the worm's dead nature and the crucible from which the butterfly emerges anew, radically changed. And in this, we are considering "merely" a *physical* miracle of God. How much more unfathomably profound is the incomprehensible mystery of new *spiritual* life!

Is it not a safe assumption that one aspect of God's provision of the butterfly is precisely its obvious typological application to the spiritual concept of the new birth? Corresponding to the cocoon, the receptacle whereby the sinner's old nature (dead to God but alive to sin) is put to death and his new nature (dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus - Rom 6:1-11) finds life is the very hand of God (not - as the opposing view is forced to argue while it desperately denies doing so - the mind of man exercising its own volitional will)!

And just as it is impossible for the butterfly to reenter the cocoon in some science fiction-type attempt to travel back in time to a previous era, it is simply, logically, reasonably and equally impossible for a genuine believer - a dearly-loved child of God - to find his way back to his previous hell-bound, unsaved state! While it may be argued that God is able to remake the butterfly into a worm, it cannot be asserted that God will ever undo His work of spiritual rebirth in His child! We know that God's omnipotence must operate in faithfulness to His character and nature. God will not - He cannot - violate Himself in the exercise of His power. I can think of no violation should God undo the butterfly - but undoing His work of rebirthing a saved one leaves us to burn the Scriptures and retire to eating, drinking and merriment!

Since the opposition rightfully concedes that the hand of God cannot be involved in such a reversal, it ascribes salvation to man's choice in order to provide an avenue for the return trip - a subsequent contrary choice! This removal of God's hand as the exclusive means of obtaining to genuine salvation allows the corresponding dismissal of its otherwise obvious requirement as the sole means which secures it!

However, Scripture promises that God's child remains eternally in the hand of his faithful, loving and omnipotent Father. As MacDonald states on the authority of God's Word above, nothing can prevail against the hand of God!

In any case, if the perceived need to reserve man's right to reject his salvation would be seen for what it is - thoroughly unnecessary, impossible and outright senselessness - man would relinquish his demand to have ultimate control in choosing to accept it as well. One necessitates the other. This is a proof of another previous point; that losing salvation is a premise in search of a foundation. Adopting the presupposition that salvation can be lost forces the inevitable, corresponding obligation to dismiss God's sovereign control over spiritual rebirth. However, in our discussion of hyper-Calvinism, we reviewed

an abundance of Scriptural proof that God indeed maintains sovereignty over the salvation of souls!

Beyond that, the undeniable certainty of this truth is reinforced from another perspective in 2Co 5:18-19 which explains that the reconciliation of man to God (the very focus and purpose of His work of new creation) is *all of God!* We did not choose to make things right with *Him* - *He* chose to reconcile us to *Himself* (Col 1:20-22)! We didn't take the initiative - *God* did!

Is it unreasonable to assert that Scripture unmistakably teaches that unregenerate sinners cannot and will not choose for God? Clearly, the Scriptures affirm that we would never do so were it not for God working that desire in us (Rom 3:10; Gen 6:5). While it is accurate to state that we have a choice to make, our choice is governed by God's sovereignty (Jn 6:44, 65). Unless we possess the imputed righteousness of Christ and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we can make *no* choice which honors or pleases God! All of our choices, behaviors, values ... *everything* we think, do and say flows from the only nature we possess - our original sinful nature!

We are born enemies (Col 1:21) with nothing but hatred for God and things of God (and should we consider the unsaved state even the slightest bit better than this, the father of lies is enjoying great victory)! If we will ever choose to love God, He must first love us! (1Jn 4:19) If we are ever to make righteous choices, we must possess a nature, a character, a godliness capable of such choices (surely you must agree)!

The first such choice must be to accept and obey God on *His* terms - and for that choice to be made, His work of regeneration must come first! Will it be proposed that a man possessing exclusively his sinful nature might execute such a prodigiously righteous act of his own volition and goodness? Of course not! It is a shallow, irreverent view of God's role in the saving of souls which allows a mere choice of unregenerate, sinful man as the catalyst to unleashing the supernatural power required to effect his crossing from spiritual death to life!

And it is an equal lack of respect and appreciation for the power of God which is necessary to sustain and secure the saved afterward (Eph 1:19-20) - for all eternity - to expect it to dutifully await and hearken to the beck and call of the saved sinner's subsequent choice(s)! No, it faithfully obeys its perfect, sovereign Source according to His unchanging plan - not the whim and pleasure of man! Furthermore, God's work of regeneration guarantees its own result! It seems we have lost the healthy and awesome fear which this regenerating and sustaining power deserves!

Remember, as stated above and demonstrated below, this entire line of thought may be rejected without imparting the slightest scratch to the integrity of ES (though its rejection does indeed have far-reaching and serious implications).

In any case, since choosing God requires Him to draw us unto Himself, is it not appropriate to inquire of the opposing camp why choosing to be unsaved does

not necessitate, at the very least, a similar intervention of God? Must not His hand be pushing away (instead of drawing unto) the one who chooses to be unsaved? But nowhere in Scripture are we told that God rejects believers or hardens their hearts against Himself - that is reserved for unbelievers.

And so, while God must be involved in man's choice to be saved, the opposing position allows man to choose to be unsaved entirely on his own! And now, we are treading on the edge of the danger zone described near the outset of this writing. However, I have purposely taken us on this excursion to reinforce that previous point: Let us not allow the secret things which belong to God to derail us from the revealed things which belong to us (Dt 29:29). As stated earlier, the interworking of God's sovereignty and man's free will remains a mystery. We are wise to leave it that way, rather than attempting to make it comprehensible by violating the clear sense of Scripture. The inane questions posed at the outset of this item (5) above - forced by such an effort - quickly and easily expose that violation.

Seizing responsibility for electing salvation ourselves obligates us to protect it afterward as well (no wonder then, the possibility of losing it)! This makes the one who chooses and maintains his salvation a better and wiser person than the one who does not. His salvation results from making *right* choices (before and after); the unsaved make a *wrong* choice somewhere along the line.

When a saved person of the contrary view is informed that this provides a basis for boasting, a typical response is, "But I would *never* boast - it is all of God and His grace and mercy!" But first, if it *is* the result of our choice(s), then it is *not* all of God and His grace and mercy (but 2Co 5:18a!; Tit 3:5a; Rom 9:16!), and we *do* have something we can boast about! Second, the Scriptural sense is not that the saved *should* not boast - clearly they *cannot!* (Rom 3:27; 4:2; 1Co 1:29; 4:7; Eph 2:9) If they could, surely some would - and who could stop or criticize them? Their boasting would be justified!

That man's free will is limited by God's sovereignty is undeniable. Man's will is subservient to God's will; man's choices require the approval of God. Simplistically, if man should choose something which throws a monkey wrench into God's plan, God will see to it that his choice is not executed (Pr 19:21). That is why (e.g.) Jesus was not murdered prematurely (Jn 8:20, 59; 10:31, 39) and Saul's maniacal pursuit of David was unsuccessful (1Sam 18:28-25:1).

I suppose a scenario might be imagined where a genuinely saved one might choose to be unsaved (Rom 9:3, yet this is not offered in actuality; or perhaps a believer who develops senility or insanity - however, I tread on thin ice to develop this), but God cannot and will not allow that choice to govern! He has saved such a one! An irreversible, supernatural work has been completed and a permanent reconciliation has been accomplished! This eternal peace was consummated and consists in nothing less than the shed blood of Christ! Therefore, God cannot and will not renounce - and somehow retract - His work

of new creation; it must and will prevail over any silly notion that man is entitled to demand and receive the right to retain (*and execute*) a choice in the matter!

I share with those of the opposing position an inability to comprehend predestination and God's sovereignty vis-à-vis man's will. We will never completely reconcile these in the realm of finite human knowledge and wisdom. I hesitated to add "to our satisfaction" to the previous sentence because I believe we can and must be satisfied with Dt 29:29. Still, it does no violence to Scripture and requires no resolution of any mystery belonging to God to accept the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit as eternal; irrevocable (Rom 11:29!). Truly, the only barrier to accepting salvation's permanence is the man-made requisite that those mysteries be resolved - and coincidentally and necessarily, in a manner which impeaches ES!

That produces three doctrinal dilemmas then: The unfounded claim that salvation can be lost, the senseless assertion that man's choice prevails over God's sovereign will, and the arbitrary dismissal of God's right to predestine souls (sovereign election). ES, on the contrary, is a fully supportable doctrine, integral to the whole of legitimate, systematic Christian theology. It maintains its integrity without requiring an understanding of, or a trampling upon the mystery of God's sovereignty in election. And since it is reconcilable in Scriptural truth independent of resolving the doctrine of man's choice (it stands fast no matter what the final truth of that doctrine), there is no need to manufacture a customized version of man's choice which is synchronized to accommodate ES (as required by salvation insecurity).

Regarding this matter of choice, perhaps the following will close up some loose ends: While unsaved, we are only able to sin; we have no ability to *not* sin because we possess only the sin nature - we have not yet received the Spirit nature (Rom 14:23b says everything that does not come from faith is sin; Heb 11:6a and Rom 8:8 reveal that it is impossible to please God without faith because the sinful nature retains exclusive control). Once saved, we are able to sin *and* not sin (Gal 5:16-17; Rom 7:15-23). However, when we get to Heaven, we will no longer be able to sin; we are guaranteed to be finally and forever free of any ability to sin!

We accept this truth, offering no resistance. In fact, we would not expect or desire it any other way! Why do we allow God this sovereign control in Heaven but not on earth? This amounts to a type of primitive henotheism which held that gods were more powerful within their own geographical, cultural or political dominions. But God is supreme over all, maintaining the entirety of His power and influence everywhere and always! We would not even think of demanding the right to exercise our free will to sin in Heaven - or, if not to actually commit the sin act there, to choose to go to Hell! We trust God to prevent man's will from spoiling His sovereign plan! (Yes, you read that correctly; God's power and will transcend man's will!) Why do we despise His sovereignty here on earth, demanding the right to supersede it by our choice?

Now I realize that sinning in Heaven is a preposterous scenario; that to merely consider such things in Heaven would itself be sin. However, contemplating all of this should illustrate and remind us that God must be in control - whether or not we understand or approve it! The Scriptures teach that once saved, we are already glorified (Rom 8:30), have already been raised with Christ (Col 3:1; Eph 2:6), and already possess eternal life (Jn 3:36a; 6:47; 1Jn 5:11). From God's view of eternity, we are already in Heaven! Consequently, choosing to reject our salvation now is no different than ordering God to send us to Hell once we actually arrive there!

Finally, as pointed out, we know that we had no control over the circumstances of our physical birth; who our parents would be, the timing, location, sex, race, physical appearance, and all the rest - *especially whether or not we would be born in the first place!* We simply accept, without argument, that we were not able to choose or influence any of those things for ourselves. Similarly, we do not struggle with the indisputable fact that we cannot choose to be physically unborn. We *have* been born - there is no way to undo it! And becoming unborn is different than dying. While it is humanly possible to desire and seek death, we know it is impossible to be unborn! Why do we resist and deny the equivalent spiritual truth?

When we are saved, we are born of God. We become spiritually alive again; indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Clearly, this is impossible to undo. Moreover, unlike inevitable physical death, there is and can be no death associated with our spiritual re-birth - only eternal spiritual life (Jn 11:26; 10:28a; Rev 2:11; 20:6)!

6) Failure to understand or acknowledge the *positional* nature of our saved state (Rom 8:1; 12:5; 16:7-13; 1Co 1:2, 30; 15:22; 2Co 1:21; 2:14,17; 5:17; Gal 3:27-28; Eph 1:1, 13; 2:10, 13; Phil 1:1; 3:14; Col 1:2, 28; 1Pe 5:10, 14).

We have already discussed the error of allowing salvation to find its security, *to any degree*, in the free will choice of man: Doing so requires its supernatural components to be denied. Now we will see that opposition to ES produces another casualty - the *positional* nature of our salvation.

Just as the opposing view requires salvation's miraculous elements to be rejected, it cavalierly discards our resultant changed position before God: In Christ, clothed with His righteousness, justified fully, blameless, reconciled to God ... As explained previously, substituting the "miracle" of man's independent choice for the true miracle of God in attaining salvation allows the independent power and work of the flesh to be substituted for the power and work of the Holy Spirit in retaining it!

But this casual dismissal of the Holy Spirit's role and work in regenerating and preserving the sinner - the voiding of His Scripturally detailed transformation of heart, mind and soul, and the denial of His subsequent sustaining power - not only removes the miraculous and supernatural, it eliminates salvation's positional status as well. The believer's indisputably secure position - provided

and maintained, as promised, by its guarantor, God - is foolishly exchanged for one which ought to be easily seen as most vulnerable and insecure instead!

The saved sinner then becomes his own guarantor, irrationally usurping God's responsibility to preserve the most profound, priceless and ultimate possession man can ever hope to embrace. The focus on God's grace and mercy is replaced with an effort of the flesh: First, man's initial choice to be saved, and then the subsequent choices he makes which either succeed or fail in achieving the necessary, yet indefinable level of "adequate" performance which secures his Heavenly reservation.

I suppose it is not unlike booking a hotel room: First, you call to check the availability, price, amenities, and terms of agreement (check-in/out times, pets, non-smoking, etc.). After thinking it over and deciding to accept it, you inform the clerk that you want the room. You are then required to provide your credit card to guarantee that the room will be yours when you arrive. However, since God does not accept credit cards, the only way to guarantee a room in Heaven is to continually perform well enough to maintain your reservation!

Simply notifying God that you want the room and are willing to accept and abide by His terms is not enough! (Of course not - then *everyone* would do that!) How would God know if you really intend to meet His terms? Especially in this day and age with so many scams out there, He must protect Himself against the unscrupulous - and God is well aware of man's deceitfulness! Therefore, He requires some collateral to secure our reservation - and that collateral is holy living. Makes sense, no?

Now, some folks foolishly hold out hope that God will maintain their Heavenly reservation merely on the basis of their genuine faith in Christ - and that this faith will produce holy living by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit (but where do they get such notions?). God is not that naïve - no sir! He knows that if He holds reservations on that basis alone, lots of folks will change their minds, choosing to stay at Satan's Inn instead! Then, what will He do with all those empty rooms? So He requires saints to prove, by godly performance, that they *really* want the room!

In any case, when salvation's positional nature is ignored, this godly performance requirement leads those of the opposing view to analyze the lifestyle of one who claims to have been saved (or, as previously discussed, his salvation may have merely been conferred upon him by others) from the standpoint of whether or not he is *still* saved (not found in Scripture). This would easily be seen for the foolishness it is if godly performance, and its role, were properly understood and accepted

Ultimately, the only godly performance God requires with regard to the attaining and maintaining of our salvation is the sole performance capable of accomplishing these profound tasks; that is, the only work acceptable to Him: the perfect, atoning sacrifice of Christ! The godly performance of man is an

aftermath; a natural result of the atonement applied to his soul. Indwelt and influenced by the Holy Spirit, man is indeed capable of righteous choices and godly behavior pleasing to God - but measured against the backdrop of the cross, this "holiness" is comparatively unimpressive, ineffective, extremely limited and not worthy of mention

This is not a deficiency of the work of the Holy Spirit in the saved; it is due to the inevitable corrupting influence of man's leftover sin nature. While it is wise to recognize that the autonomous choices of *pre*-salvation man will never produce any righteousness (except that of Isa 64:6), we must also realize that his *post*-salvation righteousness can never begin to approach the perfection required to maintain what was freely imparted on the basis of Christ's shed blood alone. Salvation is secured by the same perfect righteousness which effected it in the first place! To hope in the woefully imperfect effort of man; to substitute his feeble righteousness for Christ's is blasphemous, disrespectful, insulting and an ingratitude to God!

And so, a Scriptural analysis of a man's adherence to the Word of God cannot be used to ascertain whether or not he has "lost his salvation." Such an examination holds only three possibilities: First, if it is determined (again, within the margin of human error) that he is indeed a brother in Christ - persevering in holy living and godliness - then he may be appropriately partnered with. Second, if he claims to be saved but is not walking in obedience, then he is to be reminded, corrected, exhorted, admonished, and/or disciplined with and according to the Word of God.

2Th 3:14, written to believers about believers, illustrates God's intentions when this process is required: The disobedient brother is not to be associated with. This will bring him to shame. Yet, (vs 15) he is not to be treated as an enemy but as a brother in need of serious warning. The implication is clear: If he is saved, he will be shamed - and his shame will move him to a sorrowful repentance leading to restoration (as in 1Co 5:1-5; 2Co 2:6-8). If he is *not* saved, he will simply walk away - not overly distraught at the loss of fellowship.

But here again, as in Rom 6:11-14; Mt 18:15-17; Heb 6:4-8; 10:26-29, a golden opportunity to teach us about losing his salvation is passed up. The reason should be quite evident. To teach such a possibility would require a significant portion, and the essential whole of Scripture, to be rewritten. And note further that the more complete treatment in Mt 18 instructs believers to treat as a pagan or tax collector the one who in the end will not hear the correction of God's Word. It requires no stretching or twisting of the text to interpret that to mean that he is to be treated as if he was never saved (1Jn 2:19).

In any case, if the effort above discloses that a man is not (and therefore, *was not*) saved after all (our third and last possibility), then clearly - as in our approach to *all* unbelievers - he can only be *evangelized* with and according to the Word of God. But where does this leave us with the one who has "rejected" or "walked away from" or otherwise lost his salvation? How is it possible to

evangelize *him*? He already knows all that - He heard it, learned it, studied it, understood it, accepted it, experienced it and somehow abandoned it! He must be lost forever now - unless the matter is ultimately reliant upon his choice!

Then, absent any Scriptural support or sense, he may somehow, sometime exercise his right to choose to recover it! What would cause him to do so - and how exactly would that be done? How are we instructed to deal with him meanwhile? Why does Scripture offer no assistance with any of this? If we resign ourselves to faithfully evangelizing him anyhow - reminded that *we* do not do the saving, *God* does - are we not aware of the circle we have just traveled? Will this effort produce a second (or third, or fourth ...) regenerating work of the Holy Spirit? Is that even possible? If so, will it be permanent this time? Next time? Any time?

