

# THE SECURITY OF THE BELIEVER

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## I. Introduction

### A. The Matterhorn

The Matterhorn ... is a mountain in the Pennine Alps on the border between Switzerland and Italy. Its summit is 4,478 metres (14,690 ft) high, making it one of the highest peaks in the Alps. The four steep faces, rising above the surrounding glaciers, face the four compass points....

The Matterhorn was the last great Alpine peak to be climbed and its first ascent marked the end of the golden age of alpinism. It was made in 1865 by a party led by Edward Whymper and ended disastrously when four of its members fell to their deaths on the descent. The north face was not climbed until 1931, and is amongst the six great north faces of the Alps. The Matterhorn is one of the deadliest peaks in the Alps: from 1865—when it was first climbed—to 1995, 500 alpinists died on it.<sup>1</sup>

### B. Because He stands ...

F. B. Meyer wrote about two Germans who wanted to climb the Matterhorn. They hired three guides and began their ascent at the steepest and most slippery part. The men roped themselves together in this order: guide, traveler, guide, traveler, guide. They had gone only a little way up the side when the last man lost his footing. He was held up temporarily by the other four, because each had a toehold in the niches they had cut in the ice. But then the next man slipped, and he pulled down the two above him. The only one to stand firm was the first guide, who had driven a spike deep into the ice. Because he held his ground, all the men beneath him regained their footing. F. B. Meyer concluded his story by drawing a spiritual application. He said, "I am like one of those men who slipped, but thank God, I am bound in a living partnership to Christ. And because He stands, I will never perish."<sup>2</sup>

## II. The security of the believer

### A. What is a believer?

#### 1. Spiritual counterfeits

##### a. Good people

1) The problem with good people is that no one is good enough.

##### a) Isaiah complained:

For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls on Your name, who arouses himself to take hold of You; for You have hidden Your face from us and have delivered us into the power of our iniquities (Isa 64:6–7).

b) Paul wrote the Romans that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23).

2) That is the reason that we are not saved by our good deeds.

a) Paul wrote Titus, "He [God] saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy" (Titus 3:5).

b) Paul wrote the Ephesians that our salvation was "not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph 2:9).

3) *Trusting in our own good deeds is a tragic mistake.*

##### b. Religious people

1) Paul wrote the Romans, "But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness" (Rom 4:2).

2) As Corrie Ten Boom said, "A mouse might live in a cookie jar, but it would not make him a cookie."

3) *Trusting in our church attendance is a tragic mistake.*

c. Knowledgeable people

1) Nikita Khrushchev

At the village church in [Kalinovka], Russia, attendance at Sunday school picked up after the priest started handing out candy to the peasant children. One of the most faithful was a pug-nosed, pugnacious lad who recited his Scriptures with proper piety, pocketed his reward, then fled into the fields to munch on it.

The priest took a liking to the boy, persuaded him to attend church school. This was preferable to doing household chores from which his devout parents excused him. By offering other inducements, the priest managed to teach the boy the four Gospels. In fact, he won a special prize for learning all four by heart and reciting them nonstop in church. Now, 60 years later, he still likes to recite Scriptures, but in a context that would horrify the old priest. For the prize pupil, who memorized so much of the Bible, is Nikita Khrushchev, the former Communist [leader].<sup>3</sup>

2) One can know all of the facts about Jesus Christ, and believe none of them.

3) *Trusting in knowledge alone is a tragic mistake.*

d. Praying people

1) It is a good thing to pray.

2) However, the Bible does not say that we are saved by praying a prayer, but by trusting in Jesus Christ.

3) *Trusting in a prayer that you once prayed is a tragic mistake.*

e. Moved, but not changed people

1) Emotion is not faith.

2) False focus on dates

a) If you are trusting in Christ now, you must have started sometime.

b) If you are not trusting in Christ now, how do you know it was real then?

