

## Security of the Believer

The question of security concerning one's destination at Judgment has been debated for generations, largely illogically. Review:

**Insecurity:** Many have abandoned security, asserting that such a claim would be arrogant and therefore counterproductive. They cite the many passages that describe the separation of former believers from God. (e.g., Romans 11:20-23, Hebrews 3:12, Luke 8:13, 2 Chronicles 15:1-2, John 17:11-12, 1 Corinthians 10:12, Hebrews 6:4-6, Hebrews 10:26-29, 2 Peter 2:20, Revelation 3:5, Galatians 5:4, 1 Timothy 4:1-2, 2 Corinthians 6:1, 2 Peter 1:10-11). This position denies the "reality of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" which is a natural product of true faith.

**Revolving Door:** While not abandoning security completely, many assert that sin separates believers from God, so if repentance does not occur for each sin, then that believer will be condemned at the Judgment. First, this is Law, not grace. We are saved on the basis of faith, not performance. Second, it contradicts 1 John 1:7 – 2:1. This theory also has trouble with James 4:17 (To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin). Essentially, this theory contains no security because one can never know if one's repentance was complete, if every sin has been repented, and if every good deed has been accomplished.

**Impossibility of Apostasy:** John Calvin taught that those chosen by God could not fall. Obviously, this contradicts at least the fifteen clear passages cited above. Further, the theory denies freedom of choice. Calvin, being a logical person, realized this, so declared that our sense of making choices is a delusion. Instead, he declared, all events are pre-programmed by God, so choice does not exist. However, Calvin neglected to explain how to be confident of that election, so the insecurity was just moved, not resolved.

**Cannot Lose Salvation:** To avoid rejecting the passages listed above, the assertion is made that being broken off from the people of God, having an evil heart of unbelief, believing for a while, forsaking God, without a sacrifice for sin, worse than an unbeliever, erased from the Book of Life, fallen from grace, departed from the faith, received grace in vain, and forgetting he was cleansed mean simply that the saved person will suffer in this life. Of course, the result is that heaven will be populated with many unbelievers. The obvious disconnect in the theory is separating salvation from faith. Various explanations are offered for how to obtain this salvation, ranging from outright legalism (Catholic sprinkling or Church of Christ immersion) to a form of belief that is foreign to the Bible (accept Jesus into your heart), and various combinations thereof. Security is achieved by redefining faith.

**Faith Results in Loss of the Ability to Choose Unbelief.** Many espouse the concept that a faithful person cannot choose to reject faith. This asserts free will for unbelievers, but not for

believers. The theory makes all of the letters in the New Testament useless, since the recipients could no longer choose. If the various authors presented choices, then choices must have been available. Asserting that Christians can choose right versus wrong but not faith versus unbelief creates a security that is simply illogical, an arbitrary re-definition of choice that is not described anywhere in the Bible/

**The Faithful Will Not Fail:** This theory assumes that, once having “tasted of the heavenly gift,” a believer simply would never choose to leave God. The ability to choose is left intact, but the unsupported assertion is made that one with true faith would never make the choice to reject that faith. The conclusion is reached that those who appear to leave their faith did not have true faith. First, this argument flies in the face of the above listed passages in which believers are said to have thereafter rejected God. More importantly, this simply moves the problem one step to the left. The insecurity is shifted from fear of falling to fear of inadequate faith.

**God Would Never Reject His Children.** This theory asserts that God would never reject His children, that we have security as soon as we are named children of God. First, this is an argument based on human emotions that God uses as an illustration; extending the illustration beyond God’s application is unwise. Second, this contradicts the fifteen passages cited above. Third, some passages come close to contradicting the theory. For example, Galatians 4:21 – 5:4 begins with the allegory of Sarah and Hagar (4:31, We are not children of the bondwoman but of the free) and ends with falling from grace (5:4). So, rejected children is the logical extension of the allegory. Also, in the Old Testament (and oft quoted in the New Testament), a “remnant of the children of Israel” is described. The fact that only a remnant was saved reveals that a large number of children were rejected. Of course, not all Israelites were faithful. The point is that God could call them children and later reject them based on their unbelief. God called the Israelites His children (not just the children of Israel) in Psalm 82:6, Isaiah 63:8, and Ezekiel 16:21. So, this kind of security is based on an extension of an illustration that God did not make.

**What Security is Possible?** The problem lies in that security is inherently self-centered. This trap can be avoided by “love God and love your neighbor,” the two greatest commandments of the Old Testament, or by faith and love, the two commandments of the New Testament. Biblical faith and love are maintained by seeking reality. Since we are experts at deceiving ourselves, reality can be found only in the Word. Our security is based not on matching some arbitrary standard manufactured from mismatched verses, but by coming to know the character of God, pleasing God by being of that character, learning the promises of God, and acting on them without further evidence. Our security comes from the reality checks provided by the Word (those “bad lists” scattered throughout), always questioning our own understanding, not being satisfied with our present (safe) level of ignorance, and knowing that we are forgiven for our misconceptions and false starts toward pleasing God, not fearing punishment for not doing it well enough in the past, but looking only to making it work today.