This attempt to fathom the unfathomable steals us away from understanding the understandable. The above leaves us to consider the irresolvable mystery of the role and essence of man's choice in God's [plan of salvation](#). However, that debate - as it touches on the issue of ES - becomes moot in light of a proper understanding of the *position* we find ourselves in once we are saved. Whatever is involved in causing and executing our choice, our resulting position and status from God's view renders any analysis of that choice unnecessary. If salvation was merely a choice issue, the debate would swing on an entirely different hinge - but once that choice is made, the Scriptures reveal that we are granted a new status and occupy a new position (perfect; in Christ)! And it is the nature of this new status and position which renders our understanding of that choice unnecessary.

When we are saved, a two-fold, 180° change is produced. Theologically, the two aspects of this change are identified as *practical* and *positional*. The *practical* refers to what *we* do - our response to and *practice* of God's call to holy living, godly obedience, loving relationships, the production of spiritual fruit, etc. (our daily walk, the outworking of our faith). Because this practical aspect of our salvation requires a responsibility on our part (the extent and details of which are another mystery - Phil 2:12b-13), it will be imperfect this side of Heaven. Wherever and whenever the sinful nature of man is involved, his best intentions and effort will (and *must*) fall far short. On one hand, our faith in the finished work of Christ covers this imperfection; on the other, it motivates us to strive to avoid it - to persevere in the effort even as we continue to fail, and even though we know that more failure lies ahead.

Despite the setbacks, we can press on with confidence and joy because our saved *position* (in Christ) is secure and permanent! God is committed to His responsibility to and for us; He guarantees our perseverance - and His guarantee is not contingent on our performance! *That would be a worthless guarantee!* We persevere because God sees to it by working in and through us by *His* power, character and holiness! (Phil 1:6; 2:13; 1Co 1:8-9; 1Pe 5:10; 2Co 1:21a; Rom 14:4; Jude 24; 1Th 5:23-24) God would not guarantee it if it relied on those attributes in *us!*

And so, because of our God-given position - and in spite of our imperfect practice - Scripture informs us that God sees us as perfect! (Col 1:22; Eph 1:4; 5:27; Phil 1:10; 2:15; 1Th 3:13; Jude 24) He is able to do so without compromising His justice or integrity because of Christ's perfect obedience unto death on the cross (Phil 2:8; 1Pe 2:24). Christ has paid our sin debt in full - to God's complete satisfaction; that is, He is the propitiation (atonement) for our sin (Rom 3:25; 1Jn 2:2; 4:10).

This (and this alone!) allows God to choose to see us *in Christ* rather than in our sins. We have been perfected in Christ! (Col 1:28) That is the *positional* aspect of our salvation status. While the *practical* is what *we do*, the *positional* results from what *God has done*; the position it places us in, the permanence of which He guarantees *because of what He will continue to do - as He has promised!*

God's provision of the indwelling Holy Spirit is His expressed deposit of that guarantee! (2Co 1:21b-22; 5:5; Eph 1:13-14) The Holy Spirit is the very agent by which that guarantee is secured and enforced! Yes, various "good works" must (and *will*) flow from the truly saved, but to associate them to *any* degree with this profound business of attaining and maintaining salvation blasphemes Christ's work on the cross and the Holy Spirit's work of regeneration; essentially, it indicts God's entire [plan of salvation](#), and therefore, God Himself!

Perhaps this may help: Let us consider an illustration which clarifies how our position in Christ affects the much-debated conundrum of man's choice vis-à-vis salvation; specifically, the availability of any subsequent choice. Let us suppose that someone chooses to commit suicide. No subsequent choice is possible; his physical position is *unchangeable* - permanently dead. By definition, an unchangeable position does not allow a further choice to change that position. Suicide creates an unchangeable position, eliminating any possibility of another choice. In the physical realm, we easily understand and accept that - but in the spiritual realm, we allow confusion in.

Now, note how the opposite initial choice plays out differently. If the individual chose instead *not* to commit suicide, the result (excluding, for our purposes, any intervening circumstances) allows the opportunity for another choice: the same (remain alive) or different (to take his life). That is because his original choice (allowing himself to live) leaves him in a *changeable* position (physically alive). Again, by definition, a changeable position allows another choice.

Regarding salvation, this applies as so: Someone chooses to reject God's Word and thus remains spiritually dead, the condition we all inherit from Adam. While physically alive, this spiritually dead condition remains changeable, allowing further opportunity to choose to embrace the gospel message unto salvation. However, if he dies without changing his initial choice, his spiritual death becomes an unchangeable position from which no further choice is available.

All of the above is clear enough. However, it is the final scenario which is key to ES. I will state it here and explain its unchangeable nature further on.

When someone accepts the gospel unto salvation, though his physical condition is still destined for death, his spiritual position (eternal spiritual life) is unchangeable. Since this leaves no further choice, he is permanently saved.

Notice first that the natures of the positions in the physical realm are reversed in the spiritual. Physical life is temporary; spiritual life is permanent - physical death is permanent; spiritual death is (temporarily) temporary (changeable while physical life remains - but 2Co 6:2!).

However, in both the physical and spiritual realms, the governing factor as to whether an opportunity for choice remains is the nature of the current position. Once an unchangeable position is entered, no further choice is possible. No argument can be brought against that premise! (And the unchangeability of the saved position is demonstrated quite thoroughly further on.)

Notice also that I have not attempted to explain *how* these choices come about. For the purpose of merely determining the availability of another choice, it does not matter. Again, in whatever manner the above choices are controlled and executed, the availability of a subsequent choice is governed by the changeability of the current position. Therefore, the idea that a saint can choose to reject his salvation is unthinkable because it is impossible! He is in no position to do so!

So then, we have previously unveiled one key to understanding that salvation cannot be lost: It entails a completed, irreversible, supernatural, miraculous work of God. Now we have another: Recognizing and accepting that the saved are brought into a *positional* relationship before God, the nature of which is *unchangeable*. Our salvation is not contingent on our *practice* (thanks be to God!). It is permanent because it rests securely on the basis of our unchangeable *position!*

So first, as demonstrated, whatever role we play in “choosing” salvation is irrelevant - we need not understand it. The deed is done; the die is cast; there is no going back! Second, however short we fall in *practice*, our *position* guarantees that this shortfall is covered by the blood of Christ! And to those of the opposing view: Yes, I make that last statement *very* carefully, quite aware of the implication; that what ought to humble us and bring us to our knees risks conveying a license to sin.

However, we cannot change the truth simply because some may misinterpret or misapply it! Which is the proper course: Maintaining the truth while some may choose to abuse it - or denying the truth altogether? We must simply endeavor to proclaim and teach the truth more accurately, completely and effectively - especially to the saved! There is an imbalance today in the effort, on one hand, to add members to the Church and, on the other, to disciple them unto greater and more accurate knowledge and deeper maturity. It is long past time to recognize and deal with our individual and corporate need to move on from Christian infancy (Heb 5:11-6:2).

To strengthen the point that we must not “adjust” the truth - even with good intentions - let us return to the mystery of prayer mentioned earlier. We would not seek to encourage (or intimidate) one who is not faithful in prayer by telling him that his unsaved loved ones will not be saved if he is not faithful to pray for them (or that they will be if he is). Although it is definitely true that God calls us to faithful prayer - and we should encourage such a one - God would not approve of this type of motivation. We cannot know if the unsaved will be saved or not - whether or not people are fervently praying for them. All we know is that God calls us to pray.

The extent of our encouragement or admonishment must fall within the limits of God’s Word - no matter how well-intentioned we may be. And this certainly pertains to our concern for the brother in Christ who is living in a way which shows disrespect for what God has done for him; who is despising God’s grace by sinning conspicuously. We approach him with correction, admonishment, rebuke and, if necessary, discipline according to God’s Word. However, we cannot allow ourselves to usurp God’s control of the matter. We cannot justify the use of improper means by pointing to the righteous end we seek.

If the sinning brother is truly saved, admonishment from God’s Word will resonate with him (though God is still and always in control, so we cannot dictate or predict the nature and timing of this resonance). But surely we must not add to our effort what cannot be supported in Scripture! Threatening this brother with the possibility of losing his salvation may seem like a practical, reasonable and effective method to gain his attention and motivate him to godly living. And if that should fail and we are forced to conclude that he is indeed not saved, telling others that he lost his salvation may seem like a proper and noble way to clear God’s name, thus protecting His honor and that of His saving Word. However, these methods and strategies only *seem* and “feel” right - they are not condoned in Scripture!

What matters here is that actual, true spiritual rebirth places us in a position whereby our sin (past, present and future) is *permanently* erased! And the security of our salvation rests upon that position. *God* has placed us there - and *He* will keep and protect us! (Jude 24; Col 1:13; 2Ti 4:18; 1Co 1:8; Pr 2:8; 2Th 3:3; 1Pe 1:3-5; Lk 11:21; 2Ti 1:12) Nowhere in Scripture are we taught that the *security* of the salvation which is wholly of God - provided entirely by Him - becomes *our* responsibility afterward (“God provides, we maintain”). The Scriptures just referenced are only some which teach exactly the opposite! And there is irrefutably no rational way to reconcile the clear and deliberately didactic offerings of 1Pe 1:3-5; Heb 6:17-20; 10:14, 17-22 (among others) with any chance that our salvation can disappear!

The confusion surrounding this is caused by the fact that Scripture does indeed call us to new responsibilities once we are saved (collectively stated: godly obedience; holy living). But again - thanks be to God - performing well enough to ensure the security of our salvation is not one of these responsibilities! Who

among us would be foolish enough to believe, and dare enough to trust that our salvation would be anything but certain to be lost if *any* part of its security relied upon *anything* in our own human power or character? If it be argued that we have the supernatural power of God in the Holy Spirit available to us 24/7, do we suppose we can guarantee that our old nature will never win a battle over the new? And why would God balance ES on something He Himself tells us will fall far short? God would never be so unwise as to trust His almighty work in salvation - and the integrity of His trustworthy promises regarding it - to the power and character of mere man! (Jn 2:24-25)

So then, let us now examine how and why the positional nature of our salvation is permanent; unchangeable. We will consider six aspects of this positional status which should make its eternally-secure nature abundantly clear.

Existence: Do we exist or not; have we been born; do we have life?

Citizenship: What jurisdiction governs us?

Ownership/Belonging: Who owns us; to whom or what do we belong?

Family: What is our lineage; of whose family are we members?

The Figure of Marriage: What are the implications of this Scriptural symbolism?

“In Christ”: Does this not say it all?

Existence

The support here is simply this: Are we spiritually alive or not? Have we been born of God, born of the Spirit? Obviously, those questions are tantamount to asking, “Are we saved?” If we are, we have been born of God and are spiritually alive. And spiritual life is eternal - there is no death associated with it! (Jn 11:26; 10:28; Rom 6:8-11 - note the position mentioned there: “in Christ!”).

The only way to become unsaved would be to become unborn - an impossible concept! However, if Scripture taught that we *could* lose our salvation, I would have to qualify “becoming unborn” as an impossible concept *for the human mind to grasp*. And then, losing salvation - somehow becoming unborn - would be another doctrinal mystery. However, since Scripture does *not* teach that losing our salvation is possible, let us, with gladness and gratitude, leave the impossible impossible.

As emphasized throughout this writing, rejecting ES requires the abandonment of a true apprehension and appreciation of the overarching truth that salvation is directly the supernatural, miraculous work of God. God’s work of love, mercy and grace - in its precise and purposeful design - imparts spiritual existence to spiritually dead sinners. Without that work, we remain spiritually dead (1Jn 5:12). God’s work causes the rebirth of our dead spirit nature. It is a *rebirth* - rather than a birth - because that nature, alive in Adam when he was first created, died as a consequence of sin. And each of us begins physical life with this condition of spiritual death inherited from Adam (Rom 5:12). As Jesus explained to Nicodemus in John 3, we will not see the kingdom of God - we will not enter its eternal peace and comfort - unless our dead spirit nature is rebirthed unto life once again!

Becoming alive to God (Rom 6:11) is not a transition from some lesser existence to a greater one; it is not an improvement of a critically afflicted but viable condition. It is a completely new beginning; an entirely new life imparted to what was entirely dead! Scripture teaches that spiritual deadness is the state of all men when they enter physical life (Eph 2:1, 4-5; Col 2:13; 1Jn 3:14; Jn 5:24; Rom 4:17; 5:6, 12; 6:13) - and spiritual life, once attained through rebirth, is eternal; without death (previously supported). Its original death in Adam was a one-time consequence for sin - and Christ's sacrifice was the once-for-all settlement of sin's debt in complete satisfaction of God's justice and judgment, *actually undoing the previously executed death penalty* for those who will believe! (Heb 7:27: 9:12, 26-28; 10:10) This sacrifice alone allows God - who alone is able - to breathe life into what was once dead. (Only God, and only the power of God could accomplish such an unfathomable miracle!)

Attempting to infuse their arguments with integrity, the opposition requires us to accept (in various form and detail) that man is merely sick in sin (not dead) and makes himself well (unto spiritual life) through the exercise of something within his own will and control. Any honest examination of Scripture exposes that as utter nonsense; nothing more than a desperate and futile attempt to reduce the spiritual to the physical, the profound to the mundane, and the exclusive work of God to a partnership with the effort of spiritually dead man!

Nevertheless, as we have already seen, allowing the path of salvation to be paved with humanly comprehensible and attainable means allows a return path to be fashioned from equally common substance. But if unsaved man is merely sick, not spiritually dead, why does Jesus tell us we must be born again? Why not simply have our sickness treated so as to become well? Let us move on ...

Now then, it is wasted time and effort to study the truths of Scripture unto proper and mature understanding if we do not intend to apply them in our daily lives. Here is a critical example: We can easily discover from a study of Hebrews the essential contrast between the daily, ritualistic sacrifices involving the blood of imperfect animals carried out by imperfect priests appointed among men to serve for a time - and the one-time, effectual offering of the only perfect High Priest, Jesus Christ, appointed by God to serve forever and whose unblemished sacrifice consisted of His own sinless blood: The sacrifices of the priests could never take away sin - while the sacrifice of Christ removed sin once for all; forever! (Heb 10:10-14; 9:11-14, 24-28; 7:21-28; 1Pe 3:18)

Both views of ES agree that the salvation of sinners is justified (does not violate God's justice or integrity) because the believer's sins have been removed; that is, he no longer has an outstanding sin debt before God. It is further agreed that sin is the cause of spiritual death. So then, if the cause of spiritual death has been removed for the believer - once for all; forever - how is spiritual death still possible for him? Did Christ remove his sin or not? Did He put some back?

Once again, the inconsistency and lack of integrity of the opposing position is exposed. For that view to hold, the believer must be able to replace what Christ has removed - and then remove it again if he decides to amend that choice! Thus, the believer - not Christ - is responsible for, and in control of the removal of his sin! But if man is powerful enough to control such things, where exactly is any need of Christ? And what then is the significance of the cross?

And so, sound Scriptural reasoning has distilled yet another key (our third) to grasping the truth of ES: Christ laid down His life in complete satisfaction of our sin debt to God - *once for all!* And in the resurrection, God confirmed and displayed - for all to witness and know - that Christ's atoning sacrifice was accepted by Him. This validation was not intended merely for all of mankind, but for the rulers and authorities in the Heavenly realms as well! (Eph 3:10-11)

The security of our salvation as believers then, consists precisely in this: *We have no sin debt remaining before God!!!* And unless God is a liar and His Word is untrustworthy; that is, unless the scope and effect of Christ's sacrifice have been misrepresented, there is no way we can have a sin debt before God *ever again!* Since our account has been reconciled once for all, there is no possibility (and therefore, we should have no fear) of losing salvation - *because God has no basis for condemning us!* And there can *never ever, for all of eternity*, be any such basis - *says God!!!* That is what "once for all" means!

For God to condemn anyone who at any time became a genuine believer, He must condemn Christ, the cross and the work of the Holy Spirit! Actually, to condemn anyone whose account He has *Himself* eternally reconciled would require God to condemn Himself! Surely you understand why that must be! God is not double-minded and unstable - rather, it is the man who lacks wisdom and doubts God's Word whom the Scripture so accuses! (Jam 1:5-8)

Look, the point is really quite simple: If a man's sin debt was covered, it will *always* be covered - *it must be; God says so!* If it is covered, he is saved - therefore, he *is* not and *cannot ever* be condemned! On the other hand, if a man is condemned, his sin debt is *not* covered and therefore, he is not saved! If he is not saved, his debt was *never* covered! And just as God has no basis for condemning someone whose debt is covered, He cannot allow into Heaven one whose debt is not. God's Word makes all of this abundantly clear - it is the opposition which introduces the confusion.

Anyhow, we discover in the attempted manipulations above that ES opponents have betrayed themselves; that they have carefully and strategically selected some of the "major" inconsistencies of their view for "resolution." Perhaps they are hopeful that this will allow the remaining, "lesser" violations to be accepted or overlooked. This matter of being dead in our sins is one of the "majors" which must be removed. To concede that we are spiritually dead prior to the Holy Spirit's work of rebirth puts a fatal dagger in their "theology."

Scripture makes it abundantly clear that spiritually dead man is utterly depraved and hopelessly lost, unable to discern spiritual truth, and dead to the things of God. How then would he bring himself to life - or even be able to assist in the effort? No one can give himself life - even God cannot and did not do that! Though He does indeed give life and breath to all (Acts 17:25), He did not do that for Himself; *He always was - from eternity past!*

However, the opposition requires us to violate the Scriptural view; to alter our initial state from one of death to some viably improved condition which provides a more reasonable foundation for their assertions. However, that foundation remains fraught with too many additional defects to offer any real hope of support. And yet, I suspect that the opposition's effort to redefine God's exclusive role in the believer's attainment of salvation is not really a serious one (certainly not its focused intent). That effort is merely a smokescreen intended to mask the real mission (the creation and allowance of salvation insecurity). It is eventually abandoned when it comes under fire and its soldiers are forced to acknowledge that their position is doomed.

