

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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Eternal Security: Comfort, Not License

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 24–25, AV)

Often the discussion between folks who believe in the eternal security of the elect and those who do not believe this doctrine focuses more on the person than on God. "If I believed in eternal security, I'd go out and have my fill of sin; I'm going to heaven anyway." This frequently stated sentiment sadly reveals far more of the person's low and unbiblical motive for godliness than at first appears. Are you really living a godly life only for what you hope to get out of it? Do you have any desire to glorify God in your life that ignores the personal impact such action might have on you? How do Jesus' words, "...let him deny himself..." match up with your "I'd go out and have my fill of sin" sentiment?

This sentiment also utterly ignores Scripture's consistent teaching regarding the new birth and its moral change on the person who is born again. When God sends His Holy Spirit to permanently dwell within His child and writes His law in their hearts and minds, He effects a profound change in that person. While the sinful nature remains, it no longer rules the life unchallenged.

For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another. (Romans 2:14-15)

This passage does not describe the common (Not born again) human condition. It rather describes the condition of a born again child of grace who lives with the permanently indwelling law of God "...written In their hearts," people who have a living sensitive conscience that both affirms their righteous thoughts and actions and condemns ("accuses") their sins. Anyone who lives with this indwelling moral principle cannot wholly abandon righteousness and live solely for sinful indulgence.

The Biblical principle of Christian living, of true discipleship, builds on self-denial, not self-promotion. We seek to live our lives for the glory of the Lord, not for personal gain. We do not weigh every thought, word, and deed with the idea that we thereby gain an ever-increasing entitlement to

heaven when we die. We can't do enough to gain such a promotion. At the heart of the matter, all thoughts that build on this idea of "If I believed that, I'd go out and have my fill of sin" is inherently a belief in salvation by your works, not by God's grace. The person who truly believes in salvation by grace should joyfully live the sacrificial life that seeks above all else to glorify the Lord in both body and spirit. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.... The falling addressed in this passage is not your personal behavioral falling or failure to live up to your calling from the Lord. He keeps you from falling away from your eternal life, from anything that could separate you from the love of God. (Romans 8:38-39). The Lord's work that keeps "...you from falling" links directly with His final intent "...to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Folks who wrest this passage to their idea of personal perseverance, rather than God's "Personal" preservation of His beloved children, must deal with a major problem in the language of the passage. If you believe that God orchestrates you to never fall from your own steadfastness (A Biblical commandment that Scripture makes contingent on your personal choice of steadfastness, not God's manipulation), you must also believe that you shall rise to the state of being "faultless," without sin in any degree whatever, before you die. No such passage exists in the Bible.

While Scripture consistently teaches that the new birth effects a powerful change in a person's character, Scripture does not anywhere define a moral line below which a born again person either cannot or will not stoop. Further, many Scriptures warn believers of the consequences of their failure to be faithful in their lives. One example will abundantly underscore this point.

For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. (2 Peter 1:8-9)

These words follow immediately a list of seven behaviors that Peter in Verse 5 instructs his readers to add to their faith. In no way whatsoever does Peter indicate in this lesson that God shall orchestrate you to add these behaviors, or suggest that, if you are really a child of God, you shall surely do so. He specifically admonishes his readers to take this action themselves. They may follow his teaching and add these behaviors to their faith, or they may not do so. In the verses quoted, Peter reminds us of two outcomes that are contingent on the believer's choice, not God's action.

1. If you add these behaviors to your faith, you shall not be either barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. If you lack these things, if you refuse to follow Peter's admonition, Peter warns; you shall become blind, lose your spiritual vision, and forget that you were purged from your old sins. Peter does not indicate that anyone who so fails to add these behaviors to his faith didn't really have faith in the first place. He doesn't suggest that this person is not really born again at all. Quite the opposite; according to Peter's inspired words, this person was in fact purged from his sins, but he forgot that truth. Peter doesn't indicate that this individual pretended to purge himself from his sins, but now failed to do so. He refers to a purging that happened to him, not something he did for himself. He "*was purged,*" meaning that God purged him from his sins, but now his refusal to follow the fruitful admonition of Scripture imposes its sad consequences onto him. He was purged and remains so, but now he has forgotten about that glorious cleansing. This passage alone utterly repudiates the idea of every true child of God "Persevering" so as to be divinely prevented from falling below a certain behavioral mark. If the folks who wrest Biblical divine preservation into their own performance-based perseverance were objective about their own conduct, they might have fully as many doubts about themselves "...really being a child of God" as they obsessively voice against others.

Our study passage is dealing with eternal reality, not with a believer's present achievement. It is not the believer's conduct that prevents the falling of which Jude writes, but rather the keeping power of God that prevents the falling from their eternal inheritance. Every keeping provision in the passage is associated with God's intent and work, not with the believer's performance.

...to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. Consider this glorious "Presentation." Whose joy shall accompany this event? No argument that both the redeemed and the Redeemer shall experience that joy at this glorious "Presentation," but what is Jude's focus? Given that the action of all the verbs in the passage

are linked to our Lord and Savior, there can be little grounds to think that the joy of which Jude here writes is anything other than the Lord's personal joy at the final and complete success of His divine keeping and presentation. Another passage comes to mind that is quite similar to this point.

And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. (Hebrews 2:13)

In the context of this verse, the speaker is the "Sanctifier" speaking of those whom He has sanctified. (Hebrews 2:10). It is the "Captain of their salvation" celebrating the many sons whom He has brought to glory. (Hebrews 2:10). And immediately following, the text affirms this truth. The Lord's delivering grace for His children finds them when they are captives to the fear of death, "...all their lifetime subject to bondage." Through His death, not through their theoretical perseverance, He accomplishes this deliverance of His redeemed from death. (Hebrews 2:14-15). All the action necessary to deliver these "*children which God hath given me*" from their present fear of death, from death itself, into this glorious "Presentation" before the Father at Jesus' side is accomplished by Jesus, the "*Captain of their salvation,*" not by their keeping themselves above a theoretical minimum behavior. Every passage dealing with that final epochal and glorious event describes it as something that the Lord Himself accomplished with joy. Even as He endured the cross and its torture, He remembered the "...**joy that was set before him.**" (Hebrews 12:2).

To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. What a way for Jude to conclude his brief, overflowing letter. The Lord shall accomplish His glorious work and finally receive the 1) glory, 2) majesty, 3) dominion, and 4) power justly earned and fulfilled in the final keeping of every heir of His beloved family to their final glory with Him. Jesus came into the world and lived as a man with this goal firmly and clearly in mind, and He left this world fully knowing that He had accomplished it.

For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. (John 6:38-39)

Friends, our joyful and glorious eternity is not contingent on our will or on our perseverance, but on His will and His faithfully accomplishing the work for which He came. You shall find no peace and no rest in your own performance. None whatever! All your peace and rest with God, both now and for ever is grounded on Jesus and what He did, not on what you do. "Hallelujah! What a Savior!"

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Worship service each Sunday
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor