

**“The Irrevocable Nature of Salvation as a Basis for Trusting God with the Daily
Affairs of Life”**



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OUTLINE

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THE IRREVOCABLE NATURE OF SALVATION IN PRACTICE

Evidence of the fall of man into sin abounds. My life's work and calling from God is to spiritually lead a local church. In that capacity I am a shepherd and a practical theologian, though the distinction *practical* as theologian is somewhat unneeded. All theology is validated by the extent to which it is practical; that is, the extent to which it may be applied in the lives of Christians.

Theology must be proved valid in the context of the day-to-day experience of imperfect people living in a fallen world. Everyday followers of Jesus Christ are the true examiners of theoretical theological doctrines. Practitioners of Christian truths apply the litmus test of life to doctrines expounded from the Scriptures, which are developed within the context of the ivory-tower scrutiny of logic and academic endeavor.

The purest test of the validity of a biblical doctrine is not that it passes the test of syllogism or the rigorous examination of the minds of the doctors of the church. If a doctrine, belief, or standard of Christian theological understanding is not able to pass the test of the daily experience of the believer, then its truth value must be questioned. Such an assertion is not intended as an argument in favor of pure pragmatism. It is the biblical assertion that revealed truth has been revealed for a *purpose*.

God's activity in this world and in the lives of individuals is not without aim or definition. In the formal study of systematic theology, practical theology is often relegated to a position of academic inferiority, as though practical theology is a lesser discipline than pure theology.

All theology is practical, because the highest aim of theological endeavor is not the production of philosophical dialogue but transforming Christian men and women to be increasingly more confident and obedient. Theological pursuits that are not inherently beneficial for Christian discipleship or that do not speak to those practical pursuits which are, become utterly useless. So it is toward the *practice* of the doctrine of eternal security that we turn our attention.

Theological Foundations

Before we can begin a discussion of the irrevocable nature of salvation as a basis for trusting God with the daily affairs of life, we must first establish at least cursory biblical criteria for what we mean by eternal security and what its biblical and theological foundations are. The doctrine of eternal security and those doctrines directly related to it are, above all, pastoral doctrines. God has revealed these truths in the Bible so that His children may know the extent and depth of His love for them. These doctrines are intensely practical.

For the purpose of this essay I will limit my preliminary discussion to a succinct explanation of the connection between divine foreknowledge and election as a theological foundation for the eternal security of the believer.

It has been stated that a man cannot lose that which he cannot earn. It is impossible to adequately discuss the practical application of the doctrine of eternal security without a clear definition of why Christians are eternally secure. We must understand the nature of salvation. Sadly, a lack of clear understanding of the nature of salvation disallows many Christians from enjoying the practical daily benefits that come from knowing and applying personal knowledge of the irrevocable nature of salvation.

It is God who saves. Regardless of one's theological persuasion with regard to the nature of the sovereignty of God and its role in salvation, serious students of the Bible must concede at least this statement: *Man is the recipient of salvation*. We are saved not merely from something (eternity apart from God), we are saved unto a life of growing dependence and obedience to God.

God is active in salvation. Salvation is the consequence of God's saving action. Indeed, God works through the faith of the individual receiving His gift. However, faith is an *instrument* of salvation, not the *means*. God saves men and women in Christ. The Holy Spirit draws them to repentance unto salvation. They receive salvation by faith and are born again.

If God reigns supreme in the universe, His plans cannot be thwarted, and salvation is the consequence of His plan and supreme action, it follows that salvation is irrevocable. While we may quibble over the details of the precise nature of divine foreknowledge, election, saving faith, and other related matters, when the nature of salvation is understood as the noncontingent sovereign act of God, it necessarily follows that salvation is irrevocable. No man or woman may, through wrong activity or blatant inactivity, lose a salvation that was utterly nondependent upon their own action or inaction to begin with.

