

Testamentum Imperium
An International Theological Journal

www.PreciousHeart.net/ti

Volume 1 – 2005-2007

**The Security of the Believer:
Romans 6:3-11 and 14**

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In the past few years it has been my privilege to teach in churches in Kenya, Zambia, Nigeria, and Ghana. As I have taught at these wonderful African churches, I have on occasion brought up the issue of the eternal security of the believer. I have found that some pastors embrace this doctrine while others do not. Some even say they believe in eternal security but they are afraid to teach it. The objection I have heard most is that, if eternal security is taught, the pastors will have no control over the people, and the people will be free to go and sin without any threat of the loss of salvation.

This fear of the loss of control was well illustrated when one man responded to my teaching in John 10:27-28 and Romans 8:35 and 38-39. He said that this teaching of eternal security would mean that he could just go out and sin all he wanted, never come to church, never pray, never witness, never live a Christian life and still be saved and go to heaven when he died. My answer to him was, *yes*, that is exactly what it means; but I then asked him to think about what he just said. I had just told him of the great and tremendous love of God, how God loved him so much that He sent His only Son to be his Savior, that through faith alone in Christ alone his sins had been forgiven, that he was rescued from an eternity in hell and given

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eternal life that could never be taken away. And yet his first thoughts upon hearing of such great love and grace was to figure out how much he could get away with. I told him I thought that to be a very strange reaction to such love and even asked him if he responded to the love of his wife or children by first thinking of what advantage he could take of that love and what he could get away with. Of course he quickly tried to say he was talking about what others might do and not him. But the point was made. What is the normal response to love? Is it to think of ways that we can take advantage of that love to fill our own often perverse desires, or is it to love back?

This is the same problem the apostle Paul was dealing with in Romans Chapter 6. How are we going to respond to the love, mercy, and grace of God? How is that response going to affect how we think of the future and what we do in the present? How is what God did through Jesus Christ, His Son, our Savior, going to affect how we live?

A casual reading of Romans 6:3-11 and verse 14 will show that the apostle is thinking in three dimensions. First, he is reminding his readers and us of what happened nearly 2000 years ago at the Cross. He talks about Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. All of these are past realities. Second, he writes about what we should think and do but uses statements such as *do you not know?*, *therefore, in order that, that we might do this or that, believe*, and *consider*. Finally, Paul presses the past reality of Christ's work into our future by using the verb *we shall*.

The Past Work of Christ

The apostle Paul calls the reader of this passage to go back in time. Back to a time and place where none of his readers and certainly none of us had been, the Cross. In verse 3 he reminds us of Christ's death. In verses 4 and 5 he reminds us of His burial and resurrection. In verse 6 he recalls the crucifixion, in verse 9 the resurrection again, and in verse 10 our Savior's death.

Although it is possible that someone in Rome who was hearing or reading this epistle had been in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus' death, the vast majority of Paul's Roman readers were hearing of these things as events of the past. This is the same way we hear of these things today. For the first Roman readers this past was matter of years, for us a matter of centuries. In both cases, however, the past is

the past; it is history and the writer is telling us of these events. The critical issue is, will we believe them?

In Romans 5:1, Paul looked back to what he had taught about justification and stated that we have “been justified by faith.” In Romans 5:2, he looked ahead to the subject of Chapters 5 through 8 in Romans, the sanctification of the believer, and stated that this, too, was a matter of faith: “...through whom [the Lord Jesus Christ] also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand.” Our introduction to the present grace that we enjoy is by faith. The challenge of Romans 6 is whether or not we are going to continue in this faith that introduced us to grace and believe in what Christ accomplished for us at the Cross.

I get to teach on the foreign mission field a few times every year, mostly in African nations. When I teach I use the term *grace and faith* repeatedly in my lessons. We are saved by God’s grace and our response of faith. Colossians 2:6 tells us that we are to walk in the Christian life in the same way we were saved to the Christian life. If we were saved by grace and faith, we must then continue in grace and faith.

As I talk about faith eventually someone will ask, What is faith? I love hearing that question and know it will always come up. Faith is simply a decision we make to trust in someone to do what he has promised to do. If we take this definition of faith back to our salvation, we can see that we put faith in Christ who was the only one who could give us eternal life. So faith is placed in the right person to do what he has promised to do, what he alone can do. There is also an element of the invisible in faith. We do not see the object of our faith. I often use the illustration of a car battery to make this point. We do not see the battery but we trust in the battery to start the car. By faith we turn the ignition key and we expect the car to start. When it does, it is not because of our faith but because the battery is correctly charged. When it does not start the car, and we all have experienced that mournful sound, we do not say we lack faith, but that the battery is weak. In this case we have put our faith in something that is weak. The merit of faith, then, is not in the one having faith; it is not a work on the part of the one who has faith, but in the object of faith. In the same manner we do not trust the battery to keep our tires filled with air or to keep petrol in the tank. That is not the job of the

battery and it is not what the battery has promised to do. At salvation we put our faith in Christ to save us; that is what He can do and what He has promised to do if we make the non-meritorious decision of faith, to trust Him.