This token effort to rewrite the Scriptural teachings concerning spiritual rebirth is then redeployed with renewed vigor and commitment to the front lines of the primary target: conquering and wresting control of salvation from God! Once again however, we find the opposition's motivation quite perplexing. There are many theological profundities beyond the grasp of the human mind which they find no quarrel with. God's eternity, mentioned above, is but one - and I would submit that this stretches our minds much further than ES! Indeed, it seems that this matter of God's sovereignty versus man's in salvation is the only one which must be reined in!

Refocusing then on the matter of our positional existence, we have previously confirmed that spiritual life has no death. Though we all begin physical life spiritually dead, once we are reborn unto spiritual life, we cannot die spiritually again (Rom 6:9-11). Revelation speaks of the "second death" (eternal spiritual death), mentioning it seven times. It is second because its final pronouncement follows the first - physical death. Those who leave this life without being born again are condemned to spiritual death for all eternity.

Now then, let us examine some Scriptural propositional logic: Everyone born of God (every believer) *is* an overcomer (1Jn 5:4). Only believers *are* overcomers (vs 5). First result: All overcomers are believers. Rev 2:11 says those who overcome (believers already have) *will not be* subject to the second death. And so, a second premise: All believers (and *only* believers) *will be* spared the second death. Jn 3:36a; 6:47 (previously mentioned) state that believers *already have* eternal spiritual life, leading inexorably to a final conclusion: All believers are guaranteed *now* to be spared the second death for all eternity! *They already have eternal spiritual life - a life which has no death!*

Rev 3:5 confirms this and places an exclamation point on it: Overcomers will never have their names blotted out of God's book of life (discussed below)! The

possibility of believers losing or rejecting salvation would violate all this. A modification would be needed: *Only believers who do not lose their salvation are spared the second death, guaranteed that their names are eternally safe in God's book!* Those who *do* lose their salvation would have to be believers who *do not* already have eternal life - *but no such believer can ever exist!*

Over and over, in various ways, Scripture teaches that our salvation and its eternal benefits are a done deal (Col 3:1-4; Heb 10:14 for starters, but scour the Scriptures - it is found throughout). Our salvation is not contingent on anything more than what has wrought it already: the atoning sacrifice of Christ, regeneration by the Holy Spirit leading to godly sorrow and genuine repentance (2Co 7:10), and the gift of faith freely provided in accordance with the grace, mercy and love of God the Father. It is not in a box awaiting the presentation ceremony, subject to being misplaced. Nor can it go uncollected if we could somehow fail to show up on awards night. And deciding (making a choice) that we do not desire the award after all is a blasphemy only an unbeliever is capable of! (1Co 12:3)

Now, it is lamentably necessary to point out that ES opponents interpret Rev 3:5, referenced above, to state that *some* overcomers *will indeed* have their names blotted out of God's book of life. This is an example of what happens when Scripture is approached on a mission to "prove" a desired premise! First, these folks contend that the overcomer of 1John is not the same concept of overcomer being discussed in Revelation (though the author and context are the same). They do so to attempt to sidestep the obvious and fatal problem: It is clear that 1Jn is speaking of overcomers as believers. Therefore, the overcomers they claim will have their names blotted out of God's book must be unbelievers. Since they are forced to agree that overcomers have believed unto salvation, their invented interpretation fits quite nicely: The overcomers of Rev 3:5 - whose names will be blotted out - are different than those of 1Jn; they are overcomers who somehow, somewhere lost their salvation! They are ex-overcomers, ex-believers!

As we have seen, the wriggling and contorting the opposition is willing to undergo in order to stick to its story is indeed amazing and a great trying of our patience. I cannot begin to understand or explain why the opposition would rather engage in the endless, embarrassing and unrewarding exercise of defending the indefensible when such peaceful assurance and rest is available in the God-provided truth of ES!

Anyhow and next, since vs 4 discusses the godliness and worthiness of the overcomers who are guaranteed to have their names eternally included (*spiritually sensible and logical; Scripturally sound*), ES opponents conveniently add their own words to vs 5 (Rev 22:18). Thus, their manufactured interpretation to support their manufactured theory: "Christians" who are *not* living holy lives are overcomers who *will* have their names blotted out (*ridiculous nonsense; Scriptural absurdity!*)

That verse says no such thing! First, I will spare the reader a re-visitation of the ludicrous contention that maintaining salvation relies upon works; upon satisfactory godly performance. It is immensely frustrating that something which ought to be so unnecessary to ever discuss has somehow made its way to center stage of this debate. Second, I fail to understand why opponents of ES continue to maintain that some of the ungodly (who knows which ones?) were once saved. Since we know that such an assertion cannot be known or proven, why does the opposition continue to posit the unknowable and unprovable against the certainty of God's Word?

In any case, *Rev 3:5 does not state that anyone's name will ever be blotted out!* It simply, reasonably and most logically conveys the assurance that the names of overcomers will be found there - *and that there is no danger that any of those names will ever be erased!* It ought to be easily understood from the sense of the whole of Scripture that *only* the names of overcomers were *ever* entered in that book! Rev 17:8 addresses this specifically:

The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because he once was, now is not, and yet will come. (NIV)

and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. (KJV)

and the people of earth, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life before the world began, will be dumbfounded at his reappearance after being dead. (TLB)

Among Christians and anyone who approaches Scripture honestly, there is no argument concerning the foreknowledge of God. Scripture's presentation of God's omniscience and foreknowledge is universally accepted; that He knows all - from beginning to end (Isa 46:10; Rom 8:29-30; 11:2; Act 2:23; 2Ti 1:9; Tit 1:2; 1Pe 1:2; Pr 8:23). It is therefore empirically logical that God's book of life *has* never and *will* never undergo any additions, subtractions or revisions of any sort whatsoever. For it to do so, one of two impossibilities would have to be true: Either God is not omniscient and does not possess foreknowledge of all things - or else His foreknowledge is in error. There can be no other explanation for the book of life ever having names added to or deleted from it.

The book of life *never* included for *any* amount of time *anyone* who isn't saved. Nor did it ever *exclude* for any amount of time anyone who *is* saved. God did not start with a clean slate and add names to it as He discovered who was saved. Nor did He initially include everyone's name, subsequently blotting out those who did not measure up. The names to be found at the end will have been there from the foundation of the world, known to God from the beginning! God cannot suffer some type of shocking surprise forcing Him to correct His book! If we were ever to examine that book, it would be pristine! It is not God's

worksheet or scratchpad. It is His sovereign proclamation; accurate and complete when it was first published - and no reprints or updated editions have been, or ever will need to be issued!

Preceding vs 5, those being warned are clearly referred to as having merely a *reputation* for being alive while in fact they are spiritually dead - *unsaved!* It ought to be obvious that the issued call to repentance has their initial, genuine salvation in view - not the maintenance of their salvation by works in order to preserve their names in the book! The call to "strengthen what remains" is an admonishment to build upon the mere entertainment of religious and pious sentiments unto a proper and saving understanding and apprehension of God and salvation. The "wake up call" is an exhortation to spiritual life.

And so, here we have a passage by which God desires and intends to convey confidence and assurance to those who have overcome and are saved. When examined alongside a clear and proper understanding of other specific passages and the whole of Scripture, it is actually, as 1Pe 1:3-5, a proof text for ES. Yet somehow the opposition finds in it a warning that the very security being guaranteed is in danger of being forfeited! Incredible!

Finally then, let us be grateful for God's work of life-restoring spiritual regeneration. Being born again places us in the permanent, ***unchangeable*** position of being spiritually alive! Spiritual life is eternal! We cannot die - and we cannot be unborn!

Citizenship

Prior to our salvation, the world is our home - even if we are not exactly comfortable or content here. After salvation - while physically alive - we become restless wanderers; aliens and strangers looking forward to our eternal home, the city God has prepared for us. In actuality, as continually discussed, this citizenship is ours *now* - and it is permanent! We are no longer citizens of the world - we are citizens of Heaven (Eph 2:19; Phil 3:20; Heb 11:13-16; 1Pe 1:1, 17; 2:11; 2Pe 3:13).

That citizenship has been granted and bestowed by God - He cannot and will not revoke it! And we cannot be banished or deported - our eternal visa was purchased for us by Christ on the cross! Nothing and no one can remove us from Heaven's citizenship roll. For God to do it Himself, or for Him to allow anyone (including ourselves) to do so would be to declare the transaction of the cross invalid and the currency which paid for our citizenship worthless - and that currency was the very blood of Christ! It obtains much more than a temporary tourist pass - it provides eternal citizenship with a non-forfeiture clause!

It would appear that Paul's Roman citizenship - temporary; of human origin; provided merely according to the circumstances of his *physical* birth - was treated more valuably and considered more seriously than the eternal, supernatural citizenship conferred upon us as a result of our *spiritual* rebirth!

(Acts 22:25-29; 23:27) The natures and values of each ought to be more accurately assessed!

Chapter 11 of Hebrews reminds us that our Heavenly citizenship is granted to us on the basis of our faith. That faith is God's *non-returnable* gift! (Eph 2:8) Once received, it is automatically and immediately activated, causing all of the permanent, eternal provisions we have covered throughout this writing. Thus, it cannot be returned! How would the eternal changes it has already accomplished be undone? (Yes, salvation insecurity gets bombarded with the same dilemma at every turn!) Obviously, anything eternal *cannot* be undone - that is why we call it *eternal!*

In an imperfect but effective analogy, it is like saving a new file on your computer with the same name as an already existing one. The system asks you if you are sure you want to overwrite the old one with the new. Once you have clicked "Yes," the process is irrevocably activated! There is no "back" arrow to click on. The old is gone; it is erased and forever forgotten. The new is saved! From that point on, though it still retains its original name, whenever you look at the file you will only see the new version!

Heavenly citizenship then, is part and parcel of the gift of faith freely received of God; it is obtained no other way. And, as with earthly citizenship, Heavenly citizenship includes rights, benefits and privileges. However, the right to renounce it is not an option. Yet, why would any true believer ever need or desire such a right? God's legitimate children dearly appreciate their irrevocable inclusion in Heaven's roll! Only the unsaved could be concerned with an option to remove themselves in the event they should ever so desire!

Still, rejecting ES requires that *genuine believers* may sometime, somehow rescind their "choice" of salvation - along with its inherent eternal Heavenly membership - in exchange for eternal separation from God! As believers, these folks have a full appreciation for the unfathomable contrast between an eternity in God's presence versus the inescapable fires of Hell! Yet, apparently such "believers" would rather "enjoy" sin and evil in this life - and the subsequent eternal suffering of Hell - than experience the wonderful and marvelous everlasting promises and blessings of God! Is the obvious impossibility and irrationality of such a ridiculous contemplation really lost on ES opponents, or are they just being deliberately obtuse? Can any proper sense of Scripture and true knowledge of God actually allow even a moment's consideration of such foolishness? Why are we still discussing this issue?

Really now, anyone who would champion and defend the right to opt out of salvation and Heavenly citizenship cannot possibly have ever opted in! Advocating for such a choice is sheer nonsense and ought to instill a dreadful and imminent fear of God's wrath!

And so, let us gratefully rest in the assurance that our salvation has permanently, ***unchangeably*** positioned us as citizens of Heaven!

Ownership/Belonging

This is just one of many points which ought to seal the debate on its own. When we were lost, we belonged to the world and to the god of the world - Satan. Now that we are saved, we belong to Heaven and to the God of Heaven; the one and only true God (Jn 8:44, 47; 15:19; Rom 1:6; 7:4; 8:9a; 14:8; 1Co 15:23; Gal 3:29; 5:24; Col 2:20; Jam 2:7; 1Pe 2:9-10; 1Jn 3:12; Eph 1:13-14; 2Co 1:21-22).

God cannot misplace or otherwise lose anything which belongs to Him. Nor can anything or anybody take any of His possessions from Him (Jn 6:39; 10:27-29; Isa 43:13; Rom 8:35-39). And God will certainly never reject us Himself - He is faithful! (Jn 6:37; Ps 37:28; 1Co 1:9; 1Th 5:23-24; Heb 10:23) He has promised to never leave nor forsake us! (Dt 31:6, 8; Ps 94:14; Heb 13:5)

When we were saved, a transfer of ownership took place. We now belong to a new Owner - the supreme and almighty Creator and Sustainer of all! He was able to rescue us from the world to which we once belonged (Col 1:13) because He is more powerful than our previous owner (1Jn 4:4). And because He is indeed supremely almighty, we cannot be stolen back. Yet, lest we should now consider ourselves free unto ourselves, we are reminded that we are not our own; we have been bought at a price (1Co 6:19-20; Gal 5:13; 1Pe 2:16). We belong to the One who has purchased us and, as referenced above, He has promised to never let us go!

God's permanent and ***unchangeable*** ownership of us is wonderfully assuring!

Family

Another profound change takes place when we are saved. This involves *family membership*. In our unregenerate state, we belong to the family of sinners whose father is the devil himself - Satan (Jn 8:44). As believers, we become members of the family (Eph 3:14-15) whose Father is the essence of all that is perfect, supreme, and holy; the Creator and Sustainer of all things - God. That is because we are born anew - into a new family. This is an eternal, spiritual, familial relationship - not the temporary, physical family relationships we enjoy in this life. I am not diminishing these however, since they are themselves a marvelous blessing of God. Yet, Lk 14:26 empirically conveys the transcendent nature of our membership in God's family, placing it in proper perspective and calling us to value it accordingly.

Setting aside the ES issue, we would do well to understand, appreciate and walk in a constant awareness of what God Himself tells us and promises us concerning our membership in His family. First, *He is our Father* - our perfect, Heavenly Father - and He *enjoys* being a Father to us! He delights Himself in us, His children! (1Jn 3:1a; 2Co 6:18; Pr 3:11-12; Eph 2:19; 3:14-15) We are dearly loved by Him! (Eph 5:1) When Jesus instructed His disciples how to pray (Lk 11:1-2), He taught them to call upon God, *His Father*, as *their* Father because ... next, *Jesus is our brother!*

Heb 2:11-12 plainly informs us that we and Jesus are now of the same family - and He is not ashamed to call us His brothers! To be sure, this relationship vastly transcends man's greatest sense of family belonging. John the Baptist scolded the self-righteous of his day precisely on this point in Mt 3:9. It was the highest ideal of those Jews to be able to claim Abraham as their father. To them, *that* was family! And righteousness consisted merely in being able to trace their lineage to Abraham.

John warned them however, that unless they repented - and proved their repentance by bearing spiritual fruit - they had no part in the family of God, the only family which ultimately matters. This is reinforced by Paul in Gal 3:6-9 which teaches that lineage counts for nothing. Justification; entrance into the family of God, comes by faith. Vs 26 tells us that we who believe are sons of God; that our sonship is both effected and proven by our faith in Christ. Having been baptized into Christ; that is, having been born again, having identified ourselves with Him through a genuine profession of faith, having put to death the deeds of the flesh, and being now seen by God as *in Christ*, we have, in fact, clothed ourselves with Christ and His righteousness (vs 27).

We must recognize that belonging to God's family is no trivial matter! And once again, we encounter the unavoidable repetition: Being born into God's family involves and requires the irreversible, supernatural, miraculous working of God!

Meanwhile, Jn 1:12-13 clearly puts to rest the world's erroneous proclamation that we all worship the same God and can get along and respect the belief systems of all people no matter how much they differ (or actually oppose and refute one another)! Sentimental religion attempts to broker some type of feel-good, universal family reconciliation by claiming that we are *all* God's children - but that is not what God says in His Word!

We must take a lesson from this. Many Scriptural truths are unpopular and rejected; some because they interfere with man's attempt to be his own master, some because they prevent him from satisfying his own pleasures, others because they cannot be fully understood, and still others for various other reasons. But we must never fear to represent them unashamedly and without apology. We do so on the authority, *and at the command* of God Himself! More harm is done by maintaining friendship with the world (Jam 4:4) in denying or watering down God's Word than by simply and boldly proclaiming it!

We must trust God and His Word above all! Yes, we are all God's creation - *but we are not all God's children!* And the most loving thing we can do for the spiritual benefit of those who are not is to facilitate their knowledge and understanding of this! We must not enable their dangerously deluded condition.

For true believers, God provides the encouragement of Gal 4:4-6, informing us that we have received full rights as His sons - this being proven by the fact that He has sent His Holy Spirit to reside in us! Marvelous truths! On the other hand, if one has no sense of the Holy Spirit's indwelling, then most likely the

claim of godly sonship is illegitimate. But for those whose claim is genuine, vs 7 offers even more wonderful news: Not only are we God's sons; He has made us heirs! Rom 8:14-17 confirms and further reinforces these points, stating that we who are led by the Spirit are sons of God, co-heirs with Christ Himself! (because we are His brothers!) It also echoes the truth that our sonship is affirmed by the indwelling Holy Spirit. And Tit 3:3-7 is a wonderfully reassuring description of our "before and after" (as Col 1:21-22).

Still another perspective of our sonship (not as pleasant) is provided in Heb 12:5-11. We know we are legitimate sons - that God confirms His claim upon us as His children - because He troubles Himself (loves us enough) to discipline us. In so doing, He is training us up that we may share in His holiness (vs 10)!

Much space could be filled presenting Scriptural support for the believer's inclusion in God's family and describing the profound nature of this status. But what exactly is the point of this whole matter of family belonging? By now, I am sure you realize where this is heading: How in the name of reason and sanity is it conceivable that we could become part of God's family - at His hand; according to His will; resulting in the various Scriptural descriptions of our new status and position: possessing full rights as sons; dearly loved by our Father who disciplines us as His children; brothers of God's only begotten Son, Jesus, who has promised that He has prepared a room for us and will return for us; co-heirs of God in this family relationship we share with Christ; guaranteed an eternal, Heavenly inheritance on the authority and integrity of the promise of God to His children; and on and on - and then somehow find ourselves disowned, no longer God's child, dearly loved no more (God's discipline having apparently failed), disinherited heirs, Jesus' ex-brother, put out of God's house to become lion fodder instead?

