

What Does God's Word Say About Eternal Security And Falling Away

What Does God's Word Say

October 24, 2010

I. Review:

- A. Last Sunday, in our study of what God's word says in relation to eternal security and falling away, we saw that of all the covenants established by God between himself and mankind, the rainbow – signifying God will not destroy the earth by water ever again, and the perpetual priesthood for Phinehas' offspring are the only two one sided covenants where God does everything and the recipients of the covenant have no requirements placed on them at all.
- B. Therefore, from Adam and Eve through the book of Revelation, the overwhelming majority of God's dealings with us include some form of agreement or covenant that requires something from God's side and something from our side. To support this, I gave you three examples: Adam and Eve, the nation of Israel, and the seven churches of Revelation.
- C. Today, my intention is to begin in the Old Testament and work our way through to the end of the New Testament looking at those scriptures that speak of the security we have in God – because of His character, and the possibility of falling away from that secure place – because of our choices and behavior.
- D. Prayer

II. What Does God's Word Say About Eternal Security and Falling Away?

- A. An example early on in the Old Testament of a two-sided covenant between God and man is the covenant God made with Abraham.
 1. When Abraham was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be blameless. I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly." Upon hearing this, Abraham fell on his face before God. Continuing His talk with Abraham, God went on to say: "As for Me, and listen carefully to what I am saying, My covenant is with you, and you will be the father of a multitude of nations, and kings will come forth from you." Yet God did not stop there. He said: "I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you" (**Genesis 17:1-7**). This

covenant God made with Abraham included giving him and his descendants the Promised Land as an everlasting possession.

2. According to the language God used it would be easy to conclude that He was guaranteeing this covenant with Abraham would last forever. And indeed it was intended to last forever from God's side. However, Abraham and his descendants had a side to play in this covenant and their part was just as important as God's part when it came to keeping the covenant in force. Here is what God said about Abraham's side: "Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations (**Genesis 17:9**).
3. Abraham's side of this covenant required two things.
 - a. First, every male who lived in Israel – be he a slave or a freeman – from eight days old and older was to be circumcised. Any male who refused to be circumcised was to be cut off from God's people, for such a refusal was to break God's covenant with them.
 - b. Second, all of God's people – from Abraham onward – were to depart from evil and do good, so that they could continue living in the covenant land.
 - (1) And here is the reasoning for this second requirement given to us by David: "The Lord loves justice and does not forsake His godly ones; they are preserved forever, but the descendants of the wicked will be cut off. It is the righteous who will inherit the land and dwell in it forever" (**Psalms 37:27-29**).
 - (2) And God, speaking through Moses, affirmed that His covenant with His people placed a serious requirement on them when He said: "If you will obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples [of the earth], for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (**Exodus 19:5**).

B. In speaking about the security the Israelites had as God's children in the Promised Land, the Psalmist said that "Those who trust in the Lord are as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved but abides forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds His people from this time forth and forever. [3] For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest upon the land of the righteous, so that the righteous will not put forth their hands to do wrong" (**Psalms 125:1-3**).

1. Added to this promise of security in the land, God said that if His children would live according to His will and word, He would make sure

they had rains in the rainy season so that the land would yield its produce and the trees of the field would bear their fruit.

2. But He did not stop there. God went on to say that the result of obedience would not only be sufficient provision year by year, but also peace in the land from turmoil within and threats from without.
3. And to that God added these words: “In addition to all that, I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you. I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people” (**Leviticus 26:3-12**).

C. Such promises from God are wonderful, yet God made it clear that the fulfillment all these promises were not based on His faithfulness alone, but also on the faithfulness of His children. Therefore, to the words just spoken God added: “But if you do not obey Me and do not carry out all these commandments, if, instead, you reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances so as not to carry out all My commandments, and so break My covenant, I, in turn, will do this to you.

1. Now before reading all that God will do to His children in response to their willful disobedience, I want to point out that God, as any loving father would, starts with light discipline in an effort to get His children’s attention and call them back to their senses. And though God’s discipline becomes harsher and more severe the longer His people stubbornly resists His discipline, His patience and longsuffering increases at the same time. It is not until Israel’s disobedience reaches a certain point – which is known only to God – that God has had enough and finally drives them out of the land to die in bondage in a foreign land. Listen to what God says:
 - a. “If you reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances so as not to carry out all My commandments, and so break My covenant, I will appoint over you a sudden terror, consumption and fever that will waste away the eyes and cause the soul to pine away; also, you will sow your seed uselessly, for your enemies will eat it up. I will set My face against you so that you will be struck down before your enemies; and those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee when no one is pursuing you.”
 - b. “If also after these things you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. I will also break down your pride of power; I will also make your sky like iron and your earth like bronze. Your strength will be spent uselessly, for your land will not yield its produce and the trees of the land will not yield their fruit.”

