

*SHALL  
NEVER PERISH  
FOREVER*

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## CHAPTER 1

### Laying the Groundwork

**D**uring His earthly life, Jesus Christ's message and ministry received severe opposition on several occasions from various groups. In one particular situation, the Sadducees, who were the theological liberals of Jesus' day, questioned Him about man's future resurrection (which they denied) in order to attempt to trap Him. They asked Him,

Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her. (Matt. 22:24-28)

In answer to their hypothetical situation and foolish question, the Lord Jesus Christ gave this straightforward reply:

*You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.* For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of

Jacob"? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.  
(vv. 29-32)

What a precise and powerful answer! What a serious and scathing indictment Jesus Christ made when He pointedly said, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God" (v. 29).

Our Lord called a spade, a spade! He pulled no punches! He told it like it was. He went for the Sadducees' spiritual jugular and leveled their self-righteous pride when he said, "You are mistaken." In effect, Christ was saying, "You Sadducees, you religious people, you who think you have it all together, *you are mistaken.*" This could essentially be rendered, "You are repeatedly mistaken. You are perpetually going astray. You are over and over again missing the beaten path of truth." Why was this so? What were the root causes for their erring? And what specific reasons did Jesus Christ offer regarding their sad spiritual state?

## THE ROOT PROBLEMS

Jesus Christ identified two failures which reveal the reasons for the Sadducees erring from the truth.

### 1. They were ignorant of the Word of God.

"You are mistaken, *not knowing the Scriptures.*" Christ pointed out that though they prided themselves in being followers of Moses, they did not really understand what Moses taught. They did not perceive the true meaning of Scripture. What condemnation! Unlike some things in life, biblical ignorance is not bliss; it is a serious blunder. Throngs of people today are biblically illiterate. Sad to say, many couldn't care less. Few theological seminaries today believe or teach that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of the living God. Church-goers are fed a steady diet of "sermonettes for Christianettes," preached from Hallmark cards and dosed with social reform and pop psychology instead of clear, accurate, and practical Bible teaching. Church tradition, quasi-sanctified entertainment, rote-ritual, religious Madison Avenue techniques—*ad infinitum, ad nauseum*—dominate too many church services in our land.

The prophet Hosea's cry is still very applicable today: "My people are destroyed for *lack of knowledge*" (Hos. 4:6a). What a sad spiritual condition exists when so few know the truth about God,

His grace provision of salvation, His plan and purpose for man, and more. How tragic and how unnecessary when we have access to a completed Bible, the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of Jesus Christ which states, "If anyone wants to do His will, *he shall know concerning the doctrine*, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority" (John 7:17).

Everyone needs to know God's truth. There is no value in sticking one's head in the spiritual sand. God wants you to know His revealed truth. This is why He has given you His word. No wonder the Scriptures tell us,

But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" (Matt. 4:4)

As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby. (1 Peter 2:2)

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. (Ps. 119:105)

Should it surprise us that in 2 Timothy 2:15 the apostle Paul says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"? Because of the authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures, Paul instructs young pastor Timothy to,

*Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.* (2 Tim. 4:2-4)

Practicing what he preached, Paul explains to the Ephesian elders at Miletus regarding his own teaching ministry, "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

From this sampling of verses, one thing is quite clear. A true understanding and steady diet of the Word of God is essential in our lives. Why were the Sadducees mistaken? Like many in pulpit and

pew today, they went astray because *they were ignorant of the Word of God*. This is the first reason for the Sadducees' error, which leads us to the second reason Jesus Christ gave for their ignorance.

## 2. They were ignorant of the power of God.

"You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures, *nor the power of God*." Their ignorance of Scripture resulted in an underestimation of God's power. They could not comprehend the power of God Almighty which could raise the dead in a future bodily resurrection. This did not fit their theological system which gave naturalistic answers and denied supernatural explanations. God is omnipotent or all-powerful. He has the power to do *anything* within the parameters of His nature and will. In fact, Romans 1:20 tells us that through the medium of His created universe, every day God reveals to us His "eternal power and Godhead; so that [we] are without excuse."

Ironically, God further displayed His supernatural power in the midst of the Sadducees' dark unbelief through the numerous miracles Christ performed, climaxed by His own resurrection from the dead. It is essential that we understand the power of God, especially since the saving message of the Gospel unleashes "*the power of God unto salvation* to everyone that believes" (Rom. 1:16).