3) *Trusting in an emotional experience that you once had is a tragic mistake.*

## 2. The real thing

### a. Simple trust

#### 1) Illustration

There was a tightrope walker, who did incredible aerial feats. All over Paris, he would do tightrope acts at tremendously scary heights. Then he had succeeding acts; he would do it blindfolded, then he would go across the tightrope, blindfolded, pushing a wheelbarrow. An American promoter read about this in the papers and wrote a letter to the tightrope walker, saying, "Tightrope, I don't believe you can do it, but I'm willing to make you an offer. For a very substantial sum of money, besides all your transportation fees, I would like to challenge you to do your act over Niagara Falls."

Now, Tightrope wrote back, "Sir, although I've never been to America and seen the Falls, I'd love to come."

Well, after a lot of promotion and setting the whole thing up, many people came to see the event. Tightrope was to start on the Canadian side and come to the American side. Drums roll, and he comes across the rope which is suspended over the [most] treacherous part of the falls—blindfolded!! And he makes it across easily. The crowds go wild, and he comes to the promoter and says, "Well, Mr. Promoter, now do you believe I can do it?"

"Well of course I do. I mean, I just saw you do it."

"No," said Tightrope, "do you really believe I can do it?"

"Well of course I do, you just did it."

"No, no, no," said Tightrope, "do you believe I can do it?"

"Yes," said Mr. Promoter, "I believe you can do it."

"Good," said Tightrope, "then you get in the wheelbarrow."<sup>4</sup>

2) The Gk. word translated "believe" means "to consider someth[ing] to be true and therefore worthy of one's trust, ... to entrust oneself to an entity in complete confidence."<sup>5</sup>

3) Scriptures

a) Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life" (John 5:24).

b) And 96 other times in John's gospel ...

c) Paul wrote:

For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness" (Rom 4:3-5).

b. In Jesus Christ

1) Jesus said, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

2) Faith is only as good as what it is placed in.

On April 30, 1976 Evelyn Mooers attached a rappelling rope to a drain pipe grating on the roof of the Mark Twain South County Bank. Mooers, an experienced climber, had once scaled 14,410-foot Mt. Rainier in Washington state. The rappelling exercise from the bank building would have been routine but for one miscalculation. The drain pipe grating wasn't anchored.

Numerous bank officials and their friends watched as Mooers plummeted to her death. Her faith in the grating was fatally misplaced.<sup>6</sup>

3) Paul wrote, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph 2:8–9).

c. Alone

1) Lewis Sperry Chafer, one of the founders of Dallas Theological Seminary, said, "Saving faith may thus be defined as a voluntary turning from all hope and grounds based on self merit, and assuming an attitude of expectancy toward God, trusting Him to do a perfect saving work based only on the merit of Christ."<sup>7</sup>

2) *Trust in anything else takes the trust away from Jesus Christ.*

B. Secure in Christ

1. Security depends on God

a. God is the Source of security.

1) Scripture

a) Jesus said:

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one (John 10:27–30).

b) We all know the Scripture, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom 8:28).  
However, do we know the reason behind this verse?

i) Paul wrote:

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified (Rom 8:29–30).

ii) Two observations

(a) All who begin at one end of this chain end up at the other. Otherwise, it would have said "some of those whom He foreknew."

(b) The entire process is the work of God.

c) Peter wrote:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Pet 1:3–5).

d) Jude wrote that we are "kept for Jesus Christ" (Jude 1:1).

2) As E. Stanley Jones says, "Faith is not merely your holding on to God. It is God holding on to you. He will not let you go!"<sup>8</sup>

3) *Our eternal security does not depend on how well we hold on to God, but how well God holds on to us.*

b. Christ is the place of security.

1) Jesus Christ said, "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day" (John 6:39).

- a) Was Jesus wrong?
  - b) Will He have to correct this Scripture to say that He lost some?
- 2) Paul told us, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:4–6).
- a) If a truly saved person were to be subsequently lost, one who was raised with Christ would have to die again.
  - b) Additionally, one who was seated with Christ in the heavenly places would have to fall to hell.
  - c) *The implication of this verse is that we are as good as in heaven right now!*
- 3) All believers are members of Christ's body.
- a) Paul wrote, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor 12:13).
  - b) Paul also wrote that Jews and Gentiles both "are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (Eph 3:6).
  - c) Is the body of Christ going to be dismembered?
- 4) *Believers are safe in the body of Christ.*

c. The Holy Spirit is the Guarantor of security.