- c. “If then, you act with hostility against Me and are unwilling to obey Me, I will increase the plague on you seven times according to your sins. I will let loose among you the beasts of the field, which will bereave you of your children and destroy your cattle and reduce your number so that your roads lie deserted.”
- d. “And if by these things you are not turned to Me, but act with hostility against Me, then I will act with hostility against you; and I, even I, will strike you seven times for your sins. I will also bring upon you a sword which will execute vengeance for the covenant [which you have broken]; and when you gather together into your cities, I will send pestilence among you, so that you shall be delivered into enemy hands. When I break your staff of bread, ten women will bake your bread in one oven, and they will bring back your bread in rationed amounts, so that you will eat and not be satisfied.”
- e. “Yet if in spite of this you do not obey Me, but act with hostility against Me, then I will act with wrathful hostility against you, and I, even I, will punish you seven times for your sins. Further, you will eat the flesh of your sons and the flesh of your daughters. I then will destroy your high places, and cut down your incense altars, and heap your remains on the remains of your idols, for My soul shall abhor you. I will lay waste your cities as well and will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your soothing aromas. I will make the land desolate so that your enemies who settle in it will be appalled over it. You, however, I will scatter among the nations and will draw out a sword after you, as your land becomes desolate and your cities become waste.”
- f. “As for those of you who may be left, I will also bring weakness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies. And the sound of a driven leaf will chase them, and even when no one is pursuing they will flee as though from the sword, and they will fall. They will therefore stumble over each other as if running from the sword, although no one is pursuing; and you will have no strength to stand up before your enemies. But you will perish among the nations, and your enemies' land will consume you. So those of you who may be left will rot away because of their iniquity in the lands of your enemies; and also because of the iniquities of their forefathers they will rot away with them” (**Leviticus 26:14-39**).

2. What are we to learn from these words?

- a. First, God's covenant with Israel was not one sided. Without question, His side was guaranteed, for even though we may be unfaithful, He has been, is, and will be faithful from eternity past to eternity future (**II Timothy 2:15**). And He himself has said: "I will never break My covenant with you" (**Judges 2:1**).
 - (1) And so we see that from God's side there is no chance of even the slightest unfaithfulness in keeping covenant with us.
 - (2) However, His covenants are two sided, and both sides play a part in keeping the covenant in force. And though He does not quickly turn His back on those who break covenant with Him, there is a point at which He turns from discipline to punishment, from calling us to our senses to driving us out from His sight and presence.
- b. The second lesson we can learn from these strong words in **Leviticus 26**, is that God uses the same strong, unambiguous, seemingly extreme language when describing the certainty of His part as He does when describing the certainty of what will happen if we fail to uphold our part of the covenant.
- c. Finally, there is a powerful lesson contained in these words concerning God's magnanimous grace and extensive mercy in the face of our sinfulness.
 - (1) The Psalmist captures the bounty and extent of God's mercy toward His sinful children when he wrote: "When God killed them, then they sought Him, and returned and searched diligently for Him; and they remembered that God was their Rock, and the Most High God their Redeemer. But they deceived Him with their mouth and lied to Him with their tongue. For their heart was not steadfast toward Him, nor were they faithful in His covenant. But He, being compassionate, forgave their iniquity and did not destroy them; and often He restrained His anger and did not arouse all His wrath. Thus He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes and does not return" (**Psalms 78:34-39**).
 - (2) And again the Psalmist says: "The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west,

so far has He removed our transgressions from us. Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him. For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust” (**Psalm 103:8-14**).

3. However, lest we act like those who would take advantage of God’s mercy and discount God’s hatred of sin and the destructive, horrifying consequences sin brings to mankind, God, in speaking through Moses to the nation of Israel before they entered the Promised Land, said: “Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments; but repays those who hate Him to their faces, to destroy them. Therefore, you shall keep the commandment and the statutes and the judgments which I am commanding you today, to do them. Then it shall come about, because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them, that the Lord your God will keep with you His covenant and His lovingkindness which He swore to your forefathers” (**Deuteronomy 7:9-12**).

- a. And again God said to Israel: “I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, which I am commanding you today; and the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I am commanding you today, by following other gods which you have not known (**Deuteronomy 11:26-28**).