The indictment of the Lord Jesus Christ to these Sadducees is very clear: "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God."

### A PERSONAL APPLICATION

Could this be said of you? Do you know what you believe? Is your belief rooted and grounded in the Scriptures? Do your convictions have the biblical stamp of approval consisting of "thus says the Lord"? Have you taken into full consideration the supernatural power of God? I ask these questions of you because these two biblical essentials (the Word of God and the power of God) have everything to do with a correct understanding of the subject in this book, *Shall Never Perish Forever: Is Salvation Forever or Can It Be Lost?*

### SOME PERTINENT QUESTIONS

Have you ever wondered, "Can a genuine believer in Jesus Christ ever be lost again?" Perhaps someone has asked you, "Can people

who are truly saved ever commit a sin or sin to such a degree that they would lose their salvation and be condemned forever?" Approaching it from another angle, "Can a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ later fall away from salvation?" And "Can people know with 100-percent assurance they will be saved in one, five, or ten years from now? Or forever?" Or "Must one wait till he dies to see if he has persevered in faith and godliness, proving he is one of God's elect?" Good questions, wouldn't you say? Essential questions, for they address issues that lie right at the heart of understanding people's eternal destiny. I assure you that the Bible speaks very directly and clearly regarding these crucial issues.

### FOUR COMMON RESPONSES

When the important issue of the security of salvation or these kinds of legitimate questions arise, people generally respond in one of four ways. To some individuals, the issue of the security of salvation is a . . .

#### **Dilemma**

Some people are honestly uncertain about what the Bible teaches regarding this. This is sometimes true of new believers or of churches where the Bible is not clearly taught. Others use the cop-out, "Bible scholars have debated and disagreed on these issues for many years." Dear friends, that is nothing less than skirting the issue. Though it seems hard to believe, I have even heard of those who seek to walk the middle of the road by saying, "Both sides are right! Salvation is eternal and secure, but you can lose it." That is theological double-talk. It's like having white blacktop, which is an oxymoronic impossibility. Still others are tossed to and fro on this issue, being blown around like spiritual tumbleweed depending on whom they are talking to or associating with that day. In each of these cases, the reaction or response to the issue of eternal security is one of *dilemma*. However, though some people view the eternal security of salvation as an unresolved dilemma, there is a substantial group of people who vehemently oppose and reject this teaching, calling it a . . .

#### **Damnably Doctrine**

Some folks in pulpit and pew conclude that to know you are saved forever and can never lose it is "satanic" and "straight from the pit

of Hell.” They further conclude that this teaching is a “license to sin,” producing careless living among believers. Their concern is an understandable one, for God saves a sinner “from” sin, not “to” sin. Furthermore, we know that God hates sin and calls believers to “Be holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16). Oddly enough, some people reject this so-called “doctrine of the devil” while claiming that they personally have assurance that Heaven is *their* future home and that they shall never lose *their* salvation. Doesn’t this sound contradictory and arrogant? If others can lose it, why can’t they? So while some view the issue of eternal security as a *damnable doctrine*, a growing number of evangelicals have concluded that what you believe about eternal security . . .

### **Doesn’t Matter**

These individuals, even many who are pastors, view this issue as secondary and non-essential at best, and controversial and divisive at worst. While they may discuss it privately, they avoid teaching it publicly, not wanting to rock the boat of their numerically growing evangelical church. Oftentimes, people who attend this kind of church reflect a mixed bag of beliefs, consisting of those who embrace eternal security, those who deny eternal security, and those who just don’t know or care. Unfortunately, the truths of the Word of God regarding this important issue are not taught, leaving people with the impression that it really *doesn’t matter* what you believe about the security of salvation. Don’t you think it is important to know for sure whether or not you are saved from Hell forever? How sad! And how unnecessary, when the Scriptures are replete with numerous verses specifically addressing this subject. The fourth prevalent response to the issue of the security of salvation is one of . . .

### **Delight**

Many have found the eternal security of salvation to be one of the most comforting, assuring, and uplifting of all Christian truths. Those who understand and believe in the true nature of salvation by God’s grace and the sufficiency of Christ’s finished payment for all of our sins enjoy the assurance of an everlasting salvation. To them, the verses of Scripture we will examine in the chapters to follow are a *delight*. Like the prophet Jeremiah, they exclaim, “Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and



rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts" (Jer. 15:16).