Salvation is the gift of God. It cannot be earned. Therefore, it cannot be lost. Contrary to the position of some, when this is properly understood and applied as a foundation for the daily lives of Christians, it does not produce slothfulness in righteousness and good works. When applied biblically, this doctrine produces internally secure believers who are able to approach daily life knowing that salvation is God's

work, who live out God's purpose in salvation, who have a tenable understanding of personal sin, and who are able to produce good works as a consequence of grace rather than in an effort to attain favor with God.

God's Work in Salvation

Our lives are thematically shaped by vast collections of individual moments. Human lives are not given definition by a summary of explanation at the end of life. No eulogy has ever captured even a fraction of the essence of a person's life. Moment by moment our lives are defined, and until believers learn to reside, abide in, and dwell in the satisfying knowledge of the vast implications of the irrevocable nature of salvation, they will not find the peace that is available in each moment in Christ. The notion that salvation is revocable has the potential of creating or at least exacerbating anxiety in the spiritual life of the follower of Jesus.

Confidence in one's salvation is greatly diminished within the context of a system of Christian understanding that neglects, ignores, or rejects the irrevocable nature of salvation. Biblical anthropology clearly identifies the fallen nature of man and his inability to reconcile himself to God. If salvation is revocable and somehow dependent upon humans in any way, there is little hope for genuine internal peace in the life of any believer.

As long as there is the remotest possibility that the saved person could ever be lost, to that extent the door is opened for anxiety. As long as you entertain the possibility that, somehow or somewhere, you could sin so that you sever your relationship with God and risk being sent to hell, you cannot have perfect peace. The whole time you are talking to God you are aware that the same God you are talking to will not be on speaking terms with you should you displease Him.

Therefore at bottom when you are talking to Him you are aware that you hold the cards, as it were. It is ultimately up to you.¹

Man has no ability to save himself. Prior to the time of conversion, each person is spiritually dead and lost in their sinful condition. “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). The notion that man has any part to play in salvation, other than that of receiving the gift of it, is a spiritual principal that is guaranteed to be a source of anxiety, pride, and spiritual uproar. Confidence in Christ is the outgrowth of an understanding of what Christ has done and is doing in the lives of believers. “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!” (Romans 5:8–9).

Present-tense trust in God, though, is rooted in more than merely the knowledge of what God has done for us in Christ. Confidence is associated more with action than with knowledge. It is not merely the byproduct of something *known* but something *known and applied*. A runner who learns proper technique but never spends any time on the race track will never know what it means to have confidence in his running. It is in the application of his learned and honed technique that confidence grows. A man who has watched thousands of hours of boxing film so that he is able to recount all of the best skill of the greatest prize fighters in history, but has never stepped inside a ring, is not a boxer. He is an observer.

God is active in the lives of believers. He is actively reshaping them into the image of His Son. While there is a point in time when God, working through our faith,

¹ R. T. Kendall, *Once Saved, Always Saved* (Waynesboro, GA: Authentic Media, 2005), 33.

saves us in His Son, the total process of salvation and sanctification is the work of God. They are intrinsically connected in that they are the method of God restoring His image in the elect. Application knowledge of this aspect of biblical truth is crucial to having confidence in the here and now—the present-tense boxing ring of life. Confidence in Jesus Christ and willingness to trust God in the daily affairs of life grow out of the experiential knowledge that is gained from experiencing and observing the personal transformation that comes as God reshapes us into the image of Christ, restoring the *Imago Dei*. What happens in the daily affairs of this life is the product or byproduct of God’s shaping us into the image of His Son.

Humanity is God’s special creation. “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground’” (Genesis 1:26). Mankind has a unique place and role in God’s economy of creation. Humanity was made in the image of God, and the central theme of God’s work or aim in salvation is the restoration of that image in man. We see reflected in the person of Jesus Christ the fullness of the image of God and something of the ideal of the image of God in man.

In John 14:9 John records that Jesus said, “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?” Jesus is the perfect image of God. In Christ we see the perfection of the *Imago Dei*. This is not to relegate Jesus only as a divine messenger. Indeed, He is divine. This points to the manner in which God is at work restoring His image in believers. “The god of this age has blinded the minds of

unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:4). Christ is the perfect image of God, and God is working in the lives of believers to transform them into the image of Christ, who is the image of God.