But in Romans 6 Paul has left salvation behind and is now dealing with sanctification and the living of the Christian life. And as grace and faith is the way of salvation it is also the pattern for the spiritual life. God has provided. Will we believe it? By taking us back to the Cross Paul calls us to faith—faith that Christ died for all our sins, that he removed the barrier standing between God and man, that, although He was buried, He rose from the dead on the third day, never to die again, and is now seated in glory and honor at the right hand of the Father. Do we believe that? Do we put our faith in that? Not just for salvation but for living the Christian Life. “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him” (Colossians 2:6).

Back to the Future

The apostle Paul makes two application of our faith in the past Cross-work of Christ. One application is to the present and the other is to the future. Because we have believed in the work of Christ, Paul establishes two things as our future certainty.

In verse 5 Paul uses a first class subordinating conjunction, translated *if*. But the *if* here is not a possibility as it would be in the English language. The first class conditional conjunction introduces a true statement. The translation in the NASV attempted to communicate this by using the word *certainly* in the second half of the statement. We might read this as, “since we have become united with Him *we will be* united with Him in the likeness of His resurrection” (emphasis mine). This dogmatic statement sees our future in the resurrection as being set upon that which is in the past, the work of Christ. If we have put faith in Christ we are saved, and that secures our future with Christ without any further work, blessing, merit. We are from the moment of salvation eternally secure.

In verse 8 Paul makes a similar claim for the future of the believer. Again, he uses the first class subordinating conjunction *if* to introduce a true statement. The verse might read, then, “since we have died with Christ, we believe [present tense] that we shall also

live with Him.” The future fact of verses 5 and 8 is expanded in the next two verses of the text.

We know that Christ has been raised from the dead never to die again. Therefore, when we are resurrected we will never die again; death will no longer be master over us. Jesus Christ died once that we might live forever with God just as He now lives to God.

This security we have because of our faith in Christ is stated by Paul as an obvious fact. The question is whether or not the child of God will believe in his eternal security. When we do believe it the doctrine of eternal security becomes the living assurance that we have in our salvation by God’s grace and our faith. Paul, however, while stating our future security as a fact, is more concerned in this passage with how we are going to apply these past and future realities to the present.

Application to the Present

In the first epistle to the church, James taught believers that faith without works is dead. Although we might say that we have faith, without application that boast is dead. We might say we believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, but just saying this means very little to the present if we do not apply it. At salvation the decision of faith means everything as it pertains to eternal security. But we are not in heaven yet and we now need to not only claim to have faith but apply that faith daily in our lives. If we do not, as James said, it is dead. Paul is not calling us to a dead faith but a living faith that is going to have an affect on how we think and act right now.

In Romans 6:3-4 Paul states that as Christ died, was buried, and was resurrected, we were there. Paul uses the word baptism, which means to identify one thing with another. Spartan soldiers would dip their swords and spears in pig’s blood prior to battle to identify, or baptize them with death. When a Greek ship sank it was said to be baptized, no longer identified with the surface of the water but with the bottom of the sea. We were there at the Cross. This is a principle of retroactive positional truth. When we put our faith in Christ, we go back 2000 years to Calvary and are identified with and share in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection. We illustrate this with water baptism. Going under the water, we are in a place of death and burial. Indeed, if you were not brought up out of the water, you would actually die by

drowning. You are, however, brought up out of the water, which is a picture of your part and place in Christ's resurrection.

Salvation is provided when man puts faith in Christ's death for sins. That simple decision of faith alone in Christ alone provides eternal salvation. Salvation is a gift of God and man receives that gift by faith. This is what God did for man through Christ, and the simple act of faith provides eternal life for the believing sinner. Man did nothing more than receive the gift of what Jesus had done. All sins have been forgiven, and there is nothing the child of God can think or say or do that can diminish the work of Christ in his or her salvation. Once that faith decision is made, the believing sinner is saved. He or she has eternal life, and it will never be taken away. To remove the believer's salvation God would have to deny the very work of His Son.

In Romans Chapter 6 Paul is not dealing with salvation. He really left that subject behind at the end of Romans 4. Paul is now addressing how we are to think and to live in the present and what we are to think about the future.

While the past Cross-work of Christ is a historical reality that we must believe by faith, and our future in heaven is a fact secured for us by God's grace, the present is a potential. In verse 4 the apostle states that fact of our identification with Christ in His death and burial, but then uses a subjunctive mood verb phrase, *so we too might walk*, to express the potential that we have of either walking in the newness of life or not. In verse 6 he uses another subjunctive mood verb phrase, *we should no longer be slaves to sin*, to show us, once more, the potential we have as Christians as a result of our faith in Christ.

We can only make these potentials realities if we recognize by faith, as Paul states in verse 7, that he who has died is free from sin and we have, in Christ, died to sin. There are things that we need to know, as stated in verse 9, and things that we must consider, as stated in verse 11. These things are the things that God has done for us in Christ and are, therefore, grace. And we can enjoy this grace only through faith.