### A PERSONAL CHALLENGE

What response to this important issue of the security of eternal salvation do you have? Is it an unresolved dilemma? If so, then make sure you carefully read this book with an open heart, paying close attention to the clear verses of Scripture. Remember, "The entrance of Your words gives light" (Ps. 119:130a)!

Perhaps your response to this issue has been to consider it a damnable doctrine of satanic or human origin. If this is true of you, let me ask you a very probing question that you need to honestly face. Do you reject this teaching based on an objective understanding of all the Scriptures regarding it? Why do you believe what you believe? Please consider and study the numerous Scripture verses which this book will give.

On the other hand, you may be of the opinion that the issue of the assurance of eternal salvation does not matter. But are you willing to search the Scriptures to see *if it matters to God*? And if it does, will you change your mind?

Lastly, you might be thinking, "I believe that my salvation is eternal and secure." Great! Could you support your beliefs from the Bible? And could you communicate your convictions clearly to someone else?

### WHAT IS YOUR FINAL STANDARD OF AUTHORITY?

Whether you realize it or not, you base your beliefs on some authority, standard, or evidence which you hold to be valid or right. What is it? Take a moment to think it through. Evaluate. Consider the options. Is your conviction based on your *human experience* so that you reject this teaching as a fabrication of people's fantasies? Is it because you say to yourself, "I knew a person once who claimed to be saved, but later he did such and such a sin. I'm sure he lost his salvation"? I ask you, how do you know for sure he was genuinely saved to begin with? If he was saved by God's grace, how do you know he lost his salvation? What is your standard? What if someone else had just the opposite human evaluation or experience? Who is right?

The apostle Peter makes it clear to us that the Word of God alone, not human experience, is the final determiner of truth.

Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. *We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.* For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (2 Peter 1:15-21, KJV)

The written Word of God is more sure than human experience. Your human experience is an unreliable final authority for God's truth, just as is *human emotion*. Listen closely when people discuss this issue. They will often say, "Well, I feel . . ." Realistically, the final determiner of truth is not what we feel but what God's Word says! I don't always feel very alive, but all the vital signs are still there.

Or perhaps you base your beliefs about these matters on *human opinion*. When this is the case, you will find yourself saying, "I had a friend once who told me I could lose my salvation. This must be right." Or perhaps this unreliable guide masquerades by prefacing statements with, "I personally think" or "I heard Mr. Evangelist once say." But all our human opinions fade into oblivion when we remember that "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work*" (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Still others uphold *church tradition* as a reliable determiner of truth. Jesus Christ ripped this conclusion to shreds when He declared, "*Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. . . . And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men*" (Matt. 15:6, 9).

## THE ONLY AUTHORITATIVE STANDARD OF TRUTH

Dear friend, the final determiner of truth is not one's *human experience*, no matter how real it may seem. Neither is it one's *human emotion*, regardless of how sincere it may be. Nor is it one's *human opinion*, no matter how credible it is. Neither is it *church tradition*, regardless of how enduring and popular it is. The only final court of appeal in determining God's truth is the *Holy Scriptures*. Remember what Jesus Christ said in Matthew 22:29? "You are mistaken, not knowing *the Scriptures*, nor the power of God." He also affirmed the absolute authority of Scripture in John 17:17 when He prayed, "Sanctify them through Your truth: *Your Word is truth.*"

We have in the Scriptures the inspired, infallible, and inerrant source and record of divine truth, so we can know with certainty what *God* has to say on these matters. And when *God* says it, that settles it, no matter what anyone feels or thinks about it. The gavel of truth stands or falls not on what some theologians have taught about the security of salvation but on what the Scriptures reveal and teach. In fact, I encourage and challenge you to put everything in this book to the acid test of Scripture. Be like those noble Bereans of Paul's day who "received the Word with all readiness, and *searched the Scriptures daily* to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). Did you notice again what is the final determiner of truth? They "*searched the Scriptures.*" Will you be willing to follow their example on this crucial issue of the security of salvation? You will be glad you did!

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,  
Is laid for your faith in His excellent word!  
What more can He say than to you He hath said —  
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Keen, *How Firm a Foundation*. Observe how all the songs mentioned in this book have a ring of the absolute assurance of salvation in them.