Salvation is the act of God in restoring His image in us through Christ, who is His perfect image that was lost in the fall. A full discussion of the range of meaning and nuance of application that this truth entails is impossible given the scope of this present essay. For our purposes here, it is enough to say that man was created in God’s image, with a full range of creative, moral, and spiritual qualities and abilities. Through man’s fall into sin, these qualities were disrupted but not destroyed. “God gave of his divine ‘life-breath’ to man alone. This not only made man a living and breathing creature, but also a thinking, speaking, volitional, moral, and spiritual being. These aspects of God’s own nature which God granted to man at creation constitute the *Imago Dei*.”²

In Paul’s letter to the Romans he writes, “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers” (Romans 8:29). In his letter to the church at Corinth he writes, “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:18). A central aspect of God’s work in redemption through Christ is the restoration of these qualities. Redeemed men and women who have received Christ by faith, according to God’s grace, are being *re-created*.

² Kenneth M. Gardoski, “The Imago Dei Revisited,” *The Journal of Ministry and Theology* 11-2, no. 5-37 (fall 2007).

This is not to suggest that salvation is an ongoing process. There is a point in time when men believe, receive Christ, and are saved. At the initial point of salvation men completely change their positional relationship with God. They are no longer at enmity with God. They are then in Christ, and the wall of separation between God and men has been demolished through faith, according to God's grace.

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. (Ephesians 2:14–16)

The process of the restoration of God's image in man is not something that must be completed in order to receive salvation. This process is not a box that must be checked in order to gain entrance into heaven. It is the broader purpose of salvation. The process of restoration is the ultimate aim of salvation as it relates to the human composition. This is the matter of *propositional* transformation of the believer. When taken into consideration, it is potentially a tremendous source of daily confidence in God. The Lord Most High is at work re-creating His perfect image in believers, the elect. Salvation is irrevocable because it is the labor of God. One aspect of that labor is that God is in fact working to restore His perfect image in us. As believers see themselves being transformed, confidence in Christ grows, as does the willingness and ability to trust God in the daily affairs of life. As the way believers interact with the world and with God, and in the manner in which they understand themselves changed to be increasingly reflective of the image of God reflected in Christ, confidence increases. I am convinced that the apostle Paul was alluding to something similar when he wrote, "Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God" (Romans 15:17). Our ability to glory in God is

intrinsically connected to our experiential knowledge of God and the spiritual transformation that is occurring within our own lives. This comes in the form of a “mystical” connection to God through the Holy Spirit. It also comes through the evidence of observable transformation in propositional terms.

In the epistle of James, the Bible records the following: “In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do” (James 2:17–18). Remembering that faith is the instrument of the receipt of grace and not the means of grace itself, it may be stated that the evidence of the faith spoken of in James is the evidence of God’s grace working through faith in the life of a believer. If there is no observable change, one must not question God’s faithfulness to transform but the individual’s faithfulness to participate in the process of transformation.

This line of reasoning begs a discussion of the difference between grace and works-based salvation. Good works are the evidence of salvation; in no way are they the means of salvation. We will address that topic in the final portion of the body of this essay. The point here is related but differs slightly. God is restoring His image in us. Many believers live as though they are preparing themselves for heaven. The reality is that we are free in the process of transformation, sanctification, and holiness. God is restoring His image in us. The work is His. He most often uses the events that are allowed or purposed in the lives of believers in order to shape and transform us.

Followers of Jesus are free to trust God in the daily circumstances of life, whatever they may be, because God’s primary work in every instance, every moment, every single breath we take that He gives us, all comes together as the work of a sculptor

who chisels away at a stone, creating a masterpiece. God's tools in this present life are events, trials, joys, struggles, heartache, and rejoicing. All of these things are used by God, either by design or allowance, to shape believers into the image of Christ—to restore His perfect image in His children. “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers” (Romans 8:28–29).