1) Paul wrote to the Ephesians:

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory (Eph 1:13–14).

a) Williams translates:

You too, as you have heard the message of the truth, the good news that means your salvation, and as you have trusted in Him, too, have been stamped with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit, who is the first installment of our inheritance, so that we may finally come into full possession of the prize of redemption, and praise His glory for it (Eph 1:13–14 NTLP).

b) In the ancient world, cargo was sealed to guarantee the contents would arrive safely and intact.

c) Moreover, then, as now, a pledge was a guarantee that the transaction will be completed.

2) *The Holy Spirit guarantees that we will be delivered safely to our heavenly destination.*

2. Security does not depend on us.

a. Circumstances

1) Paul wrote:

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, **nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord** (Rom 8:35–39).

2) That is the reason that Paul could write, "For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day" (2 Tim 1:12).

3) *Our eternal security does not depend on our circumstances.*

b. Sin

1) There are none to condemn us.

2) Paul wrote:

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us (Rom 8:31–34).

3) All of your sins were future when Christ died on the cross.

4) *Our sins cannot disrupt our eternal security.*

c. Failure

1) Paul wrote Timothy, "If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim 2:13).

2) Paul wrote the Thessalonians, "Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass" (1 Thess 5:24).

3) This is what is wrong with the Calvinistic teaching of the perseverance of the saints.

- a) The Calvinist teaches that those who are elect will persevere to the end. However, one cannot be sure that one is elect until one has persevered until the end.
  - b) The Arminian is sure that they are saved now, but fear that they might lose their salvation in the future.
  - c) There is no practical difference between these two positions.
  - d) Both put the focus on man's faithfulness.
- 4) *Our eternal security is not based on our faithfulness, but the faithfulness of God.*

3. Security is forever.

a. Salvation is eternal.

- 1) John the Baptist said, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life" (John 3:36).
- 2) Jesus said "that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day" (John 6:40).
- 3) Paul wrote, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:23).
- 4) 51 times in the NT (21 times in John) salvation is called "eternal life."

b. *A salvation that can be lost is not eternal.*

#### 4. Some misunderstandings about security

##### a. Not every fire in the Bible is hell.

###### 1) The author of Hebrews wrote:

For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned (Heb 6:7–8).

2) (By the way, the impossibility mentioned in Heb 6:1–6 is going on to maturity not being saved.)

3) Jesus said, "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned" (John 15:6).

4) Both of these refer to the practice of burning off a field to kill the weeds and prepare the field for planting.

5) *This was not done to destroy the field, but to prepare it for fruitfulness.*

##### b. Not all weeping and gnashing of teeth is hell.

1) The Gk. word translated "weeping" is merely "an expression of strong inner emotion."<sup>9</sup>

2) The phrase "gnashing the teeth" meant to "*be furious*."<sup>10</sup>

3) Therefore, together these refer to being extremely emotionally upset.

4) For example, those who heard Stephen preach "were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth" (Acts 7:54).

- 5) Certainly, those who are in hell will be upset (Matt 13:42, 50; Luke 13:28).
  - 6) However, so will those who are excluded from ruling with Christ during the Millennium (Matt 22:13, 51; 25:30).
- c. Not all salvation in the Bible is eternal salvation.
- 1) We have seen in our study of James that saving the soul may mean saving a life (Jas 2:14; 5:15, 20).
  - 2) God may punish sinning believers by illness and premature death (1 Cor 5:5; 11:27–32).
  - 3) *Of course, this does not mean that all who are sick, or die young are guilty of heinous sins.*
- d. Rewards vs. salvation
- 1) There is a great deal of confusion between eternal rewards and eternal salvation
    - a) Jesus promised, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life" (John 5:24).
    - b) *If a saved person could be subsequently lost and come into judgment, Christ would have been wrong to say this.*

c) However, Paul wrote:

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified (1 Cor 9:24–27).