We were included in the family on the basis of the gift of faith received of our perfect Heavenly Father - God Himself! Has He taken it back? Did we misplace it? Must we be reminded that God's gift of faith accompanied the work of regeneration He accomplished in us? Did He misread the work order? Has He undone that work?

Well, no matter - however this "mistake" occurred, we find ourselves once again stuck in the revolving door of the recurring dilemma: How will that eternal, miraculous work of God now be annulled? And even if that were possible, where do we then find ourselves if Satan should refuse to take us back because we defected and belonged to God's family for a while?

In view of such insanity, I ask anyone still denying ES to please re-read 1Pe 1:3-5. Read it in all the different legitimate versions. Then do a word study on it. And if you still want to be stubborn and believe salvation can be lost or rejected, please be sure to rip that passage out of your bible so it does not confuse your theology in the future!

Obviously, genuine believers (the truly born-again) are permanently, **unchangeably** positioned in God's family! Once in, there is no way out! Escaping the family is as impossible as escaping this truth! Thanks be to God!

The Figure of Marriage

In the Scriptures, the Church is figuratively alluded to as the bride of Christ (Rev 19:7; Eph 5:25-32; Jn 3:29; 2Co 11:2). Of course, the Church being referenced is the "invisible" body consisting of every genuinely saved believer - not the "visible" church which includes unsaved "churchgoers," non-churchgoing "church members," and "Christians" who "made a decision" once upon a time, many of whom leave this life as yet unchurched (and unsaved). The Revelation passage included above speaks of the wedding of the Lamb and His bride as one of the major events at the glorious culmination of all things; the marvelous beginning of our eternal Heavenly existence in the awesome presence of God!

Now then, God has made His view of divorce very clear. Mal 2:16 informs us that He hates it! 1Co 7:10-11 teaches us that divorce is not (should not be) an option (for believers) because Mk 10:7-9 prohibits man from separating what God has joined. Now, before I tie this point in (and again, I suspect you already know where this is headed), let me digress - for we have just stumbled upon confirmation of another previous point: ES opponents allow God's sovereign power and rule in marriage (and all other matters), but not in salvation.

To be consistent, the opposing view must claim that man does indeed have the right to choose to be divorced. After all, one of the trademark offerings of the opposition (mentioned earlier) is, "God will not force anyone to remain saved if he does not want to be." So, if God cannot force someone to remain saved against his will, where does He get the idea that He has the right to force a husband and wife to remain married simply because they have been supernaturally joined by His hand?

Look, this type of ludicrous "reasoning" results when God and His works are reduced to the limits of man's cerebral capacities. The very idea that God bows in homage to man's choice is patently absurd! To maintain such a low view of salvation that it may be manipulated by man as God stands by helplessly is sheer madness! Still, I have had ES opponents offer the argument above ("God will not force ...") with a shrug of pride over the virtue they expect to be seen in it. They must believe they are doing God a favor - providing Him with a legitimate excuse for losing some of those He has promised to protect. (In their final analysis, it is not God's fault - those who lose their salvation have only themselves to blame!) If the opposition would simply take the time and make the effort to think and reason through their arguments (straining them through Scripture), they would see the futility of it all!

Anyhow, returning to the matter of consistency, the opposition must further assert that man's choice to walk away from marriage does, *in actuality*, un-join the marriage bond forged by God, thus restoring the couple to their previously independent, unmarried states (just as Heaven-bound saints revert to hell-

bound reprobates by choosing to walk away from salvation)! After all, if man is powerful enough to undo the Holy Spirit's work of regeneration, then the mere dissolution of God's joining work in marriage ought not to cause so much as the breaking of a sweat!

This presents some dilemmas which may seem silly or awkward to contemplate, but such are the confusions when the opposing view is considered. For example, does this undoing of marriage restore the sexual virginity of those divorced? Will I now be accused of going too far, crossing the line in entertaining such thought? But how is this any more base or disrespectful than contemplating the necessary reversals required in the losing of one's salvation? Absurdity often serves to spotlight truth.

Surely, if man is able to undo spiritual transformations wrought by the hand of God, he can effortlessly reverse the merely physical changes he has caused himself! How though, will he erase the feelings of genuine love and caring which were shared? And what about all the actions those led to; the wonderful experiences which take place in the course of marriage? And what about the in-laws and the family bonds formed through the couple's marriage?

Once again, let us consider this from the spiritual view: If choosing to be unsaved is all that is necessary to undo an ex-saint's *true and sincere* love and desire for God and the things of God, to explain away the outworking of his *genuine* faith while he was saved, and to forfeit his *God-approved* and *God-provided* membership in the family of saints, then the less profound choice to merely be unmarried must therefore much more easily undo and obliterate the equivalent components effected by that marriage (difficult as that may seem)!

There remains much more to undo, of course, but let us examine just one: the children. Do they become unborn? Are they somehow vaporized - blotted out of existence? Now, this is a bit difficult and confusing. The opposition's claim that a child of God is able to choose to be His child no more restricts that choice to the child himself. Here we have the parent(s) making the choice for the child(ren). It would seem that the children must remain in existence. However, since (according to the opposing view) choosing un-salvation actually does undo the work of God in regeneration, I suppose choosing un-marriage might actually undo the work of the parents in procreation (maybe not?).

Seriously now, is not all of this positively silly? (And quite impossible, of course.) But how is postulating the ability to undo marriage any more silly than claiming it is possible to annul salvation? Why should violating Scripture in the separation of spouses whom God has joined together be seen as impossible when separating the saved sinner from the love of God (equally in violation of Scripture) is not? Why must we reject as disingenuously ludicrous the notion of children being physically unborn while we are expected to accept spiritual un-birth as serious and viable? How can the unfathomable implications of losing salvation be so casually ignored and arrogantly dismissed in order to allow the claim that a saint may become an unregenerate lost soul again, while allowing

comparatively insignificant ramifications to stand in the way of an equivalent confidence in declaring that a legitimately married couple may be un-joined?

Nonetheless, should the opposition become irritated because it may seem that I am implying that they support man's choice to become unmarried and un-joined, and should they respond with righteous indignation that they most certainly do not, I am left to inquire of them, "Why not?" It is consistent with, and makes as much sense as their case for salvation insecurity!

Returning to the point that Scripture's symbolic use of marriage demonstrates and reinforces the unchangeable positional nature of our salvation: The Old Testament consistently employs this figure to portray God's relationship with His people as a whole. God continually expresses His tender loving care toward His chosen nation in a manner reserved for a dearly-loved spouse.

Sadly, this was spoiled by recurring unfaithfulness on the part of the idolatrous, adulterous "wife." The OT contains harsh language and blunt characterization of the promiscuous sin and ungrateful rebellion so prevalent among the nation of God. However, in the New Testament - enabled by the finished work of the cross - the body of believers (the true Church) is the pure virgin prepared for the Bridegroom, Christ. She is undefiled and clothed in righteousness. It is this righteousness (the righteousness of God in Christ - 2Co 5:21) which allows her to ready herself for the wedding of the Lamb (Rev 19:7-8).

Now, will not the bride of Christ be presented to Him without blemish; perfect and whole? Of course! Since the wedding of the Lamb - though yet to occur in time - is most assuredly completed in eternity, why would God allow some of the bride's members to go missing? Scripture often illustrates the corporate spiritual body of believers by referencing the physical human body (1Co 12:12-27; Rom 12:4-5; Eph 4:3-6, 15-16, 25; Col 3:15). Employing Scripture's illustration then, to allow some of the saved to "opt out" afterward would result in a bride without an arm, missing some toes, having only one eye, with half of one ear gone, and other such defects!

Lastly, in light of God's view of marriage and divorce, how is it possible that God should allow (be forced to abide) the separation of what He has joined together in the ultimate and ideal figure of marriage: Christ and His bride - the Church?

When we are saved, we become part of Christ's inheritance, betrothed to him as members of the body which represents His bride - the Church. We can be quite assured that God will not allow His Son's bride to suffer some loss or severing of body parts such that the wedding of the Lamb finds the bride disfigured and blemished. The bride of Christ will be preserved in all her perfection; the perfection which God accomplishes in every true believer and which consists in the perfection of His Son - whose image we are being continually conformed to until that day when its completion finds glorification as promised in Rom 8:29-30.

It all rests in the perfect plan involving the perfect work of our perfect God, none of which would even approach perfection if the eternal security of our salvation could be influenced by the independent, imperfect effort of imperfect man!

In item 4 above, we discussed the past, present and future components of our redemption, observing that salvation is achieved once for all. The doctrine of repentance is similar, and this discussion of marriage provides an insightful analogy which solidifies the point under consideration: Our initial, general repentance turns us to God and leads to salvation (2Co 7:10). Repentance for subsequent sin is required to restore fellowship with God (again, *practical* - not *positional*) in obedience to His Word (1Jn 1:9). It does not lead to salvation over and over, any more than the reconciliation of spouses after a spat causes them to become married again.

When we sin against our spouse, God's Word requires us to reconcile. The offender must confess and repent; the other must forgive. We do not enter a state of divorce while that process is pending, any more than a true believer enters a state of lost salvation when he sins. In both marriage and salvation, our positional relationships remain unchanged - though in practice, they are not functioning as they should until healing restoration takes place.

In God's eyes, the positional relationship of two Christian spouses is fixed, unable to be severed. Can God's relationship with His dearly-loved child be any less permanent? No, just as man cannot separate what God has joined in marriage, the child of God cannot be separated from God's love! The precious redeemed of God cannot forfeit or otherwise lose his position as God's child!

In summary then, God's hand performs the profound joining of marriage - and the miraculous work of salvation. Man can no more undo God's work of salvation than His joining in marriage. The Church is the bride of Christ - and His bride is complete, perfect and pure with each believer in place (1Co 12:27). God cannot and will not allow the union of Christ and His bride to be viewed and treated as less sacred than human marriage! Consequently, we cannot divorce Christ - what God has joined, no man can separate! In any case, anyone who is truly saved would never desire this separation! Such foolishness should never be taught!

Our position in the body figuratively described in Scripture as the bride of Christ is obviously and necessarily permanent and ***unchangeable!***

In Christ!

This is the ultimate reality of our salvation security; the very proof of it! *We are in Christ!* In light of such profound assurance, why would anyone dare impugn God's ability and integrity regarding His promise to safeguard our salvation? How is that gently answered? I have already cited the numerous Scripture references which irrefutably establish our position in Christ. This alone seals the guarantee, but if that were not enough, God also sees us *in His righteousness!* (Phil 3:9; 2Co 5:21) We are clothed with Christ! (Gal 3:27)

Since all Christians share this common position in Christ, Scripture's call to unity and like-mindedness (Rom 15:5-6; 1Co 1:10; Phil 2:1-2; Eph 4:13; 2Co 13:11) is quite logical and makes perfect sense. But once again, we encounter the phenomenon lamented earlier: We may stand together with the opposition in apparent agreement as we open our hymnals to proclaim the truth of ES in vocal harmony, but the unity is simply an illusion after all! For when the strains have faded, the opposition unashamedly and incoherently denies what they have just enthusiastically declared:

*My hope is built on nothing less - Than Jesus' blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest frame - But wholly lean on Jesus' name*

*On Christ, the Solid Rock, I stand - All other ground is sinking sand
All other ground is sinking sand*

*When he shall come with trumpet sound - O may I then in Him be found
Dressed in His righteousness alone - Faultless to stand before the throne*

Of course, this is just one example of many. Providing a comprehensive list would be quite tedious. Lest this point be overlooked however, let me furnish some others for your consideration: I Know Whom I Have Believed, My Tribute, A Mighty Fortress is Our God, Day by Day, Calvary Covers It All, Nothing but the Blood, Heaven Came Down. I encourage you to read and meditate upon the words of these hymns which Christians on both sides of the aisle sing in unison. Flip through the pages of the hymnal and you will easily discover many more - and contemporary Christian music echoes the same. The music we regularly share is replete with proclamations of ES! The various elements of its truth are unashamedly declared over and over. And, as exemplified above, these proclamations are not obscure or ambiguous!

Now be honest, opposing brother, surely you have sung these and similar words with great exuberance - and if not with voice, then with mind, heart and soul have enthusiastically added a resounding "Amen!" When you do so, you affirm the Scriptures and proclaim the very salvation security you argue against!

Nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness! Yes, you declare and claim this truth! Will you now dare submit that the godly obedience and meritable choice you bring before the Lord are not less than Jesus' blood and righteousness? Surely not! And who exactly is the source of your godliness and righteous choices - yourself?

I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus' name! It is not possible to hold the opposing view and proclaim this truth simultaneously! We *wholly* lean on Jesus for our hope of salvation! We dare not place *any* trust in ourselves, though we be the most faithful and obedient child of God to have ever walked the Earth! Paul, perhaps the greatest recorded example, did not trust himself. Shall we?

All other ground is sinking sand! ALL other ground! Yes, you have proclaimed this truth as well, willingly attesting to its veracity! Is your faithful obedience the same ground as His blood and righteousness? Will you stand upon that with equal assurance? Will you not, like Peter, begin sinking as your eyes move away from Christ as you walk in your own added righteousness and power?

O may I then in Him be found! Yes, you have summed up your hope precisely! You are saved - and secure in your salvation - because you are *in Him!* Surely you realize that! Yet, you propose the possibility of somehow finding your way back out? We ought never to consider such foolishness!

Dressed in His righteousness alone! Does this need any explaining? Were you merely singing these words because that is what the hymnal reads? Of course not - you would defend this truth to your dying breath! So why do you violate your own integrity by changing the meaning of "alone?" What moves you to add something of yours to complete what is lacking in Christ?

Faultless to stand before the throne! Faultless! If God expects and demands, and if we will in fact - according to Scripture - appear before Him *faultless*, why would He then be requiring and examining our post-salvation godliness? When we appear before him, will we proudly and confidently present - for His consideration and judgment - our perfect, faultless performance? "Silliness!" you reply. I agree, so let us examine this further:

If Christ's righteousness is perfect and complete (Scripture is true), and we are seen by God in His righteousness (true again), why must we (or why *are* we) attempting to add something to it? What exactly is the role of Christ's righteousness in our salvation then? Does it merely help or partner with our effort of the flesh? "More silliness," you say? Very well! So if entrance to Heaven is instead and indeed solely reliant on the righteousness of Christ which is imputed to each born-again believer, then what exactly is the role of *our own* "righteousness?" Will you dare admit that it has nothing to do with salvation; that it is merely an imperfect expression of our sincere love for God; the corrupted outworking of our genuine faith in Christ; a tarnished reflection of the indwelling Holy Spirit? Will you concede that none of that must be allowed to have any sway in God's judgment, lest it guarantee a "thumbs down?" Must we be reminded of God's view of our "righteousness" (Isa 64:6)?

So then, since we know that God requires perfection, and since we know that perfection is found in Christ alone, and since God's gracious plan allows us to be seen and judged in the perfection of Christ, why do some resist being saved on God's terms? What exactly are they afraid of?

The only remaining alternative ought not to be discussed, except to reveal its absurdity in order to remove, perhaps, the last bit of resistance to the truth: If we must indeed persuade God with our own effort, then the righteousness of Christ is either imperfect or incomplete (Scripture is wrong)! The role of our own righteousness then, is either to make perfect what is not (to fix the

righteousness of Christ), or to complete what Christ has left unfinished! Hoo-boy! It causes me great fear and trembling to even put such thoughts in writing!

As to the first point: If Christ's righteousness is not perfect, how will adding our perfect performance fix that? His imperfection will simply corrupt our perfection! The solution then, would be to substitute our perfection for Christ's imperfection; that is, to take Christ out of the equation completely so that we can control our salvation perfectly and safely without his corrupting influence! (Ouch!)

If instead, the second possibility is true, then exactly how far short does Christ's righteousness leave us? Just how much must we make up in order to complete it? Since whatever we add must match His now perfect (though incomplete) righteousness, that places us under tremendous stress and pressure! We cannot afford the tiniest mistake! One little slip and Heaven's everlasting bliss is exchanged for the eternal torment of Hell! However, if we should indeed manage to maintain our perfection and add it to Christ's, we must then ask God not to judge us in Christ's righteousness alone, but in our own *improved, completed* version! (Wow!)

Have we then stumbled upon what is feared - the unease of venturing our eternal salvation on Christ's righteousness alone? Before taking such a monumental risk - given the critical and eternal stakes which lie in the balance - are we availing ourselves of the opportunity to firm up whatever inadequacies God may discover in Christ by confidently placing ourselves in the breach? Really now, have we not uncovered and identified the true absurdity in all this?

Jesus taught that a house divided against itself cannot stand (Lk 11:17). The notion that we, the righteousness of Christ, are able to lose, reject or walk away from the righteousness of Christ is likewise untenable. So how will ES opponents continue to join in the choir of the saints *while maintaining their opposing view*? Is it possible to express such truths while opposing ES? Are they not divided against themselves?

Still, our salvation (and its inherent security) is not merely a matter of our position in Christ; possessing *His* righteousness *rather than* our own godliness and faithfulness. It is not a case of one versus the other - His versus ours. If so, I am confident we would agree which it must be; but it involves *both*! However, the first is the exclusive and effectual *requirement* and *assurance* of our salvation - at once accomplishing *and guaranteeing* the effect; perfect in all aspects! The second is the *imperfect evidence* of the first - which imperfections are eclipsed in the light of the radiance of Christ's righteousness! It is the natural result of the first; yet imperfect because it is entrusted to man - *and God would not entrust it to man if it could alter the eternal order!* God knows what is in man (Jn 2:25)! Though man's improved comportment is a natural outgrowth of the Holy Spirit's presence and influence, it remains imperfect because man corrupts its outworking by mingling his sinful nature in the effort.

