Gospel Truth

Biblical Instruction and Encouragement for the Mission Field Worldwide

THE DEVIL, AS A ROARING LION

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith....—1 Peter 5:8

In 1898, a railroad spanning the Great Rift Valley from Kenya to Uganda was under construction. There were thousands of people involved in the construction and there were many campsites. Workers began disappearing and it was soon discovered that there were two man-eating Tsavo lions in the area. These lions wreaked havoc for nine months, killing many people and instilling fear in thousands of workers. The lions would hit different camps stretched along the railway to kill and maim. Traps were set but to no avail. The workers made thorn hedges around the camp and lit fires to scare them off, but the lions aggressively leaped over or crawled through the thorn fences. They would seize men from their tents and drag them out into the bush where they were heard at times crunching bones and purring contentedly. Imagine the fear of walking in the darkness, knowing that a maneating lion was hiding in the bush nearby.

The lions would be heard roaring in the vicinity of one of the camps and word would rapidly spread from camp to camp: "Beware brothers, the devil is coming!" An agonizing shriek would be heard and one less person would show up to work in the morning. After many lives were lost, the lions were eventually killed.

The apostle Peter warns us to be sober and vigilant knowing that the devil is as a roaring lion. The devil, just as the Tsavo lions, is trying to instill fear in the lives of Christians and is doing all he can to kill, steal, and destroy our spiritual lives. It is vital that we be watchful and observant that we might see the areas in which the devil is working. He is trying to steal our joy, peace, and unity. He wants us to be isolated from God's people, away from those that can help strengthen and support us.

The enemy is fighting on many different fronts and is aggressively attacking the saints. He is no respecter of persons. If you are living for God, he desires to make you a victim—a casualty in this spiritual warfare. The enemy is attacking people in their personal lives; he is attacking marriages, families, and congregations. Let us open our eyes and recognize the true enemy. It is not time to sleep or to cower at his attacks. Resist him steadfast in the faith!

Jesus told His disciples to "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). We are still in the flesh and prone to temptation while we live on this earth. We are not yet in Heaven, so we must be watchful and prayerful lest we lose our way and return to the world. Prayer is a weapon that will enable us to

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The Devil, As a Roaring Lion

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WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT...

Word of God

2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Matt. 24:35

Relationship of Love

Matt. 22:37-40; John 14:21-23; 1 John 4:7-11

Repentance

Acts 3:19; Acts 17:30; 2 Cor. 7:10

New Birth

John 3:3-7; 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:1-4; Eph. 2:1, 5-6

Freedom From Sin

1 John 5:18; Matt. 1:21; John 8:11

Infilling of the Holy Spirit

Acts 19:2; Acts 15:8-9; Acts 1:8

Holiness

Luke 1:73-75; Heb. 12:14; 1 Peter 1:15-16; Titus 2:11-12; Rom. 6:22

Kingdom of God

Luke 17:20-21; Romans 14:17; John 18:36

The Church

Acts 2:47; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; Col 1:18

Unity

John 17:20-23; Gal 3:28; Rev. 18:2-4

Ordinances

Matt. 28:19-20; Matt. 26:26-30; 1 Cor. 11:23-27; John 13:14-17

Divine Healing

Luke 4:18; Isaiah 53:4-5; James 5:13-16

Sanctity of Marriage

Matt. 19:5-6; Luke 16:18; Rom. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 7:10-11

Outward Appearance

1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Cor. 11:14-15; Deut. 22:5

End of Time

2 Peter 3:7-12; John 5:28-29; 2 Cor. 5:10; Matt 25:31-46

Pacifism

Luke 6:27-29; Luke 18:20

Worship

John 4:23-24; Eph. 5:19; 2 Cor. 3:17

Great Commission

Mark 16:15

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overcome the attacks of the enemy. The flesh is very weak and a desire for God alone is not enough to protect us from the power of the enemy. We must be on guard and continually seek grace and power from the Lord.

Jesus told Peter in Luke 22:31-32, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and



"Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." It is still true today that Satan desires to have YOU. Jesus is praying for you and is interceding for you at the right hand of God. The good news is that the power of God is greater than the power of the devil. "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). If you will daily stand with God, He will defend and protect you and make a way for you to overcome the power of the devil, but you must remain watchful and be careful in your choices and decisions in life. Be wise and do not put yourself in harm's

way. Stay close to the Lord and maintain a personal environment that will enhance your relationship with God. The light of God's Word will expose the enemy. God will make a way to escape every temptation and make a way through every valley and over every mountain that the enemy brings.