- b. God went on to say: “I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the Lord your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them” (**Deuteronomy 30:17-20**).

D. Just as Adam and Eve had the choice of life or death set before them by God, so did Cain in regard to his dealings with Abel, Noah in relation to building the ark, Abraham and Sarah in regard to Isaac’s birth and in presenting him as a sacrifice to God, Lot in regard to fleeing Sodom, Joseph after being sold into slavery in Egypt and most obviously when tempted by Potiphar’s wife, Moses in refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh’s

daughter, Joshua and Caleb in urging the people to trust and obey God rather than being afraid to enter the Promised Land at the urging of the ten other spies, Rahab in protecting the Israelite spies, David when patiently waiting for God to put him on the throne of Israel, the prophets of Israel who served the Lord in spite of persecution and a rebellious audience, and the many martyrs – from the days prior to the birth of Christ up until today. All these know what it is to have the choice of life or death set before them.

- E. Returning to the scriptures we read that God’s covenant with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the subsequent generations of Israelites was an everlasting covenant in which God said, “To you I will give the land of Canaan, as the portion of your inheritance” (**I Chronicles 16:14-18**). And yet God warned Israel just before entering the Promised Land that if they did not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before themselves, those whom they let remain in the land would become sharp sticks in their eyes and thorns in their sides – thus giving them trouble in that Land of Promise. And should Israel fail to drive them out, God said that he would do to Israel what He planned to do to those Israel was to drive out” (**Numbers 33:55-56**).
1. To this warning about driving out all the inhabitants, God also warned Israel about idol worship – telling the Israelites that they had seen the abominations of the nations they passed through from Egypt until coming up to the Promised Land. God said Israel had also seen their idols of wood, stone, silver, and gold.
 2. Therefore there was not to be among them a man or woman, or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the Lord God, to go and serve the gods of those nations – so that there will not be among them a root bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood who claims to be right with God yet walks in the stubbornness of his heart. God concluded this warning with these words: “The Lord shall never be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of the Lord and His jealousy will burn against that man, and every curse which is written in this book will rest on him, and the Lord will blot out his name from under heaven. Then the Lord will single him out for adversity from all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant which are written in this book of the law (**Deuteronomy 29:14-21**).
- F. In talking with David about who would build His temple in Jerusalem, God said: “Your son Solomon is the one who shall build My house and My

courts; for I have chosen him to be a son to Me, and I will be a father to him. I will establish his kingdom forever if he resolutely performs My commandments and My ordinances, as is done now” (**I Chronicles 28:6-7**).

1. In talking about this with his son, Solomon, David advised Solomon to “know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever” (**I Chronicles 28:9**).
2. When Solomon had finished building the temple and had dedicated it to the Lord, God appeared to Solomon twice.
 - a. In one of those meetings God said: “I have consecrated this house which you have built by putting My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually” (**II Kings 9:3**).
 - b. And on the other occasion God said: “If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people [because of their sin], and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (**II Chronicles 7:13-14**).
 - c. But God did not stop there in speaking to Solomon. He went on to say: “As for you, if you walk before Me as your father David walked, even to do according to all that I have commanded you, and will keep My statutes and My ordinances, then I will establish your royal throne as I covenanted with your father David, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man to be ruler in Israel.’ But if you turn away and forsake My statutes and My commandments which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will uproot you from My land which I have given you, and this house which I have consecrated for My name I will cast out of My sight and I will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples” (**II Chronicles 7:17-20**).

G. Notice the strength of God’s words concerning His presence being in the Temple forever and the perpetual attentiveness of His eyes and heart toward the people, when He says: “I have consecrated this house which you have built by putting My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually” (**II Kings 9:3**). And yet notice God’s warning that makes it clear the people and Solomon could bring it all to an end by giving themselves to the worship of other gods.

1. Isaiah, in speaking as God's mouthpiece, expresses this truth when he says: "those who forsake the Lord will come to an end" (**Isaiah 1:28**).
2. And God speaking to Israel, through Jeremiah, about the soon coming judgment, said: "Many nations will pass by this city [after it is destroyed because of your sin]; and they will say to one another, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this great city?' Then they will answer, 'Because they forsook the covenant of the Lord their God and bowed down to other gods and served them.' Do not weep for the dead or mourn for him, but weep continually for the one who is carried away; for he will never return or see his native land" (**Jeremiah 22:8-10**).

III. "Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off" (**Romans 11:22**).