And yet, we must not succumb to fatalism, resignation and despising of God and His commands, the putting off of care and concern which entrap and characterize the hyper-Calvinist. We must toil and labor, endeavoring to honor, glorify and magnify God always and everywhere - *but we may rely on none of that to satisfy or impress Him!* Our performance does not, cannot and will not provide Him just cause for allowing our entrance to Heaven. Nor will it maintain His favor in order that we might retain our post-salvation visa! That profound business was taken care of once for all by the only One able to do so - Christ Jesus! Our trust must be in Him *alone* - *while* we nevertheless, in obedience to God, press into service the whole of our being!

Please hear this clearly: It is all about *Him* - what *He* has done and continues to do! And because we do indeed, by the benevolence of His grace and mercy, recognize and understand who He is and what He has done and is doing, we gladly press on. Though we fall short, we continuously and steadfastly aim for the ideal: to serve Him with every ounce of our might, every fiber of our being and the utmost effort of our will! However, we become fools when we lose perspective and reverse the order of things. We are not pressing on *in order* to accomplish or preserve anything in us - we press on *because* something has been permanently accomplished in us!

And again, let us not resort to reconciling the apparent inconsistencies by some neat human wisdom which has discovered that we can all find unity if we just give man's choice a seat at the table. *Here* is the sole and ultimate choice which must be faced: Will we choose to humble ourselves and simply accept God's Word, relying on Him in total, and walk in the faith He has given us - fully appreciating and trusting His power, wisdom, faithfulness and integrity? Or will we retain our "dignity" and pride by choosing to continue in the foolish notion that the right to enter God's kingdom (and the means to retain that right) relies on something less than all of God in order to allow some additional bit of man? Will we ever fully grasp the concept that man is God-created? *Whatever man might add is all and ultimately of God anyhow!*

Opposing ES requires that some part of man (however small does not matter) must evade God's sovereign control - *and be influentially powerful enough to earn an independent seat and voice on salvation's board of directors - with God as co-member!* Will we attempt to somehow justify such blasphemy by patronizing God in allowing Him to occupy the chair? Will such condescension and magnanimity be extolled? No, it is a shameful insult to the sovereign God!

Finally however, I must honestly report that there are some who in fact, completely and stubbornly reject this positional aspect of our salvation. The only basis for that which I can conceive of is their undying commitment to reject ES. Or perhaps the concept of our position "in Christ" is simply too abstract, a bit vague, not tangible enough for the human senses. If so, are we then to abandon the Scriptural teachings which illustrate that spiritual rebirth imparts a new heart (pursuing the purposes of God) and a new mind (functioning as the mind of Christ); indeed, an entirely new nature (led by the Holy Spirit in

conformity to Christ) since these are equally challenging apprehensions for the human intellect? When we have dared to dismiss all that, what should prevent us from relinquishing any remaining faith in the other revealed truths of God or, for that matter, in the very existence of God Himself? Does the incapability of the finite human mind to fully grasp the infinite truths of God render such truths unworthy to retain? Of course not.

So then, let us simply enjoy, as God desires us to, the comfort and security of our position in Christ. God's Word says *true believers are in Christ!* I cannot imagine a more secure position to find myself in! Occupied in truth (and there is no other way, no matter how many unregenerate charlatans claim to occupy it), such a position profoundly sobers and humbles. On one hand, it provides a joyous peace - on the other, a trembling of soul toward the honor and awesome perfection of the One who has gently and lovingly placed us there. And because of His dear love for us, God continually reassures us that He will protect and keep us for all eternity, having most powerfully and unquestionably demonstrated to us His desire and ability to do so!

There can be no virtue found in denying the security of our position in Christ - permanent and ***unchangeable*** - in a needless and futile effort to defend God's honor and the wisdom of His [Plan of Salvation](#)! That leads us to ...

7) A noble desire to do two seemingly virtuous things:

- 1) To defend God and His Word; to protect His [Plan of Salvation](#) from misuse and abuse as a license to sin; to rescue God and His plan from mockery (Imagine, using the feeble strength of the flesh to save and protect the almighty God!).
- 2) To motivate (or worse, *intimidate*) folks unto godliness; holy living (2Pe 3:11, 14; 1Th 4:7; Tit 2:11-12) with the threat of losing salvation - *but that is not part of God's plan!* Genuine rebirth resolves this - God's plan accounts for it all!

Though well-intentioned, this is meddling and interfering with the exclusive business of God. Justification for doing this is derived as so: Multitudes of professing Christians all around are living lives which contradict their profession (Tit 1:16), and so the cry goes out to protect the honor of God and His plan. After all, the world must know that true salvation does not allow such licentiousness! But this is addressed in the book of Jude, Rom 6, Gal 5:13 and 1Pe 2:16 (among others).

God does not need us to solve this problem for Him - and inventing a solution which contradicts His Word is most certainly not helpful or pleasing to Him. Furthermore, to summarize Jude's closing verses (17-25), true believers are instructed to remember what *they* know, where *they* have been and are now, to build *themselves* up in faith, and to look to and glorify the One who is able to keep and preserve *them* unto Himself! God will deal with those others

appropriately (Gal 6:7-8). Causing those who merely profess rebirth to live as truly reborn cannot and will not happen!

But here is the difficulty: When these others are merely “others,” we easily and simply rest in the conclusion that, judging by their behavior, they have obviously never been saved. However, when they are loved ones, close friends, fellow local church members; when we have been praising God for their salvation; when, in this sense, we have come to own it for ourselves, we do not treat the situations the same - though they are indeed the same!

We want so much for those we know and love to be saved that we attempt to simply will it to be so! The slightest, temporary, dimmest ember of evidence (or anything we can construe as evidence, no matter how much of a stretch is required) is fanned into a spiritual blaze in our minds! We celebrate for joy that our spouse or child or parent or close friend is a new child of God! Sometimes we cause them to “give in” just to please us! We then force ourselves to stay that course long after weeks, months and years of contrary or lacking evidence - *but we “know they are saved!”*

So we then begin to “evangelize” them with the message that they will lose their salvation if they do not shape up. Since they are not saved, they do not get it; they *cannot* shape up - they are lost in sin; spiritually dead; in need of rebirth from above! Finally, if and when we remove our rose-colored glasses and see the situation as it is (they are not saved after all), we attempt to salvage some of our own integrity - at the expense of the integrity of Scripture - by concluding that they lost their salvation.

In addition to the error above, we must further realize that the term “Christian” is tossed around rather loosely in these modern times. It should not surprise us that much of what carries, or used to carry the title of “Christian” is not, or was not Christian at all! Before we conclude that it used to be but now is not, we must consider if it ever really was.

For example, we constantly hear that the divorce rate among Christians is virtually the same as non-Christians. That is impossible! Those statistics do not and cannot discern real Christians from counterfeits. Obviously, the Christian category includes merely *professing* Christians - and those divorces belong in the non-Christian total.

Of course, further evidence that these statistics are skewed is that we never hear the third category reported - divorces among the unequally yoked. But here is a sobering wake-up call: Even if we allow for whatever number of divorces occur among truly saved spouses (due to immature faith, human emotion, sin, improper spiritual counseling or whatever), do we realize what a high percentage of the Christian category must be merely professing if the divorce rates are virtually equal?

Similarly, various reports place the percentage of Christians in America at 80 or 90 or whatever. True Christians should have no difficulty resolving the

inconsistency between those claims and the hedonism all around us. Clearly, the figures cannot be accurate. Therefore, if the reported percentage eventually drops, we will know better than to conclude that a lot of people are losing their salvation!

We need to apply the same discernment before accepting individual professing Christians as genuine! And we must abstain from contributing to the problem, increasing the number of mere professors by ascribing salvation so quickly and easily to those for whom our hearts yearn.

As part of the solution then, the most effective way we can demonstrate to the self-professing lost that those professing believers do not represent or belong to God (or us) is to provide them with a clear contrast. Rather than attempting to rescue God's honor by convincing the imposters not to "reject their salvation" or - after the inevitable failure of that course - reporting to others that their salvation was lost, let us instead concentrate on living the holy lives God calls us to (1Th 4:7; 2Pe 3:11, 14; Phil 1:27a; Eph 4:1).

We cannot possibly control the fallout from all of the phony "Christianity" around us! Nor can we explain to a world of lost sinners that these professing Christians are just as lost as they are! They cannot understand that. Actually, their natural inclination is to enjoy accepting the false professors as true. It gives them an excuse (so they think) to neglect consideration of the gospel message themselves!

And that is the very phenomenon which drives us to cry out to God - and causes some to fall into a trap. Since these false Christians are identified with salvation, some folks find it easier to claim that their sinful lifestyle proves that they lost their salvation than to explain and teach what true salvation is - thus showing that these imposters were never included in. Much of this is due to the fact that the "average" true Christian nowadays does not understand and/or is unable to articulate the gospel message effectively. Though the message is simple, it is not one of the simplistic, unavailing versions being proclaimed today. If it was, there would be an excuse for allowing these others to be viewed as Christians: They pass the test!

I think we fail to realize how much we contribute to the problem ourselves. If not by our acts, then in our minds we are allowing the inclusion of great numbers of people into God's family who have no family resemblance at all! We need to be more strict and discerning, applying a right judgment (Jn 7:24); not with a mean, judgmental spirit - but motivated by a reverence for God and His great renown, and a genuine, loving heart for the lost! As long as we continue to allow folks (not limited to those we know and love, as above) to pass the easy test, *everyone* will select the easy test! (Are they not?) And the easy test will become the standard! (Has it not?) We cannot administer the easy test to our select favorites and the true one to the rest!

In any event, when we witness this “false Christianity” going on around us, we must seek God’s will as to what to do about it. Meanwhile, we need, at the very least, to be prepared to spread the truth in all its fullness - with its inherent urgency, contemporary relevance, sobering exhortation, ensuing responsibility and all the rest - and to do this with an accurate view of the sinner’s sin and God’s holiness before us! There is just too much “love” going around and not enough truth! We cannot merely love people into Heaven! We must evangelize them with the message which alone - and at once - contains and is the power to do so! Although truth without love is too harsh, love without truth is too soft; the former deadens the heart, stresses the mind and paralyzes the will, while the latter soothes the heart without engaging the mind or motivating the will.

And so, let us stop concerning ourselves with offending the imposters or the self-professing lost. God does not expect or desire us to protect their feelings from the truth. Such “protection” is like Peter’s! (Mt 16:22-23) God is able to heal any resultant hurt with a permanent, eternal healing. He has given us a message to deliver. Let us simply do what He asks and get it delivered - *completely* delivered! (Eph 6:19-20; Col 4:3-6) He has everything under control. Let us fix our eyes upon Jesus and let God handle the situation - because we most certainly cannot.

What we *can* do however, is to help strengthen and purify the weak and tarnished witness emanating from the truly saved. As we ourselves mature in the Spirit (perhaps with assistance from a more mature mentor), we must fulfill our responsibility to disciple *others* unto greater growth, understanding and maturity - especially, but not limited to those we “introduce” to the Lord ourselves.

SUMMARY

In summary then, do we not yet see, honestly and truly, that all the objections to the doctrine of ES are ultimately set upon the same two pillars: First, how to prevent the permanently saved from taking license with sin - and second, the establishment of an authoritative place for man’s choice in the matter. As I have shown however, those pillars are just illusions, providing no real support for the opposing view whatsoever!

But beyond that, are we still unconvinced that salvation is *necessarily* permanent; that it comes with its own security guarantee as an inseparable inherency; that this is so because the effectual work of God in the heart, mind and soul of a saint produces eternal, unfathomably profound changes which cannot be undone - and because God Himself has pledged to guarantee it, having provided the indwelling Holy Spirit Himself as the very deposit which both demonstrates and ensures the certainty of His pledge?

Do we still fail or refuse to grasp the Scriptural view of the impenetrable position enjoyed by the saved; that it is eternally secure because God Himself has placed us there, promising to keep and guard us by *His* power? Can that position truly find itself held in such utter contempt - as opposing ES requires - when it is impossible to deny that it is anchored in Christ Himself?

And will we ever recognize the blasphemous indictment of God and His Word which surreptitiously lurks behind the contention that man has an unspecified measure of responsibility (*and capability*) to satisfy some portion of his own sin debt? Is it really imaginable that this debt was not completely satisfied in Christ's atonement, thus exposing this critical and clear testimony of God's Word as a monumental lie of Satan? Is it actually possible to interpret Scripture's claim that Christ has removed sin for those who believe - once for all; forever - to mean anything other than what is plainly stated?

Do we not realize that rejecting these truths judges the work of God in salvation to be no greater than the greatest work of man, devoid of any supernatural or miraculous component - and further, that such rejection considers the power of God which eternally secures the saved to be of no greater magnitude, nor any more availing than the best which man himself can muster?

Denying ES relegates the veracity of God's Word, the faithfulness of His promise, the surety of His guarantee, the very integrity of His holy, perfect, never-changing character and nature to the company of corrupt man - providing God just another ordinary place among sinful men in a temporary, dying, godless world!

And yet - though ES is simple, reasonable and, most importantly, Scripture-taught - the doctrine of salvation insecurity (an impossible position which greatly distorts and violates Scripture and common sense alike) continues to be promulgated!

Rather than rushing to the rescue of God and His Word, why not simply rest upon Gal 6:7-8 and 1Jn 2:19? Opposing ES requires and exposes the violation of both passages. First, we must believe that God *can* be mocked - why else invent the doctrine of salvation insecurity? Second, we must reject the teaching God has provided to protect us from this very error! Do we not realize that everything is put right, every concern removed by 1Jn 2:19? There is no need to seek and implement a "solution" of our own.

As demonstrated throughout this writing - and in the abundant provision you will find at its conclusion - God's Word exposes salvation insecurity as a misguided invention of man; a false doctrine manufactured to cure a non-existent need conjured up in the human mind! It is a counterfeit security blanket desperately clung to in order to justify God and protect his [Plan of Salvation](#) from intruders should the need arise - *but it is God who justifies and safeguards!* Our assistance and protection is laughable!

In total disregard for its corresponding requirement to rewrite the Scriptures, the opposition has built its doctrine of salvation insecurity in reverse; from the analysis of man's observations, experiences and unsatisfied quests for truth backward to an explanation which attempts to resolve it all! But beyond the fact that the process itself is flawed, God's Word says their *final analysis* is flawed as well!

First, the missing answers are God-ordained and to be left blank; they are not part of some quiz where nothing is lost by hazarding a guess or hunch! And second, the

hedonism witnessed among professing Christians is not the result of lost salvation - it is evidence that it has never been attained; that the professions of such "Christians" are false! This Scriptural tenet of ES cannot be refuted and ES opponents are well aware of that. It is time for them to let go of their needless opposition!

Look, let me be blunt: *It is impossible for the opposition to produce even one example of someone who has lost his salvation!* Nonetheless, they teach this doctrine and claim it is happening all around us! Where, I ask? Let us hear first-hand from an unsaved one! Bring forth just one such case in reality! It cannot be done! Why might that be?

This raises an interesting curiosity: Let us consider one who might approach those of the contrary view, stating that he was once born again but is struggling to confirm whether or not he has lost his salvation due to some recent bout with sin (perhaps very serious), some struggle with ungodly attitudes, some other weaknesses which are known to be displeasing to God, or some other cause of such doubt. Or perhaps he may be asking on behalf of, and out of concern for a loved one who appears to be out of step with the Holy Spirit. Now, I have referred several times in this writing to one of the dilemmas of the opposing position: that the threshold for maintaining salvation cannot be found. It is not in the Scriptures; it is indefinable, and whenever we are called upon to acknowledge it hypothetically, we are forced to refer to it as "whatever that is."

So how exactly would the opposition counsel such a one? What strategy, what questions would be employed to probe for and determine the answer? And what if the approach was not out of concern that desired salvation might be lost, but rather that salvation is no longer desired and such a one seeks instruction as to how to reject it? After failing to dissuade him from seeking to execute such a choice (am I wrong to assume that ES opponents would indeed attempt this first?), will they then fail to provide him with direction for what we must all nonetheless agree is a foolhardy course? If so, they would thus withhold from him the information he requires to consummate the very choice they argue he has a right to! And yet, if they do avoid such hypocrisy, how exactly will they then instruct him to rid himself of the burden of eternal salvation?

Now, you of the contrary view, do not hastily dismiss these difficulties as nonsense! It is your position which begs them! I strongly encourage you to take up their challenge, for if you are able to truly resolve them, you will have succeeded in defending your position!

Perhaps a quick consideration of another false doctrine may convince ES opponents to reconsider. This writing has described several errors which have led to the invention of the doctrine of salvation insecurity: Conducting a search for truth from man's view rather than God's; allowing human reason, however otherwise logical, to be posited in opposition to Scripture; "addiction" to a predetermined creed; violating Dt 29:29 in an attempt to resolve the mysteries of God; allowing the human intellect to become a taskmaster demanding to understand the unknowable; constructing doctrine in reverse - from the observations and experiences of man (and their analysis from man's view) backward to a resolution which satisfies the observer and participant rather than the Inventor and Choreographer; and there are others, of course.

Now then, a fundamental key to the integrity and validity of any doctrine is this: Does the concept originate with God or man? Does Scripture *teach* it? Support it? Mention it at all? Still, though it must originate with God and be found in His Word, the responsibility to define, establish and teach it in human terms - in accordance with God's plan and pleasure - rests, of course, in man's intellect and reasoning abilities. These are the final avenues by which God communicates with us (and we can rest assured that we are able to grasp all that God intends for us to comprehend) and by which those who are called and gifted to teach convey the truths of God's Word to others (though these others are responsible to confirm their veracity - Act 17:11; Mt 7:15-16a; 1Jn 3:7-8; Rom 14:5b).

However, we must carefully and continually monitor and adjust what we allow to come under consideration; what is being processed by our intellects and established with our reasoning. Are we pursuing God's thoughts and purposes or our own? Are we attempting to satisfy God or ourselves? Are we discovering a truth of God or solving a dilemma of man? There are, of course, endless other ways to draw the distinctions and describe the qualifications and tests, but I trust the reader understands the dangers and pitfalls being generally outlined.