While we must be careful, we need not live in fear of the enemy when the power of Christ rests upon us. "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Luke 10:17-19). You can and will overcome the attacks of the enemy as you maintain your faith and trust in the power of Jesus Christ. While the battle wages on, and we must continue resisting the devil steadfast in the faith, there is great security in the saving grace of Jesus Christ. It is all sufficient to see us safely home to Heaven.

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Editorial



There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. —Hebrews 4:9-11

The subject this quarter deals with the theological issue of eternal security

or "once saved always saved." The doctrine of eternal security is one of the primary tenants of Calvinism. The opposite perspective would be one of Arminianism. These two theological camps are divided on God's sovereignty, man's depravity, election, Christ's atonement, grace, man's will, and perseverance. These subjects are interwoven as one affects the other. Rather than detail all of the various interpretations of scripture, because of the space constraint, I had to deal very directly with the scripture in a brief summary. While I believe Arminianism is generally more correct than Calvinism, our guide should be the scripture, not the teaching of a certain theological persuasion. Often there are bits of truth on both sides that can be neglected by a theologian's pursuit of drawing a distinction between the two.

"Once saved always saved" as a concept is clearly not from God and can give people a false sense of security. It is a dangerous doctrine which opens the door to the permissibility of sin using grace as a covering umbrella. While the doctrine is not Biblical, there are many foundational scriptures used by Calvanists that are vital to a clear, rounded understanding of God's plan for mankind. God has called His children to a life of holiness without the moral sins which separate mankind from God. There is still much room for growing in the Lord and for perfecting holiness. If we are not careful, the Church of God can place so much emphasis on works that people begin to find their identity and security in those works. While works are an outflow of true salvation, works neither save us nor can works keep us saved. We are saved by God's grace and through the atonement of the blood of Jesus. There is security that comes in knowing God is more willing to forgive and restore than to cut off. Self-righteousness is often a consequence of people overemphasizing the concept of works.

Salvation is a work of God that frees us from the power of sin. Teachers of eternal security often point to the fact that those who do not believe in it are minimizing the power of the blood and God's grace. I believe it is more accurate to turn that around. Is it not crediting the blood of Jesus and God's grace with greater power to believe they are strong enough to keep us from going back to sin? The greater power is the sustaining, keeping power of the blood and grace rather than a continual atonement for continual sin. Our job is to maintain faith in the keeping power of God and to obey His word by His enabling grace.

The scripture is clear that people can leave their faith and lose eternal life if they do not maintain fellowship with God. Hence, the doctrine of eternal security is wrong; but we are not interested in teaching a false doctrine of eternal insecurity either. The beauty of true salvation is there is a rest which belongs to God's people when we cease from our own works. I am thankful to be eternally secure in God's love and grace. May we ever stay faithful and choose that security above the things of this world.

Michael W. Smith April 2019



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Bible Study Guide

Subject: Eternal Security

Scripture Reading: Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

—Hebrews 10:38-39

Definition: Eternal security [referred to as the "perseverance of the saints" in Calvinist theology, or commonly known as "once saved always saved"] is variously interpreted. In essence, it is a teaching which asserts that once a person is truly regenerated or born again there is nothing that can cause a reversal of the converted condition. This doctrine purports that once a person has accepted Christ and been saved, God will preserve the individual and his salvation is eternally secure without possibility of losing that salvation.

Summary: An individual's salvation is exclusively by the grace of God and is not based on works. God will be faithful to preserve that individual by His grace which enables a life of holiness. Salvation is a covenant relationship of faith; so if an individual chooses to swerve from that faith and commitment to God, the relationship is broken and salvation is forfeited. Hence, while eternal security or "once saved always saved" is a theological fallacy, a believer can rest in God's grace and be eternally secure as he follows Christ in faith.

I. Salvation Solely by Grace Through Faith

- A. Ephesians 2:8-9 By grace are ye saved (Romans 5:1).
- B. Hebrews 7:25 God saves to the uttermost.
- C. 2 Corinthians 5:17 New creature in Christ.

II. Eternal Life Is a Gift of God

- A. John 5:24 He that believeth hath everlasting life (1 John 5:11-13).
- B. John 6:37-40 He that cometh, Jesus will in no wise cast out.
- C. Romans 6:20-23 Wages of sin/gift of God.

III. Security in God

- A. John 10:27-29 Christ's sheep shall never perish.
- B. Romans 8:35-39 Nothing can separate from the love of God.