God's Purpose in Salvation

For what purpose did God send His Son to die for humanity? When asked this question, most well-intentioned Christians, having been schooled in a “me-centered” modern church culture, are likely to answer something like “To save sinners.” Or they may answer more specifically, “So that we can get to heaven.” While salvation does bring with it these and other personal benefits, Jesus' death on the cross had much more to do with God than it does with humanity. Just prior to His journey to the cross, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once” (John 13:31–32).

Jesus' death on the cross does provide atonement for our sin, but God's purpose in salvation is not primarily our good. His purpose in salvation is essentially to glorify Himself through Christ and ultimately in us. Salvation is irrevocable because it is the act of God bringing glory to Himself through the cross. We are recipients of His grace and instruments of His glory. As such, we are free to delight in His worth as His children and give ourselves over completely to trust in Him.

In the tenth chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans he writes, "Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (vv. 3–4). God's purpose in salvation includes sinful mankind, but the emphasis of salvation is Christ, and its highest aim is the glorification of God. This notion flies in the face of modern constructs of evangelical practice and the most common articulations of the gospel.

Christ did die to save sinner. But that statement is incomplete. Sinners are saved when they receive Christ by faith in order that God's glory may be put on display when the nations of the earth are gathered to sing His praises. Righteousness is extended, as the apostle writes above, to everyone who believes. But the purpose of the righteousness that covers and indwells regenerate men and women is meant to translate them from unrepentant sinners who scoff at God's glory into spiritually reborn saints who glorify God.

This is not to say that man's happiness, joy, security, or peace is not an integral part of the plan of God in salvation. It is only to say that the highest aim of salvation is the glorification of God, and this brings with it the highest state of man. Ultimate happiness, joy, security, and peace within man is the result of his living in a state of union with and glorification of God. "The key to the coherence between passion for God's glory and compassion for perishing man is that rejoicing in God himself, through Christ, glorifies God."³

³ John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad!* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 1993), 212.

When salvation is viewed through this lens, from this more completely theocentric perspective, we find a basis for trust in God even in seemingly mundane affairs. Every aspect of every moment of life becomes opportunities to glorify God. The burden of each moment becomes an opportunity to rest in the strength of God. Anxiety and performance-based pseudo-religion vanish and we become free to bask in His glory, fully convinced of His grace working in us!

We pervert the gospel when we arrogantly assume that Christ died in order to magnify *our* worth and to increase *our* pleasure. Many believers fail to find a practical basis for trusting God in the daily affairs of life because they invert God's purpose in salvation. In making humanity central in God's plan of salvation, we rob ourselves of the highest aim of salvation and consequently rob ourselves of its chief benefit. As believers glorify God, they *participate* in the present outworking of His glory, and in that participation they find the peace, joy, and satisfaction that their hearts so desperately long for. We ascribe to Him glory. He blesses us with fulfillment.

If God's ultimate aim is my pleasure, I become the object of His love after the manner of a doting father, fanning the flames of my vanity. My value is fleeting and tarnished at best. It is not a worthy foundation for trusting God. God's worth is an infinitely more valid premise for trust, and God's work in salvation is the gathering of people to celebrate His worth. All that occurs in life happens either by design or allowance from the sovereign hand of God in order to draw us into a place of deeper trust, increased commitment, and growing dependence upon God—so that His glory can be expressed in us more completely. He is the object of salvation.

God's purpose in salvation is to express His own glory, and believers get to participate in the expression of His glory. "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18). We can trust Him in all things because we are His. In trials we can trust that He is working out His purpose in us. "Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?" (Hebrews 12:7).

A Workable Understanding of Personal Sin

Even after a sinner has been reconciled to God through faith, he or she will continue to come up short in matters of personal holiness. God is actively restoring His image in believers. He is shaping His children into sanctified vessels of worship. He is putting His glory on display in and through believers.