Falling victim to the errors above is epitomized in the false doctrine known as "[Age of Accountability](#)" (AOA). AOA is a prime example of violating all the rules in order to satisfy a quandary of man - and it does so by allowing man to supply his own desired solution. Salvation insecurity ought to learn a lesson from the error of AOA. The effort to promote and sell that false doctrine is undone by the very reasoning which its proponents offer as support (click on the link to refer to that posting). As we have seen - and will see further - this is the undoing of salvation insecurity as well.

By the way, AOA tosses a curve ball into the ES debate. A new question arises: Do those who are issued free salvation passes have the right to cancel them afterward if they choose to be unsaved? Can they simply toss the certificate in the trash or must they be officially invalidated or whatever? And what if they change their mind? Are they automatically covered again as soon as they decide they want salvation after all or do they have to sweat it out while their request is processed through the channels? Also, is their free privilege subject to forfeiture due to bad behavior or any other cause? If so, what is the procedure to regain it after its loss?

Well, enough of that confusion. The resistance to ES ought to collapse when its pillars of "support" (licentiousness and man's choice) are appropriately removed. With those set aside, there ought to be easy understanding and acceptance of ES. So why do some refuse to set them aside or persist in denying the clear implications of doing so?

When all is said and done, it is simply man's pride; his desire to either be in control or to have opportunity to influence control - and his need to understand what he believes he has a right to; to be able to authoritatively teach that for which he finds no authoritative

support. He does not trust God's handling of such things so he presumes to assign responsibility for them to himself.

The driving force behind it all, in essence, is man's desire to dictate which truths of God, if any, will be allowed to transcend his apprehension and control. When man discovers that his ability to manage the godless "Christianity" around him is "limited" to his faith in God, leading a godly life as an example in contrast, the exercise of his spiritual giftedness, wise implementation of God's Word under the Holy Spirit's guidance, and the mystery of prayer; and when he is asked to exercise this influence without understanding its detailed, specific working - unable to see, know or dictate its result - he finds discontentment and becomes indignant. He demands an explanation! When one is not forthcoming, he supplies his own - and convinces himself of the virtue of it all!

And so, first he has a seemingly righteous concern that some of the saved may incorrectly believe they are free to sin. Did not Paul, under the Holy Spirit's inspiration, address this very point in unambiguous fashion in Romans 6? Did he not anticipate and put to rest the essential concern which sadly remains at the core of this debate today? And is it not quite curious that in this preeminent and clearly didactic passage on the subject, not once does Paul so much as hint that failure to apply its teaching places our salvation at risk? Would this not have been the prime opportunity to warn us, and this chapter the prime location we would expect to find it if it were so?

And yet, on the contrary, he clearly states the very opposite! The only condition raised is that we must indeed have died to sin; been united with Christ in His death - we must be saved! If so, then: vs 5; We will *certainly* be united with Christ in His resurrection! And vs 8, 13; We *will* live with Him - we *have been* brought from death to life! Because vs 6-7, 18; We are no longer slaves to sin; we are freed from sin! And vs 2, 4; We are not able to live in sin any longer. Instead, we are able to live a new life. Because vs 11; We are dead to sin and alive in Christ; *count on it!* And vs 22; The result of all this for us is holiness and *eternal* life! Because vs 23; God has granted it to us *as a gift!* Do vs 1-2 and 15 allow any possible marriage of ES with a license to sin? By no means!

Nonetheless, though God managed to design, implement, complete and administer the remainder of His salvation plan in fine fashion, some have endeavored to resolve this one complication which they apparently believe God overlooked. And so, applying their best effort and greatest wisdom, they have plugged the one hole in God's plan which He somehow missed: He accidentally or foolishly granted eternal status to salvation! Now, just as a chess master who helplessly awaits his opponent's move after he realizes his last move was a blunder, God shudders in fearful regret that He did not think to require man to fulfill some responsibility of his own in order to retain the salvation freely granted without merit or justification apart from faith in Christ's sacrifice on his behalf!

As a result, Christians everywhere will now run amok in gleeful, promiscuous celebration of unmitigated sin because the security of their eternal salvation provides them with a free pass! Oh no!!! But wait - in a stroke of sheer genius and great fortune for God's sake and honor, the opposition has fabricated a solution to God's dilemma:

Convince the saved that their salvation is not secure - that retaining it hinges on their daily performance and choices. That will contain and control the one danger God did not anticipate when He sent His Son to the cross, since God cannot control it Himself because He made the additional mistake of granting man free will!

The lack of Scriptural support *for* this false doctrine, and the overwhelming presence of Scripture which refutes it will not and cannot be allowed to stand in the way! God will just have to trust them with this one! After all, the end will justify the means: *We will have godlier Christians!* And then, when Christians (and God and all of Christianity) are impugned because of Christian imposters behaving as heathens, we can simply explain that we have no part with them; those are ex-Christians who have lost their salvation!

However, in the euphoria of self-congratulations over solving God's crisis, two things have gone unnoticed. One, Scripture says that *God* will see to it that the saved persevere in holiness and godliness. Therefore, He sees them as perfect *now*, even if they do not seem quite so to others as yet (sanctification is a process, not an event).

"But," continues the protest, "we have 'Christians' out here engaging in *all manner* of sinful lifestyle! *No way* should they be allowed into Heaven!" That is the second thing which has been missed. All this worry is over nothing! Those people have *never* had a room prepared for them in Heaven! They *are not* saved, *never were* saved and, unless they are born again before the opportunity is lost, *never will be* saved!

So, what is all the fuss about? Relax! God has everything under control! His plan accounts for every detail; nothing is overlooked; this attempted mockery will be dealt with. And once again, God does not need any help from us.

Second then, is the matter of man's choice; tellingly referred to as "my" choice or "our" choice. I will spare the reader a revisit of the irrelevance of choice vis-à-vis ES. I will simply frame the begging question: Disregarding for the moment that it flies in the face of Scriptural teaching, why in the name of all that is rational, sane and just plain common sense would some folks want to retain the right to choose to go to Hell - *after God has qualified them for Heaven* (Col 1:12)?

Remember, these folks *are saved* and have the ability to spiritually discern the revealed truths of Scripture! (1Co 2:14) They possess a profound realization and appreciation of what they once were and now are; where they once stood and now stand! (Col 1:21-22) They have an *experiential* knowledge of, and relationship with the supreme God of the universe - the Creator and Sustainer of all! They are His dearly-loved children!

What could possibly cause them to choose Hell over Heaven? Why would they do so? The answers? ***Nothing - and they would never!*** Look, it is impossible to dance around the following any longer. Though the evidence, arguments and support throughout this writing were necessary and beneficial, the essential cause of this irrationality must finally be exposed and plainly stated: The opponents of ES do not at all desire this choice *for themselves!* They *absolutely know* they would never exercise

it! Go ahead - ask those of the opposing view who are genuinely saved if they *would* ever, or *could* ever choose Hell over Heaven *knowing what they now know and having experienced what they have now experienced!* If they answer honestly, they will proclaim loudly enough to be heard in the Heavens, **“NO WAY - NO HOW - NEVER!!!”**

So why their need to oppose ES? **Because eliminating ES allows them to pronounce that someone else has made that choice!** But no *truly* saved person can or ever would do such a thing! (1Co 12:3) Think about it! ES opponents may tell of someone they know who has surely lost his salvation (or rejected or walked away from it - or some other such foolish attempt at explaining it). Exactly how would *they* know that? What arrogance to allow themselves to usurp God’s omniscience in such matters! How do *they* know who is saved, or who *was* saved, or who is on his second or third salvation or whatever? *Has anyone who has actually lost his salvation ever confessed this to you?* **Of course not!!!** Allow me to let you in on a little secret: **No one has ever confessed it to them either!!!**

Apparently, the choice to become unsaved inherently causes some sort of selective amnesia because no one who makes that choice remembers it long enough to tell anyone! Fortunately, we have ES opponents monitoring the situation - and they report that losing, rejecting and walking away from salvation is indeed going on all around us!

Look, it all boils down to man’s unnecessary and unwise effort to protect God’s image, the image of His [Plan of Salvation](#), and the image of His true Church! May I again suggest that we simply rest upon Gal 6:7-8 ... *and spiritual common sense!!!*

EPILOGUE

You are probably aware that much is written on this subject. In this electronic age, you can study this issue in virtual endlessness by accessing literally millions of articles, books, and internet websites and blogs (the internet alone yielded over 3 million hits in response to a recent search on “eternal security,” with many websites dedicated exclusively to this issue). On one hand, I would encourage you to explore some of those to get a fuller, more rounded view of the issue and its salient components. On the other, I must warn you that there is a fair amount of outright false, deliberately deceptive, strategically confusing, and insidiously evil treatment of this subject out there.

I am not characterizing the entirety of the opposing camp in this manner - I am simply notifying you in advance that some of what you will encounter will not be pleasant. Unfortunately, some of the opposing view express it with blatantly non-Christian attitudes and motivation. There exists an abundance of vitriolic hatred, anger and condemnation for any reasoned support of the ES position - and for us who espouse it.

However, this issue, as all others, must be resolved on the merit of Scriptural support for the viewpoint claimed - not as attempted by some of the opposing view: literary screaming and threatening. Jumping out of some of their writings is a finger in the chest applied with enough force to bruise the sternum!

Underlying this degeneration of the discussion is primarily the intellectually dishonest claim that ES allows unrepentant sinners into Heaven. However, I believe that this disingenuous claim is itself a disingenuous protest. Salvation insecurity has been manufactured out of whole cloth - and this trademark accusation against ES is simply convenient to its adherents, in keeping with the axiom that the best defense is a good offense. So they continue to attack ES with this false claim, having taken themselves so far down the broad avenue of error that they are no longer able to find their way back to the narrow path of truth.

As a result, typical offerings from ES opponents present the same basic 3-step strategy in one fashion or another: First, they attempt to tear down the support offered by ES proponents. Second, they present a Scriptural case proving that unrepentant sinners will not enter the kingdom of God. And third, they pronounce their conclusion: ES is a doctrine of Satan because they just proved that unrepentant sinners go to Hell!

They love to quote 1Co 6:9-10 and similar passages, then look at us - shoulders back, palms up - and triumphantly declare, “See, ES is a hoax!” They do not seem to see (or do not *want* to see) the obvious disconnect in their “reasoning.” No legitimate presentation of ES allows unrepentant sinners into Heaven! And they never attempt to prove that ES makes such a claim! They simply state it and seek to quickly move on to avoid getting caught. It is like an NFL touchdown which the replay shows was not; the kicking team is rushed on hoping to snap the ball before the play can be reviewed.

But note that the opposition conveniently stops at vs 10 of 1Co 6 because vs 11 leaves absolutely no question that those behaviors were characteristic of God’s children *before*

they were saved - *not afterward!* (And is it not interesting that Scripture does not contain an equivalent text describing and declaring what we were like when we were once saved - before we became lost again? Why do you think that might be?)

I challenge the opposition once again to bring forth *even one* whom they allege to have lost his salvation, that we may inquire of him how he came to make that choice and how he feels about it now; why he gave up the benefits, joy, peace, security, etc. That would be an interesting and intriguing interview, but one thing we can be sure of: It would quickly betray the fact that such a one has no accurate intellectual understanding of salvation or the various other fundamental Christian doctrines, nor any real appreciation of the natures of God and man, nor any bona fide experiential testimony of salvation!

God's Word does not teach (*nowhere, no how, never!*) that behaving in the manner of 1Co 6, e.g., *gets* you unsaved - rather, it unambiguously reveals that such behavior is the *characteristic evidence* of those who *are* unsaved!

On the other hand, the characteristic evidence of true salvation is also provided for us (Gal 5:22-25; Mt 7:16-18; Eph 5:8-9; 4:22-24; Rom 8:9a; Tit 2:11-12; Col 3:5-8; Rom 13:12-14; 2Ti 2:22; 1Pe 1:14-16; Rom 6:4-14, among many more). And it is a transparent and shallow attempt to argue that ES provides the saved with a license to sin on the basis that they can be found to violate these characteristics. God knows all about that and His Word tells us so (1Jn 1:8-10).

As previously mentioned, if the saved were required to perfectly fulfill even one (let alone all!) of God's commands, and to exhibit perfectly the characteristics of holiness and godliness in this life, then *no one* would be saved! Losing salvation would therefore be a moot issue since no one would ever permanently possess it! We would then be left to ask, "Why exactly did God design and implement a [Plan of Salvation](#)? For what purpose did Jesus come and die in fulfillment of that plan? What is the point of the Holy Spirit's regeneration of sinners and the imparting of new life?"

If, in light of this, those of the opposing view magnanimously concede that perfect performance is not required, then exactly what level is acceptable? Which sins - or how many from column A combined with how many from column B - transform the saved into the unsaved? Are any mitigating criteria allowed? In exactly which Scriptural book and chapter do we find treatment of this?

Obviously, God's Word provides no such teaching. However, the opposition cannot be allowed to claim that this is a mystery - or to camouflage that claim by piously stating that we should simply endeavor to live holy lives and leave this matter to God. Scripture unambiguously asserts that we are able to *know* we are saved, and makes it clear (along with common sense) that such assurance is possible because it is founded in what *Christ* has done, not what *we* might do! How could we know for certain that we are saved if such certainty relied on our performance?

Is it not unmistakably plain that opposing ES necessarily and most assuredly requires salvation to be of works? And is it not equally obvious that the nature of our attainment of salvation - requiring that it be separated from works - is the same nature, with the same requirement, of which its maintenance consists? And do we not understand that this is so because these are inseparable - salvation's security is salvation itself?

Can we not simply agree that those who live the lifestyles which cause concern for those on both sides of this issue are folks who have never experienced the new birth, or else they would not conduct themselves in such manner? Do we not see that man's intervention is foolish and counterproductive, and the virtue ascribed to it is false?

Yet, it is precisely the failure to recognize this falsehood which leads some to assume that they are needed to defend the honor of God and His [Plan of Salvation](#). They become convinced that they can and must define the legal limit of godliness - above which we are saved, and below which, unsaved. And our "godliness level" requires periodic monitoring because our status is ever changeable!

This turns God's [Plan of Salvation](#) into a common legal statute like the BAC (blood alcohol content) limit for DWI enforcement. When we want to be saved, we behave ourselves. When we misbehave, we lose our salvation for a while. The choice is ours - and it is an ongoing choice. Timing is everything! The strategy is to die after one of our choices to behave - but before one of our choices not to!

This makes a mockery of God's plan - along with His mercy and grace, Jesus' sacrifice, and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit! As repeatedly asserted, we are not saved by what we do before, nor secure in our salvation by what we do after we are saved! If so, we are left to follow Paul's advice should we discover that Jesus' resurrection is a hoax (1Co 15:32) because we are likewise hopelessly lost in our sins; in our inability to perform well enough to meet God's standard. We could not meet it before, *and we will not do so afterward!*

Believing in one's ability to perform to God's satisfaction is understandable in the unsaved, but it is incomprehensible that a believer should think so! And for a genuine believer to *teach* such error to others must truly grieve and anguish the Holy Spirit.

So, why does the opposition keep marrying ES with a license to sin? Because, as you may have noticed in the typical 3-step approach above - and as you will discover if you read their writings - they never get around to truly supporting their *own* view by proposing a legitimate, persuasive and coherent case! That is because *there is no Scriptural teaching or support for losing salvation!* The best they can offer are Scripture verses which seem problematic to ES rather than supportive of salvation insecurity. Their only hope is to attack and destroy ES - and they attempt to do so with intellectual dishonesty because they cannot refute it by reasoning from Scripture!

Beyond beating the drum of "ES allows Christians a license to sin," they attempt to dismantle its support with sleight of hand and torturous twisting. Let me provide just

one example. This is not the worst, but it is not atypical. Take a guess at one passage used to support *losing* salvation. Try Jn 10:27-29! Now go ahead, read it carefully to see if you can determine how that proves you can lose your salvation. Stuck? Okay, let me explain (see, this is the stuff they do which can get quite irritating - see below). *They say that what that passage really says is that saved Christians are protected from being snatched out of God's hand only if they hear and obey the voice of Jesus!*

What never ceases to amaze me about such silliness is this: We know that God's Word must possess integrity, and if we want to maintain our own intellectual integrity, we know that we must conform our thinking to God's Word, not God's Word to our opinion. So why do these folks seek to maintain the integrity of their opinion by twisting Scripture so that it violates itself? Where is the intellectual victory in that? Beyond its obvious error and the exposing of themselves to ridicule, is it not simpler for them to make the necessary adjustments in their thinking in order to synchronize it with God's trustworthy standard than to seek to turn the universe upside down by setting His aside to make room for theirs? How will they rewrite the remainder of Scripture when they have succeeded in altering the selected pieces which violate their view?

Anyhow, below are just two of undoubtedly many dozens which can be found to proclaim this particular error. The first may be found at BibleStudyLessons.com by David Pratte of the Church of Christ in Round Lake Beach, Illinois (original emphasis retained). Notice how it boldly and shamelessly spins itself into the works salvation hole, setting conditions for man's performance if he hopes to retain his salvation!

"This is a wonderful promise. But is it so unconditional that a person's soul cannot be lost no matter how he lives? The context gives conditions - v27, 28. Note the word '**and**' repeated. Receiving life and never perishing are tied to **hearing Jesus and following him**. These are conditions, exactly like we have been teaching. As the Good Shepherd, Jesus protects His sheep so no one can destroy them, **as long as** the sheep hear Jesus and follow Him. But what if they **cease** to hear and follow ...? Neither Satan nor any outside force can steal you from the Lord, as long as you meet the conditions. But we must 'resist the devil,' and then we have assurance he will flee from us (James 4:7)."