- i) The translation "be a castaway" (KJV) is incorrect.
- ii) The Gk. word translated "disqualified" refers to "*failing to meet the test ... of athletic endeavor.*"<sup>11</sup>
- iii) *Paul is referring to being disqualified for reward, not eternal salvation.*

d) Paul also wrote:

For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire (1 Cor 3:11–15).

- i) Here is another place where fire does not mean hell.
  - ii) Paul is clearly talking about rewards.
  - iii) *The one whose works are burned up still is saved.*
- 2) *Perseverance is required for eternal rewards, but not for eternal salvation.*

e. Entering the kingdom vs. inheriting the kingdom

1) Paul warns:

a) "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor 6:9–10).

b) "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal 5:19–21).

c) *Inheriting the kingdom, ruling with Christ, is based upon our works.*

2) However, Jesus said:

a) "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

b) "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

c) *Entering the kingdom is based on being born again alone.*

f. Eternal security makes people sin.

1) There are severe consequences for sin.

a) Breaking the heart of God, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Eph 4:30).

b) Divine discipline (Heb 12:3–11) up to and including sickness and death (1 Cor 5:5; 11:27–32).

c) Loss of eternal rewards (1 Cor 3:11–15).

2) However, one of them is not loss of salvation.

3) *God wants to motivate us with love and gratitude, not fear.*

C. The insecurity of the unbeliever

1. God's promises are for God's children.

2. If you have not trusted in Jesus Christ alone for your eternal salvation, none of these things are yours.

3. Eternity is a long time.

4. You can be sure by trusting in Jesus Christ alone for eternal life.

a. John wrote, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30–31).

b. In his first letter, John continued, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13).

5. *Assurance is based on the objective word of God, not my subjective feelings.*

II. Applications:

- A. The Bible promises eternal life to all who trust in Jesus Christ.
- B. Eternal reward is based on our works, but eternal salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone.
- C. Assurance is based on the objective word of God, not subjective feelings.
- D. Believers are eternally secure, but unbelievers are insecure.

- <sup>1</sup> "Matterhorn," *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia* [on-line], accessed October 29, 2011, <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matterhorn>>.
- <sup>2</sup> "Because He Stands I Will Never Perish," *Bible.org: Sermon Illustrations* [on-line], accessed October 29, 2011, <<http://bible.org/illustration/because-he-stands-i-will-never-perish>>.
- <sup>3</sup> "Motivation," *Higher Praise* [on-line], accessed October 29, 2011, <[http://www.higherpraise.com/illustrations/7\\_motivation.htm](http://www.higherpraise.com/illustrations/7_motivation.htm)>.
- <sup>4</sup> "Tightrope Walker," *Bible.org: Sermon Illustrations* [on-line], accessed October 29, 2011, <<http://bible.org/illustration/tightrope-walker>>.
- <sup>5</sup> BDAG 816–18.
- <sup>6</sup> "Misplaced Faith," *Today in the Word* (May, 1990): 16 quoted in *Bible.org: Sermon Illustrations* [on-line], accessed October 29, 2011, <<http://bible.org/illustration/misplaced-faith>>.
- <sup>7</sup> L. S. Chafer, "Saving Faith," *True Evangelism*, 55–56 quoted in *Bible.org: Sermon Illustrations* [on-line], accessed October 29, 2011, <<http://bible.org/illustration/saving-faith>>.
- <sup>8</sup> "Definitions of Faith," *Bible.org: Sermon Illustrations* [on-line], accessed October 29, 2011, <<http://bible.org/illustration/definitions-faith>>.
- <sup>9</sup> Friberg et al., *ALGNT* 231.
- <sup>10</sup> Friberg et al., *ALGNT* 94.
- <sup>11</sup> Friberg et al., *ALGNT* 35.