Personal sin in the life of the believer is a reality. "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). While the argument is sometimes made that this passage refers to the life of the unregenerate sinner prior to the time of conversion, the context doesn't necessitate such an interpretation, nor does the weight of biblical data. The apostle Paul, at a time in his life when he was plainly a believer, writes, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin" (Romans 7:24–25).

While the argument is sometimes made that Paul is writing in a hyperbolic or euphemistic fashion; again, the context does not necessitate or even strongly imply that

he is doing so. The weight of biblical data supports the reality that believers continue to struggle with sin after the time of conversion and regeneration. The day-to-day experience of believers bears this out. Humans fail to maintain a consistent, authentically holy lifestyle. The reality of sin in the life of the believer necessitates the development of a basis for trust in God in light of sin in the life of the believer.

Any system of biblical theology that fails to deal adequately with the fact of God's purpose in salvation (to glorify Himself), God's work in salvation (to restore His image in believers), and the presence of sin in the life of believers is inadequate. God is glorifying Himself in humans through salvation in spite of past, present, or future sin. God is restoring His image in humans because of their inability to maintain that image in any sense. The presence of sin in a believer's life is not abhorrent to the security of their salvation, nor must it be a roadblock to their ability to trust in God.

God saves men and women in spite of past sin. How can present sin affect one's eternal security? Yet anxiety over present sin is often the cause of a diminished capacity of trust in God in the life of the follower of Jesus. Since the work of salvation is solely the work of God, believers are eternally secure. And to the extent that they recognize that they are eternally secure, they will be able to maintain a life of growing dependence on God in the day-to-day affairs of life.

Believers have been plucked out of the world, but much of the world remains in them. While they are positionally holy—that is, set apart for God's usage and service—they remain surrounded by and inundated with temptation to sin and with sin itself. In no instance does the Bible state or imply that believers are free to give into sin. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the apostle Paul writes, "What shall we say, then? Shall we

go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" (Romans 6:1–2).

Followers of Jesus are being transformed by God into the image of Christ. Jesus lived a purely holy life. We are not free to commit sin with no conscience. However, we are freed to trust God with our sin in Christ, who soothes our conscience. We are free in Christ to rest in the security of our salvation, trusting God in the daily affairs of life, knowing that while we are utterly unworthy, we are covered by His grace, indwelt by His Spirit, and guided by His sovereign will.

God even uses our sins and mistakes through His redemptive plan. He does not cause or tempt anyone to sin. But when we do, if we are contrite and confess our sin, He uses our brokenness to crush our pride so that He may reign more completely and be glorified more wholly in our lives.

A workable understanding of personal sin is derived from a right understanding of what sin does in the believer's life. There are those who say that sin blocks our connection to God. In what way can this conclusion be derived from Scripture? Sin blocked our access to God prior to conversion, as we were cut off from the knowledge of God. However, the Bible tells us that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

For unbelievers there is an initial entrance into the kingdom, which comes at the point of salvation and regeneration. For believers there is an ongoing process of sin, conviction by the Holy Spirit, repentance, forgiveness, and cleansing. This process is an upward cycle. The more we yield to God and experience His forgiveness, grace, and cleansing from sin, the less we will need it. This is where the life of submission to God

and His work of restoring His image in believers intersect. The more yielded we are to His work in us, purely as recipients of His grace, the more evidence of His transformative power will be seen in our lives.

The more evident His work becomes in our lives, the more highly evident His trustworthiness becomes. In Hebrews 2:18 the Bible says of Christ, “Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.” We follow a Savior who is not foreign to our experience in this sin-inundated world. The Lord is faithful and just and will forgive the sins of believers. (I Corinthians 1:9) God is trustworthy in the sinful and imperfect affairs of the daily lives of all believers.

A Workable Understanding of Grace and Works

When salvation is understood as the objective work of God in believers, a basis for trust in God emerges. We are able to view salvation as the work of God alone. Faith becomes a part of the work of God in salvation; His grace is the means. Good works and righteousness are understood as the consequence of the work of God restoring His image in us, and present peace is the immediate consequence. Salvation is the objective work of God of restoring the *Imago Dei*, His image, in the elect. When understood along these terms, a completely theocentric soteriology emerges.