Is it not remarkable how truth, such as Jam 4:7 above, can be used to reinforce error? I am not sure how to respond to the above without being disrespectful of the author. However, I trust that you are capable of overlaying his claims with Scripture and seeing for yourself where they fail to match up.

Nevertheless, I do not want to leave its major point (and error) begging: If you were a sheep owner, would you hire a shepherd who promised to protect your sheep only as long as they followed him and listened to him? Is it presumptuous to contend that our Heavenly Father expects a bit more from the perfect Shepherd in whose charge He has placed us (Heb 13:20, "that great Shepherd of the sheep")? Is it really possible that we have been resting in a false security; that our Protector and Defender is actually the type of shepherd described in Jn 10:12-13? Of course not!

God has not placed us in the protective custody of a mere hired hand! Never! He has taken us under His very own care and responsibility, entrusting us to His perfectly able, trustworthy and faithful Son! Christ laid down His life to protect and preserve us (vss 11, 15), and we have previously reviewed Scripture which teaches the “once for all” nature and efficacy of His sacrifice. Opposing ES requires the essence and purpose of that sacrifice to be misunderstood or denied!

Furthermore, would the Son of God have laid down His life for our protection if, after doing so - unable to lay it down again - such a need could arise once more? Of course not! Once for all means ... well, *once for all!!!!* Or have we perhaps stumbled upon the essence of the opposing view? Is it precisely *because* Christ is unable to die for us again that we are forced to assume responsibility for whatever His vicarious sacrifice failed to cover? Again I say, if the opposition would simply take their theories through Scripture, we could all move on to the work God expects of us.

Note that in vss 3, 4 and 16 there is no debate as to *whether* the sheep will hear and listen to their true Shepherd - they most certainly will! Why would Scripture define and prescribe the Holy Spirit’s role in the lives of the saved if our salvation relies on our autonomous, ongoing choices to hear and follow? Since the choices of *every* saved sinner will not always be in obedience to God, what hope would *any* true believer have in the salvation God has promised him?

Why did this author not think and work through his “support” before embarrassing himself by putting it in print? Once again, I emphasize that this is *typical* “support” offered by the opposing view!

Look, Jn 10:27-29 is meant to convey *exactly* what it plainly states - just as 1Pe 1:3-5 and Heb 5:9 (examined earlier). There is nothing tricky about properly understanding them. Tricks become necessary only when the opposition finds the truth standing in the way of promoting their invention of salvation insecurity! Speaking of tricks ...

This example is from EternalSecurity.us by Jeff Paton (original emphasis retained).

“With a small amount of scholarship, this verse can be cleared up. In the Greek text, the **hearing** and **following** are in the present tense. What does this mean? It means that only those who are **hearing and following** Christ right now are his sheep. Those that are living in a state of continual sin are not his sheep because they are neither hearing nor following Jesus. Who are secure? The sheep. Who cannot be snatched (taken away by force)? The sheep. Who is Jesus giving (present tense) eternal life? Those who are sheep. **Who are the sheep? Who shall never perish? Who is Christ giving eternal life? Only those who are hearing and following right now!** Whom do Jesus and the Father protect in their hands? Not the one who heard and followed, but only those who are actively believing **now** with an obedient faith. Is this not works? No! It is genuine faith! This is true biblical security.”

“The term ‘snatch’ means to take by force. This promise guarantees that the devil cannot remove the believer (present tense) from the hand of God. This safety is only from forces outside the believer and God Himself. A backslider removes himself from the promises of safety and security. He is not removed against his own will.”

“Now, looking at this passage in its plain and obvious meaning, it renders no credence to the theory of unconditional eternal security.”

Responding kindly to this one will be a challenge. I will do my best. Scholarship? How does the fact that it is characteristic of those who are not Jesus’ sheep to live in a continual state of sin (I wholeheartedly agree!) prove that it is possible for such a one to have once belonged to the flock? The “logic” above fails in the same way all opposition to ES fails. Hear this well: They *never prove* that the one who is characterized as currently unsaved *was ever saved!* Because *that is impossible to do!* Even if salvation *could* be lost, this proof could never be supplied! *We never know who is truly saved - only God does!* So the constant beating to death of this notion that the behavior of someone “who was once saved” is proof that his salvation was lost is wasted exercise! *Who* says he was once saved? On what basis?

Next, did you notice the glaring flaw in the author’s argument? He shamelessly contends that *eternal* life is something Jesus gives *only in the present tense*; that He apparently retains the right to withhold the next scheduled dose (or some such nonsense)! In other words, the author is attempting to prove that salvation can be lost on the basis that eternal life is an ongoing, present-tense provision contingent upon the recipient’s current behavior or his choice to take his spiritual medicine today!

He has got to be kidding!!! And yet, this assertion should not come as a surprise or shock because, though it may not be specifically included in the repertoire of each opposition member, it is essentially characteristic of the “integrity” of *all* their arguments!

In any case, though I have come to appreciate the wisdom of playing things safely as I have grown older, I think I will go way out on a limb here and trust that eternal life is ***ETERNAL***; that it cannot be sliced up into time-sized feedings which I get only if I be good! I would hate to consider the consequences if, while otherwise living a perfectly sinless life in order to earn my eternal life treats, I should oversleep or get busy, or get old and forget, or whatever, and miss my *daily* provision of *eternal* life! Gee, I wonder if God offers us the option to receive our eternal supply of eternal life in a lump sum distribution? Maybe not, because then we could go out and sin all we want because ... (wow, how did we wind up back there again?)

In any case, notice how the author anticipates the obvious objection by loudly announcing that his “theology” does not involve works (arguments are not won by volume but rather by reason). Am I reading something into the author’s theology which is not there - or is there something there which the author expects us not to read? Is he hoping we will miss it because of his distracting guilty declaration that it is not works?

Anyhow, let me see if I understand and can restate his summary at the end of his first paragraph: He says that what he has just described is “genuine faith;” “true biblical security.” Therefore, genuine faith is believing in yourself! And true salvation security consists in your ability to continually live a holy and godly life! Gee, I must be developing a gambling nature because again, I find myself willing to risk my salvation on the faithfulness and omnipotence of God rather than my own untrustworthiness and weakness. I think I will go “all in” and bet on *Him* to guard the security of my salvation. After all, He is the One who provided it for me in the first place - and He has promised to keep and guard it by His power! Phil 1:6 and 2Ti 1:12 (among others) seem to apply here. I sure hope I am not twisting them too much.

I will leave it to you to refute paragraph two. I guess I missed something because when I first read it, I thought the author was saying that God is powerful enough to protect us from Satan, but not from ourselves. Since Satan is more powerful than us, and God is more powerful than Satan (1Jn 4:4), I must be confused. I will try reading it again.

Look, as you can see, I am unable to hide my irritation at all this. I am convinced that ES opponents do not play fair. We who maintain ES provide a progressively building foundation of integrated, logical support for our claims and assertions - calmly and clearly from Scripture. We focus on establishing the wholeness of our own position. Yes, the opposition’s view is necessarily scuttled in the process, but we see no value in destroying their “support” apart from providing our own.

The opposition, on the other hand, uses the tactics of guerilla warfare; launching numerous and various limited attacks aimed at undermining bits and pieces of the “enemy’s” position and confidence. Overmatched and outmanned, the goal is to inflict scattered damage in an effort strategically designed to cause enough confusion to force a retreat, hoping the enemy forces will abandon their cause in frustration - even though they possess the winning hand. However, since ES has a solid Scriptural foundation, these efforts are not a threat - just an annoying nuisance.

One example of what I am referring to is paragraph two of this excerpt. There we see invented theology and preposterous claims unashamedly presented without a shred of referenced support, void of Scriptural common sense and absent any reasonable expectation of conventional consensus. Twisting and misstating Scripture is bad enough - but offering such empty, nonsensical and indefensible arguments ought to cause embarrassment. And walking away in arrogance afterward with no attempt to provide any evidence of their veracity is utterly deceitful and betrays insidious guile.

If someone desires to take up the debate, is it too much to ask and expect that their arguments will be more than mere statements of personal opinion? Ought they not to be required to present some sort of reasoned, coherent support? Where exactly are the author’s assertions to be found in Scripture? Nowhere, of course. They are simply the result of the self-imposed commitment to salvation insecurity which requires that man be placed above God - all the while blinding himself to the fact that he has done so.

In essence, God has been ordered to genuflect at the throne of man's choice! Thus, the bold but manufactured assertion previously mentioned: "God will not and cannot force anyone to remain saved!" Of course not - He must step aside when the sovereign one, man, enters His presence! As the author explains, the backslider's salvation is not removed against his will. Nosiree - he chooses to throw away his salvation all by himself! And if God has a problem with that, well then, just who does He think He is - and who died and made Him boss of salvation anyway?

Then, in order to hang onto their position - though they must surely know better - the opposition forces itself to maintain that man's salvation in the first place is likewise the result of his own sovereign choice. After all, salvation cannot be allowed to depend entirely on God as the Scriptures teach because salvation insecurity would then require man to control what God controls - and that would make no sense. So that problem is "fixed" by simply placing salvation in man's control right from the start! God will not mind; He has enough to do already. We are really just doing Him a big favor, right?

How corrupted and infantile is a view of salvation which allows it as some disposable commodity or child's Christmas toy - to be abandoned when it has served some temporary purpose, or when we become bored and reject it in favor of some greater interest; something more suited to our desires! I believe it is long past time that the consideration and treatment of salvation be brought in line with its reality!

Have we no appreciation for the unmitigated damnation our sin deserves - or the monumental sacrifice which was necessary to provide our redemption from its clutches? Salvation insecurity disconnects this atonement, in large measure, from the One who loved us enough to pay for it with His life! Essentially, its cost is spat upon! The profound business of saving and keeping souls is detached from the prodigious act of the Atonement and shamelessly reduced to a matter of mere human will and choice, tantamount to deciding which brand of toothpaste we prefer; easily amended (or restored) as our desires change. Perhaps you find such discussion irreverent? So do I! That is why I reverently and thankfully cling to and cherish the security of my salvation!

Finally, the author proudly proclaims his conclusion; that this passage offers no support for "unconditional eternal security." ***And he is absolutely right!*** Because *there is no such thing as unconditional ES! That is exactly the point of the entire controversy!* Our salvation is conditioned either upon God, or upon man! I will have to go with God on this one (playing it safe again).

Essentially then, the opposing view would have us believe that we are secure in the hand of our omnipotent, perfectly loving Father as long as we be good. When we be bad and wriggle around too much, His grip is not strong enough to protect His dearly-loved child from eternal catastrophe. Being the loving Father that He is however, He cannot bring Himself to toss us to the lions when we misbehave. So, He hangs on until His grip succumbs to the strength of His child's will, and then is forced to watch helplessly as the cherished work of His very same hand wanders off into danger's den, unaware of the lion prowling nearby (1Pe 5:8). If His former child is "lucky," the lion is

not hungry just then and, when he comes to his senses and makes the right choice, he can dust himself off, get re-saved and be God's child again! However, if His ex-child is not so lucky ... oh well! I guess this does not bother God as much as we might think since the devoured one was not His child anymore anyhow.

Whew! And I have only refuted a couple of points! Again I emphasize that these I have tackled were not selected for ease. This is like fishing in a barrel! You will find hundreds of such Scriptural hi-jinks if you read the opposition's "support." It would take huge volumes to debunk *all* of this stuff! Some of it is sheer silliness and foolishness - beyond mind-boggling! But make no mistake. Those who present the opposing position in "reasonable" fashion are forced to employ the same flawed arguments and "support." They simply do so more kindly and respectfully. But I encourage you once again, to read their writings for yourself.

In any case, why would God inspire Scripture which teaches ES if it were not so? Furthermore, when the position ES opponents hold forces them to claim that Jn 10:27-29 proves that genuine believers can *lose* their salvation, it ought to be more than obvious that it is time for them to abandon their position!

And beyond the Scripture twisting and indefensible arguments, the above excerpts once again display the opposition's stubborn insistence upon a post-salvation maintenance program rooted in works. Retaining salvation requires godly performance *after* being saved - or else salvation is lost! Basically, the salvation which requires and results from the profound working of God upon the soul is reduced to a mere governor's pardon. Though the inmate is freed - released from his previous judgment - he is still subject to the law and risks being returned to prison if he commits another transgression. He must "keep his nose clean" or else find himself right back where he was.

But when God performs the miraculous and supernatural work of eternally saving regeneration in us, it is sheer blasphemy to contend that He is not able to guarantee the integrity of His very own work - or to fulfill His claims and promises concerning it! Quoting again from "Once in Christ, In Christ Forever," by William MacDonald:

"A true child of God continues in the faith, not in order to hold on to his salvation, but as a fruit of the new life. It is not a work of merit, but an outworking of the life of Christ within him. It is a matter of criterion, not of condition. So the passage (such as 1Co 15:2, Col 1:23, etc.) is good for nominal Christians as well as genuine ones. It brings the former up short, causing them to realise their need of a real work of grace, and it encourages true children of God to press on toward the mark for the prize. Arthur Pridham says it well 'The reader will find, on a careful study of the Word, that it is the habit of the Spirit to accompany the fullest and most absolute statements of grace by warnings which imply a ruinous failure on the part of some who nominally stand in faith... Warnings which grate harshly on the ears of insincere profession are drunk willingly as medicine by the godly soul.'"

- MacDonald, W. (1997). *Once in Christ in Christ forever: with more than 50 biblical reasons why a true believer cannot be lost*. Grand Rapids, MI: Gospel Folio Press.

The opposing view rightfully concerns itself with the promulgation of various sinful lifestyles among us, more and more common and perverse each day, and progressively finding such acceptance as to be legislated “legal” behavior (with incremental movement toward prohibiting the condemnation of what God Himself clearly condemns). We who maintain ES share this concern. But the ES controversy would end if we would properly identify those living in such manner. Whether they claim to be saved, or whether salvation has been conferred upon them by the prevailing religious criteria of the day, those who involve themselves in such debauchery are nevertheless unregenerate, unrepentant sinners - just as all of us who are truly saved (whichever view of ES we claim) once were (before we were saved).

The *truly* saved are not able to live the lifestyles which opponents of ES allege is possible, which they claim causes “backsliders” to become unsaved (or results after their *choice* to become unsaved). God’s regenerating work, the infusion of new life by the Holy Spirit prohibits that. Believing that God performs the supernatural miracle of the new creation only to leave His new child vulnerable to sliding back down sin’s slope into the very abyss God rescued him from is nonsensical, and causes God and His profound provision of salvation to appear amateurish!

God has reached down and taken hold of us to solve our sin dilemma - and the surest evidence that He has done so is that He continues to hold onto us afterward. If He is not hanging onto us now, He never took hold of us in the first place! We are not strong enough to wriggle out of His grasp - God forbid that it should be so! Thankfully, just as a human father (in the ideal, yet still imperfectly) takes responsibility for his child and holds him tightly through occasions of danger, our perfect Father secures us with His perfect grip always! He knows, as in 1Pe 5:8 referenced above, that we are in constant danger until the day we see Him face to face. What kind of father would let go of his child while danger surrounds and the child’s only hope is in him?

The opposing view, faced with such airtight lines of reason, forces itself to stick to its story. The subsequent responses become increasingly frustrating. Their answer to this argument is that, indeed, the Father does *not* ever let go. It is the child who manages to free himself from the Father’s grip! What is it exactly which causes folks to attempt to defend the clearly indefensible? Is it not easier, wiser, and more peaceful for the soul to simply allow the truth to convict?

And let us consider the following dilemma: To become unsaved, a saint must perform in some manner which both earns and proves his lost salvation. I assume this must be done over time, but until he does so long enough (no, I don’t know how long) or bad enough (nope, can’t seem to find that in Scripture either), he is still saved. In any case, the proof that he is unsaved must be evidenced while he is still saved; that is, while he is on his way to becoming unsaved (earning his unsalvation). At what point, precisely, does his salvation go “Poof!”?

Now, exactly where in Scripture can we find even the slightest mention or treatment of the faintest wisp of all the necessary complications this raises? Does the opposition

hope to advance yet another doctrinal concept which is unmentioned, unsupported, untaught, and absent any remote hint or implication in God's Word? Will they do so by labeling it some type of "mystery?" The American Heritage Dictionary defines "mystery" as "a religious truth that is incomprehensible to reason and knowable only through divine revelation." There is quite a disparity between the true mysteries of Scripture (which are either taught, supported, mentioned or implied, but not fully revealed or able to be fully understood) and the "mysteries" of the opposition which appear out of thin air! Even so, let us examine some possibilities to attempt to resolve this.

Perhaps it works like so: A truly saved saint makes a free will choice to become a truly unsaved unregenerate - *then* he begins proving he is unsaved by leading a sinful lifestyle! No, that will not work because the saint would have to start thinking about choosing to be unsaved while he is still saved. Those thoughts would grow into an idea, and the idea would lead to a decision: to become a hell-bound unregenerate! And who exactly is contemplating and executing such a decision? *A dearly-loved child of God whom He has reconciled to Himself by the shed blood of the cross; a new creation in Christ; a temple of the Holy Spirit who has done a marvelous, supernatural, miraculous, ETERNAL work in him!*

Obviously, this process of choosing Hell over Heaven would be sinfully ungrateful, disrespectful and rebellious - impossible for a true believer! (commensurate with 1Co 12:3a) As mentioned, this would require a saint to prove loss of salvation while still saved. Since that cannot be, let us think a bit harder to determine if we can make sense of it all (this stuff does get a bit intriguing). Okay then, let's try this:

There are designated "cities of salvation refuge" to which a saint may escape whenever doubts arise (see, this works because it is okay for believers to encounter doubts). Without any required admission of guilt, and with no strings attached or obligation of any sort, he is free to think about his salvation and to decide whether he wants to keep it or not. This is a free space, so if he begins to consider, and eventually does choose to become unsaved, this sinful process does not count against his time as a saint. His time in the city of refuge is kind of like a state of limbo and God sort of kind of like puts the eternal life of those who go there into some kind of sort of like temporary type storage. When he finishes his contemplation, the saint (or not) announces his decision to God! If he still desires to be saved, God returns his salvation to him (and He claps for joy and gives His child a big hug for making the right decision)!