IV. God Is Faithful to Preserve

- A. Jude 1:24 Keeps from falling (1 Peter 1:5).
- B. 2 Corinthians 1:22 God seals the believer (Ephesians 4:30).
- C. 1 Corinthians 1:8-9 Confirmed unto the end.
- D. Philippians 1:6 God will finish the work.

V. Spiritual Relationship Illustrated

John 15:1-11 The believer is to abide in Christ, the vine.

VI. Holiness Required

- A. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God.
- B. Hebrews 12:14-15 Follow holiness lest you be defiled.

C. 1 John 1:6 Profession of fellowship while in darkness is a lie.

VII. Evidence That Salvation Can Be Lost

- A. Matthew 13:3-9 Parable of the sower.
- B. 1 Timothy 4:1 Some shall depart from the faith (Acts 20:28-30).
- C. Galatians 5:1, 4 Fallen from grace.
- D. 1 Timothy 6:9-11 Erring from the faith.
- E. Hebrews 3:12-14 Unbelief causes departure from God.
- F. 2 John 1:8-9 Lose not the things you have wrought.
- G. Revelation 3:3-6 Defiled garments.
- H. 2 Peter 2:20-22 Entangled and Overcome.
- I. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 God will destroy a defiled temple.

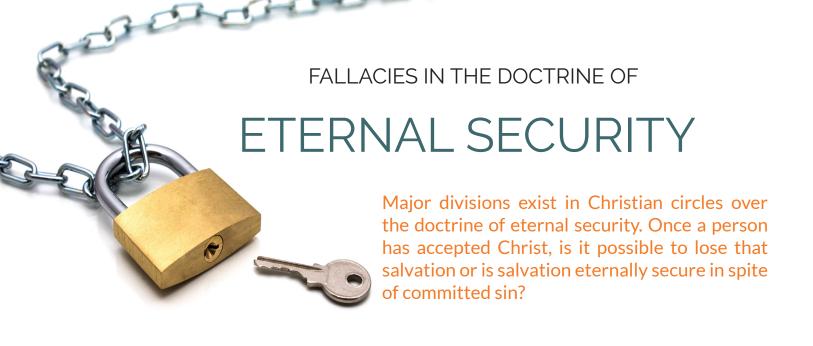
See Also: 1 Corinthians 9:27, 2 Peter 3:17, Romans 11:21-23, 2 Timothy 2:17-19.

VIII. Exhortation to Faithfulness

- A. Colossians 1:21-23 Be not moved away.
- B. 1 Corinthians 15:58 Be stedfast and unmoveable.
- C. Hebrews 4:14 Hold fast our profession (Hebrews 3:14).
- D. 1 Timothy 6:12 Lay hold on eternal life.

Conclusion

Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. —Revelation 2:10b



"Believers CAN
be secure that
God's grace which
restored a broken
relationship will be
sufficient to enable
them to maintain
that relationship."

Plan of Salvation

The questions about eternal security are many and the answers affect a myriad of theological issues. While the divide is great among theologians and there are scriptures used to support radically different perspectives, the scriptures do not teach opposing doctrines. The Bible in its entirety presents a beautiful plan of a covenant relationship of faith between God and man. God will stand by His Word and be faithful to His children, but for the relationship to be complete, His children must continue in their choice to follow Christ regardless of the cost. A believer continues to have the power of choice to step outside of faith and follow after a life of sin. In so doing, the believer forfeits the work and benefits of salvation by personal decision.

A False Doctrine Allows for Continued Sin

The doctrine of eternal security is often referred to as "once saved always saved." This doctrine either opens the door to continued sin while professing salvation or it falls into a theological quagmire by purporting that someone was never really saved if he goes back to a life of sin. Both of these are incompatible with the Word. While eternal security as a doctrine is incorrect, there are important truths espoused in its teaching. We must be careful not to throw out vital truths because someone has used those blocks to build a false edifice.

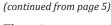
Salvation by Grace, Not Works

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Salvation is not of works and is exclusively a divine operation and gift of God's grace when one puts his faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is complete and Jesus saves to the uttermost (Hebrews 7:25). There is great rest found in the knowledge that salvation is not obtained of our own goodness but by God's merciful grace. These scriptures, often used to teach eternal security, do not do such; but while good works are fruit of true faith, salvation is of grace alone and not of our own merits. The Christian must remain committed to the efficacy of Christ's atonement. Believers CAN be secure that God's grace which restored a broken relationship will be sufficient to enable them to maintain that relationship.