Eternal security means that I am not working in order to please God. We are His creation and He is recreating us in Jesus Christ. Our good efforts and work on behalf of His glory and His kingdom are love offerings to the God who has saved us in spite of ourselves.

Good works often become a sort of counterfeit trust. Believers convince themselves that they trust God as evidenced by all they do for God. This is an imitated

form of trust, a forged, inadequate version of trust. There is a radical difference between trust and obedience versus insecurity and working to garner favor.

In Matthew 7:21–23 Jesus says, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” Apparently right action does not necessarily equate to right belief. While the preceding verses do inform us that a way to know a tree is by its fruits, these verses plainly give us the parallel truth that right action often flows from impure motives.

Good works are the consequence of faith, not the means. This is abundantly clear from Scripture. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9). When believers reside in the reality that good works are the outgrowth of grace working through faith, they are able to trust God in their daily tasks, as God has assigned them. Worry for a believer is often rooted in a misunderstanding of the role of good works and active righteousness.

It is common for a sinner to come to Christ by faith and trade in a set of worldly addictions for a set of slightly more sanctified addictions. But is a relationship of trust in Him established by attending every worship service at the local church? Is the Lord pleased when a believer volunteers for every possible committee, board, or project in their local church? In a familiar yet seldom applied passage in the gospels, Jesus says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my

yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30).

The test of trust in God is not the amount of good works done. It is the degree to which the believer’s heart and mind are secure in the promises of God. The tallest of giants in the faith are not necessarily those who have *done* the most. They are those *in whom* the most has been done. Trusting God in the daily affairs of life is ultimately about resting in His comfort and trusting in His provision for the daily affairs of life. Trust is something to be grasped by the *mind*, enjoyed in the *heart*, and lived out in the *here and now*.

A WORD OF CAUTION

In embracing a thoroughly theocentric view of salvation as described above and adapting the supremacy of God’s role in salvation as a basis for trusting God in the daily affairs of life, there is a high degree of potentiality that a believer may spiritually drift into that most egregious of errors referred to as antinomianism. Briefly, antinomianism is “the doctrine that it is not necessary for Christians to preach or obey the moral law of the Old Testament.”⁴

While the New Testament places the emphasis in salvation upon the work of God in humans, this does not contradict the moral teachings of the Old Testament. Biblical ethics must not be viewed as a means to securing favor with God or adding to salvation in any way. Proper life conduct is the right activity that follows the work of God in salvation. It is the natural consequence of the restoration of the *Imago Dei*. Moral law is

⁴ R. D. Linder, “Antinomianism,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., 2001.

not nullified by grace. Indeed, only through God's work in salvation and the subsequent process of the restoration of His image in believers are men and women enabled to fruitfully adhere to the ethical code and *spiritual* observance of the highest principals and aims of the Old Testament.

Speaking to the Pharisees, Jesus said, "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean" (Matthew 23:27). The grace of God that comes by faith enables genuinely righteous living. It does not nullify its need. "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matthew 5:17). As believers rest in grace, they are freed to walk in obedience.

CONCLUSION

All that occurs in this life happens either by the direct design or allowance of God. This means that everything in life, whether or not it is the perfect and pleasing will of God, is part of the plan of God to conform believers into the image of Christ. God actively uses all of the affairs of this life to transform believers as He works to restore His perfect image in us. This understanding of the revelation of God's will through the truth of Scripture provides a basis for trust in God in the daily affairs of life because everything that occurs happens according to His intention.

This life is not my own. My present circumstances are instruments of God's ultimate plan for my life. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. He chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he

predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves” (Ephesians 1:3–6).

You and I are free to trust Him and respond to His grace, correction, and will, filled with confidence and peace. The basis for peace in this life is abiding in the knowledge of God’s sovereignty in the universe and the world, in our salvation, and in all things.

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