If not ... hoo-boy, this gets complicated and confusing ... I'm not sure if God gives his salvation to someone else or ... (I just cannot bring myself to think of the alternatives, let alone put them in print). Maybe He saves it in the event this ex-saint chooses to be saved again - but then, what happens if he decides to remain unsaved for all eternity? Yeah, I think He gives it to someone else so it is not wasted. Then, if the first guy somehow becomes re-convinced that Heaven is truly a better choice than Hell, God simply provides him with a new salvation! But I had better check into this a bit more because I cannot seem to remember any of this stuff from my studies of Scripture.

Okay, enough already ...

Now that I have done my best to present the truth, I offer one last excerpted contrary view. The reader may choose to receive this as a “final exam” of sorts; to critique what is presented here in light of the truth of ES; that is, the truth of God’s Word regarding ES. From an article entitled, “[Just What is the Unpardonable Sin](#)” by David C. Pack (original emphasis retained - excerpts listed in order of appearance in the article - my brief comments in red; I have taken a pass on most of it):

“Christians are required to obey God’s laws. That is the *truth* from His Word! The false teachers and deceivers of this world’s Christianity will tell you that you *need not* keep God’s Law. They will tell you that it *cannot be done* - that it is *impossible* - and that you should not even try. Matthew 19:26 plainly says otherwise! These ‘ministers’ are basically saying, ‘Go right on sinning. It’s okay! God does not care, because He knows His law is too harsh for you to keep. And besides, Christ kept it *for* you. You are *already* justified, sanctified and spiritually perfect - because of what Jesus did.” **I believe these specious arguments and distortions of Scripture have been more than adequately exposed and debunked throughout this writing.**

“The book of Acts speaks of ‘the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to them that obey Him’ (Acts 5:32). God only gives His Spirit to those who practice His commands. Obedience to God is not only a *qualifier* for receiving eternal life, it is also absolutely essential to both receiving and *continuing to receive* the Spirit of God.” **Is it really possible to promote such nonsense in light of God’s Word?**

Referring to John 15:1-2, the author states the following:

“This passage introduces two important points that must be comprehended: (1) The amount of fruit that Christians develop must increase, and (2) God ‘takes away’ those who do not bear fruit ‘and casts them into the fire, and they are burned.’ Of course, that *is* serious. It means that there is a point past which God no longer works with a person. This would certainly not happen right away, after one sin or even a series of sins, but it does happen after a certain point. This is what the scripture says.” **Just what might that *certain* point be; where exactly does Scripture actually say this?**

“But the terms *reconciled* and *justified* are not the same as *saved*. These terms come into play upon repentance and acceptance of Christ as Savior. That event wipes our past clean. But it does nothing about our *future*. **Then reconciliation and justification are pointless, no?** Justification and reconciliation are not the equivalent of the gift of salvation. Christ’s blood, of and by itself, gives no one salvation.” **WOW! So, what exactly must be added to Christ’s finished work then?**

“A Christian is ‘justified’ when his past sins are forgiven (Rom 3:24-25). He remains on the path to salvation ‘through sanctification of the Spirit’ (2Th 2:13). Sanctification means *a setting apart for a holy use or purpose*. God’s Spirit, within the begotten mind, sanctifies the believer. You now know that you are saved by Christ’s LIFE. Did you notice the words ‘shall be’ before that phrase in Romans 5:10? Read it again. It is written in the *future* tense, not the past or present tense!

It means that we are *not yet* saved, but we *are* forgiven. **That is an impossibility!** Salvation is something that 'shall' happen in the future. The verse does not say that we are 'now saved,' but rather *shall be*." **How can it be that we know we have eternal life (Jn 20:31; 1Jn 5:13) even while we are not yet saved?**

"Will you believe men? Or will you believe the plain words of the Bible? Grasp this! Salvation does not happen at the moment of justification and reconciliation. **It most surely does!** Rather, this is the moment the salvation process *begins*." **Obviously, he is confusing sanctification with salvation. Salvation is most certainly not a process. It is an instantaneous, once-for-all transaction effected by God.**

"It is important to understand exactly *when* a Christian is saved. This is a subject of great confusion and misunderstanding. Comprehending it is critical to everything about salvation. The Bible teaches that you are saved in *three distinct ways*. All of them represent what is best described as the *process* of salvation. Romans 6:23 explained that the wages of sin is death. At repentance, baptism and conversion, a Christian is forgiven by the blood of Christ and is immediately *saved* from the penalty of PAST sins. So, in one sense, it can be said that the person has been 'saved,' *at that moment*, from death! But this is not the whole story. There are two more applications of when and how a person is saved. The word *salvation* is derived from the word *saved*. So the second way is the most obvious, and it is the actual receiving of eternal life, the pinnacle of salvation. This happens at the resurrection of the dead in Christ (1Co 15:50-55; 1Th 4:13-18), upon His Return. This is future! But no one receives *eternal* salvation now. All must first undergo a life of trial, testing, learning, growing and overcoming. So then, the third way one is saved is that he is 'being saved' - an ongoing process - throughout his lifetime." **And yet, he claims there is no assurance that the "process" will lead to salvation! If we must, by our own effort of the flesh, successfully navigate an obstacle course trial to earn salvation and gain eternal life, what was the point of the trial Jesus endured on our behalf? His entire line of thought here is thoroughly flawed.**

"Many verses reveal that nothing is automatic simply because conversion has taken place. This is why Paul says, in 2Corinthians 2:15 (RSV), that Christians 'are being saved.' This is written in the present progressive tense, because salvation is a process. To believe that salvation is complete upon conversion insults God. **How so?** It ignores all of the verses we have read about obeying Him! **What does post-salvation obedience have to do with the effecting of salvation in a soul? Obedience flows from salvation; it doesn't lead to it. In fact, the unsaved cannot obey God; only those who are saved are able to obey!** Besides, if you were automatically saved at conversion, then what would be the point of living out the remainder of your natural life? If salvation is finished at the moment of conversion, why does God not simply take you directly to salvation ... **Some clues are found in Mt 28:18-20; 2Co 5:18-20; 1Pe 4:10 (there are many more). God has assigned responsibilities to the Church. If God removed the saved upon salvation, there would be no Church to accomplish its assignment!** Christ taught His followers that Christians must persevere in this life. They must demonstrate stick-to-it-iveness.

He told His disciples, 'But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved' (Mt 24:13; 10:22)."

"Of course, this is not what professing Christians are being taught. Most see conversion as a two-week cruise on the 'love boat.' How many Christians do you know who actively talk about using - exercising! - God's Spirit within them to overcome and grow? Many do talk about 'having' the Holy Spirit, and even acknowledge that it is a spirit of 'power' (2Ti 1:7), but almost none talk about tapping and utilizing that Spirit to win the *war* (2Co 10:3-4) of salvation. Take time to read how Paul exhorted Timothy to understand that he was a 'soldier' (2Ti 2:3-4). Soldiers fight in wars. He also told Timothy to 'war a *good warfare*' (1Ti 1:18)."

Appealing to the sadly prevalent attitudes and practices of merely professing "Christians," or even true Christians who, for whatever reason, are misguided, hold false views, are immature or are otherwise not working out their salvation very well cannot cause false doctrine to become true.

"Now look at what Paul told the Ephesians: 'Finally, my brethren, be *strong* in the Lord, and in the *power* of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we *wrestle* not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness [wicked spirits] in high places' (6:10-12). Yes, Christians battle against Satan. When they are under temptation, they 'wrestle' with him and his demons ('wicked spirits'). But this is done through the 'power of *His* (God's) might,' not their own!" So, spiritual warfare is actually a series of unending battles to save our salvation? Thank God this is not so!

Alright, it is time to close. Take a moment to consider this final point: Have you ever heard or seen someone you know very well seemingly do or say something out of character? Or maybe someone else reported to you that this one you trust and respect had said or done something which just did not synch with the character known to you? Have you not experienced the relief which comes when you recheck what you heard or saw, or examine for yourself the report you received, and discover it is in error; that the character you trusted is still intact? In the human realm, we always dread that our investigation will find the transgression to be true - and thus, the character tarnished. But we need never fear that with God!

Honesty requires us to agree that allowing His children to lose their salvation (and to be His children no more) *appears* out of character for the God known to the truly saved. It *seems* inconsistent with His promises, and it is an *apparent* contradiction to so much Scriptural teaching that it leaves us unsettled if we should choose to accept and believe it. Although this does not in itself indicate that losing salvation must be impossible, *it certainly begs verification!* If you believe salvation can be lost and have never investigated the foundational validity of such a profound and serious doctrine, you are believing irresponsibly!

When an issue which breeds controversy and disagreement is encountered, three basic responses are elicited among folks: First, some simply ignore it, choosing to stay out of

the fray. It does not concern them - or they deem it to be inconsequential - so they give it little or no consideration. Though this may be appropriate in many cases, the issue of ES among Christians cannot be allowed to be one of them.

Second, in stark contrast to the first, and as seen in many of the secular political and social debates, some folks are moved to vehemently advocate for their view. Some of these however, do so with little knowledge of, or concern for the salient components of the debate. They form an opinion and declare a conclusion without ever searching the matter out. They simply adopt and “defend” whichever stand meets their preference or brings them benefit! We dare not approach the doctrines of Scripture in such manner!

Finally, there are those who seek the truth and are willing to invest the time and effort necessary to arrive at a reasoned conviction. If you have “done your homework” on this matter, you understand my concern - especially if you have ever debated this with someone who has not. If you are one of those who has not, whether you have heretofore stood clear of the discussion or not, this issue demands that you tend to your homework assignment!

One explanation for the many folks who are content to simply ignore ES - without even so much as assessing its import - is an inappropriate fear and lack of confidence. And some of that is the result of insufficient acquaintance with God and His Word. On the other hand, I have encountered folks on both sides who are “certain” of their position but cannot begin to explain why. This must not be! It is no different than believing you are saved without knowing how or why! Yet, much of the ES controversy stems precisely from the pervasiveness of this sad phenomenon.

We recognize, of course, that those who merely profess Christianity cannot know how or why they are saved because they are not. They cannot know the [Plan of Salvation](#) intimately and experientially because they do not have an intimate, experiential relationship with its Author. And they cannot relate the circumstances of their second birth, along with its profound and eternal affect upon their heart and mind, because it is yet to occur. It is understandable then, that these unsaved ones might believe salvation can be lost - because they do not know how it is “found.” Unfortunately however, they are joined in this error by some who are truly saved.

There is a woeful job of learning God’s Word being done today. And it is quite apparent that one thing which has not been learned effectively is the Christian’s responsibility to adequately know and understand what he professes - and to endeavor to expand the breadth and effectiveness of his profession for God’s glory by building upon his knowledge and understanding of God and His Word.

Where are the Bereans of our day, commended in Scripture for their nobler character? Indeed, *all* who are genuinely saved are called to be Bereans! If and when every “common” believer is seized with an excitement to allow the Third person of the Trinity to lead them to an intimate knowledge and relationship with the Second, according to the wisdom of the First, then will we see it become unnecessary to spend precious

spiritual resources debating that which ought to be readily apparent and easily discerned. Perhaps then will we overcome the current frustration of establishing unity among the saved, and tend instead to pleasing God by cooperating with *His* interests and purpose, chief among which is the task of adding to our numbers!

Well, I have attempted to lay it all out as honestly and effectively as I possibly can. Nevertheless, I have included some “bonus coverage” below - a bounty of nourishment from God’s Word for you to partake of and digest. I strongly urge you to invest the effort to look up each reference - and in the order I have deliberately arranged them for logical and topical flow. And there is much more support here for the ES position which was not touched on above. Yet, I am sure you can and will identify even more.

We are able to know

Heb 2:3b-4; 1Jn 5:13; Lk 1:1-4; Jn 20:31; 21:24; Col 3:24a; 1Jn 2:3, 5b-6; 3:14a, 18-19, 24b; 4:13; 1Co 2:12; 1Jn 5:20; Eph 1:18; 1Jn 5:19a

God’s promise to us is clear

1Jn 2:25; 5:11-12a; Jn 14:19b; Heb 9:28; 2Co 4:14; 1Co 6:14

God wants us to be confident and assured; in Him and in His promise

Dt 31:8; Isa 40:1-2; Jn 14:1-3; 27; 16:33; 17:8; 19:35; 1Co 15:56-58; Eph 3:12; 2Co 5:6-8; Heb 4:16; 10:19-22a; 1Ti 3:13; Col 4:12b; 1Jn 2:28; 4:16-17; Rom 4:20-21; 15:4, 8

God’s plans, promises and purposes are guaranteed, unchanging ...

Num 23:19; Jos 21:45; 23:14b-c; Ps 138:8; Job 42:1-2; Ps 33:11; Pr 19:21; Isa 14:24; 26-27; 46:10-11; 55:11; Jer 29:11; 1:12; Lam 2:17a; Eze 12:28; Mt 1:22; Lk 18:31; 24:44; Jn 18:9; Rom 11:29; 8:28-30; 2Co 5:5a; Tit 1:2; (Mt 22:14); 1Pe 1:2; Rev 17:14; Eph 1:4-5; Lk 18:7; Jam 2:5; Heb 12:28

... anchored in Christ

Jn 6:37; Rom 6:23b; 8:1-2; 1Co 1:30; Eph 1:7a, 9-11; 3:11; 1Th 4:13-14; 2Co 1:20a; Heb 7:22; Jude 21; Heb 6:17-20a; Jn 12:49-50

God is faithful

Dt 7:9; 2Sa 7:28; Ps 33:4; 37:28a-b; 111:7-9a; 145:13; 146:5-6; Isa 55:3; Rom 3:3-4a; 1Co 1:9; 10:13b; Lk 2:20; 19:32; Mk 14:16a; Jn 2:22; 1Th 5:23-24; 1Pe 1:9; Heb 10:23

God will finish what He started

Phil 1:6; 2Sa 23:5

Nothing and no one can separate us from God

Jn 6:39; 10:27-29; Isa 43:13; Rom 8:28-39; Rev 3:8a

Our salvation is secure; the Holy Spirit *Himself* is our security deposit

Ps 16:5-6; 2Co 1:21b-22; 5:5; Eph 1:13-14; 4:30; Rom 5:5

Will God destroy his own temple?

1Co 3:16; 6:19a-b; 2Co 6:16b; Jn 14:16-17; 2Jn 2; Act 13:52; 1Jn 3:24; 4:13; 2Ti 1:14; Rom 8:11

God keeps and guards our salvation in and through Christ Jesus;
the security of our salvation does not depend on us

1Pe 1:3-5; Lk 11:21; Col 1:5a; 2Ti 4:8; 1:12; Job 17:3

Jesus himself is our advocate and mediator;

He intercedes on our behalf with the Father

Job 16:19-21; 1Ti 2:5; Heb 7:25; 8:6; 9:15, 24; 1Jn 2:1; Rom 8:34b

We are God's children; His designated heirs - He cannot/will not disown us

1Jn 3:1a; 2Co 6:18; Jn 1:12; Eph 5:1; (Jn 5:19c-2); Pr 3:11-12; Heb 12:5b-7a; 1Co 11:32; Phil 2:14-15; Mt 5:45a; Rom 8:14-17; Gal 3:29; 4:6-7; Tit 3:5-8a; Col 1:12; 3:23-24; Heb 1:14; 6:12

God has reserved citizenship for us in Heaven

Phil 3:20a; 1Pe 2:11a; Heb 11:13b, 16; 2Co 5:1

He has rescued us, and will continue to strengthen and protect us

Gal 1:3-4; Col 1:13; 1Th 1:10; 2Pe 2:9a; 2Ti 3:11b; 4:18; 2Th 2:16-17; Eph 3:16; Col 1:11a; 1Co 1:8; 1Pe 5:10; Ps 97:10; Pr 2:8; Jn 17:11-12a; 15; 2Th 3:3; 1Jn 5:18; Jude 1

God is able to make us stand - and He will do so

2Co 1:21a; Rom 5:2a; 14:4; Jude 24; Eph 6:10-11; 13-14a; Phil 4:1; 1Th 3:8; 1Pe 5:12; 1Co 10:13c; (Rev 6:17); Act 4:10; Heb 1:3; Col 1:17; 2Pe 1:3

Everyone who believes is secure

Jn 3:16, 18a, 36a; Mk 16:16a; Jn 5:24; 6:40, 47; 8:12, 51; 11:25-26; 12:46; Act 2:21; 10:43; 13:38-39; Rom 1:16; 3:22; 10:11, 13; Heb 10:39; 1Jn 4:15

The work is done; the transaction complete

Lk 12:50; Jn 4:34; 17:4; 19:28-30; Heb 4:3c; Eph 3:11; Heb 5:9; Act 13:32-33a; 2Co 5:17-18a; Rom 5:1-2; 8:3-4a; 6:22; Tit 3:4-7; Eph 2:4-7; Col 2:13; 3:1-4; Rom 6:4-11; 1Pe 3:18a; Heb 7:27; 9:26b; 10:10, 12, 14; 1Pe 1:23-25

Jesus' sacrifice is worthy; our sin debt is paid in full; God is satisfied

Heb 9:12; 1Pe 1:18-19; Col 1:19-20; Eph 2:13; Rev 1:5b-6; Jn 1:29; 1Jn 4:14; 2:2; 4:10; 2:12; Heb 10:18; 1Co 6:9-11; Rom 8:33; Col 1:21-22; Eph 1:4; 5:27; Phil 1:10; 2:15; 1Th 3:13; 2Pe 3:14; Jam 1:5; Rev 14:5; Rom 5:8-11

Definition of "overcomers"; God's promises to them (us)

1Jn 2:14b; Rev 12:11; 1Jn 4:4; 5:4-5; Lk 10:19; Jn 16:33; Rev 17:14; 2:7b, 11b, 17b, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:3-7