The definitive and dogmatic summary statement to our security is found in verse 14. Paul states that sin shall not be the master over us. And it will not be unless we fail in our potential and let sin rule us. This is something that we need not let happen, because we are not

under law but under grace. Many try to make this a dispensational distinctive. They teach that the Old Testament believer was under law and the New Testament believer is under grace. But the Law of the Old Testament was for a nation, believers and unbelievers alike. And at all times all believers are under the grace of God. The Mosaic Law was a temporary measure of God for the nation of Israel. It lasted from Sinai to the Cross, from Exodus 20 through John 12, from 1440 BC to AD 30. It served a number of very important purposes, including:

- Setting forth a constitution for the nation of Israel;
- Describing the Holiness of God (Leviticus 19:2);
- Describing the sinfulness of mankind; for the unbeliever the law points to the need of salvation (Galatians 4:1-6);
- Giving freedom and individual responsibility to man in areas not covered in the Law (Deuteronomy 4:2 and 12:32); Controlling Israel until the Messiah, the Promise should come (Galatians 3:19);
- Describing what would be imputed to Christ at the Cross (Romans 5:13).

At no time was the Law or any law able to save or able to sanctify. Even for those believers who lived during the time of the Mosaic Law, God did not deal with them as individuals in Law but in Grace. King David, under the Mosaic Law, should have been put to death for a number of capital crimes he committed. But God dealt with him in grace. God continues to deal with us today in grace. That is His divine plan and policy. Man cannot earn grace and does not deserve grace. Hence, man can only accept grace by faith alone.

Conclusion

In these few verses in this magnificent epistle to the Romans, Paul has given us a threefold perspective to our Christian lives: the past reality of what God has done for us through His Son, our present options as believers, and our future security in Christ.

Using those three time periods, past, present, and future, we can outline the text as follows:

- v 3 The Past Reality of Christ's death
- v 4 The Past Reality

- v 5 Our Future Security
- v 6 Our Present Option
- v 7 Our Present Option
- v 8 Our Future Security
- v 9 The Past Reality
- v 10 The Past Reality.
- v 11 The Present Option
- And verse 14 The Principle of our Present Option

The one-time decision of faith at salvation saved us from the penalty of sin. That one-time decision of faith also secured for us our place in heaven. We now live by decisions of faith to save us from the power of sin. We cannot live the Christian life by law or obedience. Even the unbeliever can be obedient to rules, and what we have in Christ far exceeds anything the unbeliever can do. We live by faith responding to God's grace.

Paul, in his letters, was writing to believers in Christ and yet he often took his readers back to salvation. He did this because the pattern by which we were saved is the pattern by which we now live. We cannot switch from grace and faith at salvation to law and works for living the Christian life or gaining a place in heaven. God's plan through the ages has been His grace and our faith.

Harry Ironside has given some of the best illustrations of law and grace we have. Once he invited a group of Navajo Indians from northern Arizona to visit with him in California. During the evening the discussion turned to the issues of law and grace. Ironside tells us what happened next.

One of the older visitors from Arizona had been quietly listening. He finally rose and said, My friends, I have been listening very carefully, because I am here to learn all I can in order to take it back to my people. I do not understand all that you are talking about, and I do not think you do yourselves. But concerning this law and grace business, let me see if I can make it clear. I think it is like this. When Mr. Ironside brought me from my home we took the longest railroad journey I ever took. We got out at Barstow, and there I saw the most beautiful railroad station and hotel I have ever seen. I walked all around and saw at one end a sign, *Do not spit here*. I looked at that sign and then looked down at the ground and saw many had spitted there, and before I think what I am doing I

have spitted myself. Isn't that strange when the sign says, *Do not spit here?*

I come to Oakland and go to the home of the lady who invited me to dinner today and I am in the nicest home I have been in. Such beautiful furniture and carpets, I hate to step on them. I sank into a comfortable chair, and the lady said, *Now, John, you sit there while I go out and see whether the maid has dinner ready.* I look around at the beautiful pictures, at the grand piano, and I walk all around those rooms. I am looking for a sign; and the sign I am looking for is, *Do not spit here*, but I look around those two beautiful drawing rooms, and cannot find a sign like this. I think *What a pity when this is such a beautiful home to have people spitting all over it—too bad they don't put up a sign!* So I look all over that carpet, but cannot find that anybody have spitted there. What a queer thing! Where the sign says, *Do not spit*, a lot of people spitted. Where there was no sign at all, in that beautiful home, nobody spitted. Now I understand! That sign is law, but inside the home it is grace. They love their beautiful home, and they want to keep it clean. They do not need a sign to tell them so. I think that explains the law and grace business.

It is the beauty of our salvation by grace and faith, it is the beauty of eternal security, it is the beauty of God's love for us that will keep us from spitting in the wrong place. Remember the African man whose first response to eternal security was what he or others get away with? He was not considering the beauty of His salvation and its application to us today. That is what Paul is telling us of in Romans 6. We are in that beautiful room of God's love and grace that provides for us eternal security. As we come to understand that love more and more we will respond with love for Him and for others.