

SCRIPTURAL SECURITY

(Continued)

The Doctrine of "Eternal Security" Clarified Scripture and experience prove with solemn conclusiveness that, after being genuinely saved, one can sin against God so as to lose fellowship with Him and "backslide." A few admonitions from the Word will serve to emphasize this thought and support this claim.

Writing to the Corinthians Paul warns: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." To the Galatian Christians the same apostle presents the question: "But, now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?" Gal. 4:9. And to the Hebrews: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Heb. 3:12-13.

From the apostle Peter we have the following: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." 2 Peter 1-10: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it is better . . . not to have known the way of righteousness, than after ye have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them (you) according to the true proverb, 'The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.'" 2 Peter 2:20-22: "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness." 2 Peter 3:17.

So here we have believers being warned against falling, turning again to the things which formerly held them in bondage, being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, turning from the holy commandment to become entangled in the pollutions of the world from which they had escaped, and being led away with the error of the wicked. Surely these scriptures, but a few of the number that could be cited to prove the point, plainly warn the born-again Christian against the danger of backsliding. To take the position that backsliding is an evidence that the professed conversion was not genuine, is to make a claim that finds no support in God's Word.

Moreover, it is evident that one, having known the grace of God, may turn away from the Lord and die in a backslidden state. From the epistle to the Hebrews we have the following: "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame." Heb. 6:4-6. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour their adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought

worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace?" Heb. 10:26-29.

Here we have a plain warning against sinning against God to the loss of grace and blessing, with no word or indication concerning reconciliation. In the scriptures we have notable examples of children of God being alienated from their Lord by sin, and dying in that unhappy state. King Saul, Judas Iscariot, Annanias and Sapphira are chief among them. A man to whom the Lord gave a new heart, and upon whom the Spirit of the Lord came mightily, commits the sin of disobedience, becomes the hapless victim of a spirit of jealousy, hatred, and murder, and, with the tragic cry "the Lord has departed from me . . ." falls on his own sword on Mount Gilboa. Judas Iscariot, called of Christ to the "grace of apostleship," enjoying the unique privilege of intimate fellowship with the Lord in the apostolic circle, sharing with fellow apostles in the evangelization of the towns and cities of Judea, entrusted with the treasury office of the group, falls prey to a temptation to sell the Lord for a certain sum of money, commits the heinous act, and hastens his guilty soul into eternity by suicidal violence. Annanias and Sapphira, enjoying communion with the Spirit-filled Christians of the wonderful post-Pentecost days, endeavour to deceive the Holy Ghost and obtain God's blessing dishonestly, and, smitten by the just judgment of the Almighty, die with a lie on their lips and in their hearts.

By precept and example, we are faithfully warned against the awful danger of falling from grace and dying in a state of alienation from Divine favour. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed . . ."

"THINGS WHICH HAPPENED"

By Rev. E. E. Shelhamer

"But I would that ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel" (Phil. 1:12).

By-products of certain oils and minerals are sometimes more valuable than that from which they were taken. In like manner it is possible to turn to our profit spiritually things which are coarse and cruel. How wonderful that we can outwit men and devils when we let a miracle-working God rule and overrule in our behalf.

Things do not just happen to come to a real saint. Paul would have the "brethren" know that he did not need human comfort, for the Great God had timed everything to the minute, so that whether in or out of prison, everything had worked out for the "furtherance of the gospel."

When we wholly believe, "all things are possible," and we are well-nigh omnipotent. Such a person can grow tall sitting on a low bench; can shine more brightly by giving up his own brilliancy; can rule over others by letting them ride over him; yea, can overcome all opposition and "smile at Satan's rage." Long after his critics have landed on the scrap heap he will be going strong and his message will have life and power. Why? Because he has solved the hardest problem in the universe—"Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it" (Mark 8:35).

Look at Joseph! Neither he nor his envious brethren ever dreamed that his being sold into

Egypt and being subjected to all kinds of slander and suffering was God's method of promotion to the premiership of the most powerful kingdom (then) in the world. Oh, for the ability to wait, if need be for years, to be vindicated by a miracle-working God!

Again, look at Moses! We speak of him as the meekest man on earth, but it was not always so. His killing an Egyptian drove him to the "backslide of the desert" where he learned meekness from gentle sheep. Later, when he returned from the mount, he became impatient and with one blow broke the table of Commandments. Strange that men can climb to the heights, then suddenly tumble and become a disappointment.

God graciously gave him another chance. This time he was to speak gently to the rock. But instead he "smote" it, saying, "Ye rebels, must we fetch water out of this rock?" And for thus speaking "unadvisedly with his lips," he was not permitted to go over Jordan and enjoy the milk and honey. How sad, after all those years of hardships, to be denied this glorious privilege. Yet, here again, the compassionate God planned something nice for His "Servant," though he had to wait about four thousand years. Finally, we see him standing in the Promised Land, beside his transfigured Lord. "All's well that ends well."

Years ago a certain man invested unwisely and lost everything. He could have done as others, gone into despair, and committed suicide. But instead he resorted to prayer and soul-winning. The result was, many were saved who might have been lost had it not been for his loss. "The thing which happened" turned out all right.

Another man felt led to accept calls outside of his own denomination—sometimes a wise and again an unwise thing to do. For this, some of his very loyal brethren took exception and did not give him calls. He could have become carnally independent as many have done, but instead he let God handle things, with the result that new doors opened and many heard truths which otherwise they never would have heard. Thus his ostracism was overruled to the "furtherance of the gospel." Lord, give us special Grace, Wisdom, and Strength, so that we may be able to say with Paul, "Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak. I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Corinthians 9:19:22).

SANCTIFIED BY FAITH

By justification we are saved from the guilt of sin, and restored to the favor of God; by sanctification we are saved from the power and root of sin, and restored to the image of God. All experience, as well as Scripture, shows this salvation to be both instantaneous and gradual. It begins the moment we are justified, in the holy, humble, gentle, patient love of God and man. It gradually increases from that moment, as "a grain of mustard seed, which, at first, is the least of all seeds," but afterwards puts forth large branches, and becomes a great tree; till, in another instant the heart is cleansed from all sin, and filled with pure love of God and man. I have continually testified in private and public, that we are sanctified as well as justified by faith. And, indeed, the one of those great truths does exceedingly illustrate the other. Exactly as we are justified by faith, so are we sanctified by faith.—John Wesley.