The Consequence of Choice

Iohn 6:37-40 states that whoever comes to Jesus will in no wise be cast out and those who believe will have everlasting life. This passage speaks not of the indefectibility of faith but of the gift of eternal life to those who believe on Him. Later, in the same chapter, we read of many of Christ's disciples going back and walking with Him no more. People always have the choice to walk away from God, thus walking away from their very salvation. Similarly, John 10:27-29 speaks of Jesus giving His sheep eternal life and "they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." No man or power but we ourselves have the ability to steal the gift of salvation that God has bestowed; for the sheep Jesus spoke of were those that hear His voice and follow Him (v27). If the sheep cease to follow Jesus of their own volition, they willfully step outside of the security of the Father's hand.

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"If a believer stops abiding in Christ, the relationship is severed, and the consequence is eternal destruction rather than eternal life."

There is great rest in the knowledge that nothing can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:35-39). Our choice is the only thing which truly breaks the relationship of faith and love once it has been restored. The consequences of choice still exist to all people, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

God Is Able to Keep Us from Falling

Many scriptures speak of the faithfulness of God and of His power to "keep you from falling" (Jude 1:24). God seals the believers (2 Corinthians 1:22) and preserves and protects them from the evil of the world, but only as they maintain their faith by following Christ. Jesus illustrated the relationship as a vine and branch in John 15:1-11. If a branch does not bear fruit, it is taken away. We are instructed to "abide" in Christ. If we do not abide or stay in Christ, we are cast forth and burned. All fruit or righteousness comes only from abiding in Christ, for without Him, we can do nothing. If a believer stops abiding in Christ, the relationship is severed, and the consequence is eternal destruction rather than eternal life.

The Bible is very clear that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). If someone has confessed faith in Christ and been saved but then turns back to the works of the flesh, he is spiritually lost. Hebrews 12:14 teaches that without holiness we will not see God. True holiness comes from Jesus, but if we forsake Jesus, we will not be holy, and if we are not holy, we will not see the Father. Verse 15 reads, "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." Clearly, the believer must remain acceptant of God's practical working grace or the result will be failure and defilement. This disproves the doctrine of eternal security.

Warnings Against Backsliding

There are a large number of scriptures in the New Testament which warn against falling away and give evidence that salvation can be lost and faith destroyed. The parable of the sower in Matthew 13:3-9 illustrates well the reality of people being saved for awhile but when temptation came, they withered away as they did not allow the Word of God to take deep root. 1 Timothy 4:1 warns that some would "depart from the faith," and Galatians 5:1 warns us to "stand fast ... and be not entangled again." The Jews that turned back to the law after receiving salvation were "fallen from grace" (v4). 1 Timothy 6:9-11 speaks of those who "erred from the faith." The saints are instructed in Hebrews 3:12-14 to take heed lest they depart from God with an evil heart of unbelief. If a believer, as a temple of the Holy Spirit, defiles the temple that was once clean, God will destroy that temple (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). God gave the congregations in Revelation an opportunity to repent because many of them had fallen and defiled their garments. 2 Peter 2:20-22 speaks without ambiguity of those who had been saved but were entangled again and illustrates how their eternal end would be worse because they had turned away from truth.

Be Not Moved Away

There is a preponderance of scriptural evidence proving that when people are saved, they still have the power to turn away from their original faith in Christ and forsake their experience of salvation. It is for this reason the apostles challenged the saints repeatedly that they "be not moved away from the hope of the gospel" (Colossians 1:21-23), "be ye steadfast, unmoveable" (1 Corinthians 15:58), and "fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life" (1 Timothy 6:12).

The doctrine of eternal security is contrary to the truth of God's Word. God's power is sufficient to keep us from sinning and to enable us to live a holy life by His grace. Let us stay watchful, trusting not in our own merits but faithfully trusting in the merits of the blood of Jesus as we serve God in holiness. He can and will preserve us from all evil as we allow His holiness to work in our lives.



According to Hebrews 6:4-6 and Hebrews 10:26-29, is it possible for an individual who has been saved and then departs from his faith in a life of sin to be restored to salvation?

A resounding YES! It is possible for a backslider to be saved. Foundational to the gospel is the message of God's great love for mankind and the hope of restoration through the blood of Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 3:9 tells us that God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." The Lord does not will that anyone lose his eternal soul; hence, He works through the convicting power of His Spirit to draw all men to Himself. The invitation given in Revelation 22:17, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," extends even to the backslider. The Old Testament repeatedly reveals God's nature of forgiveness and willingness for the restoration of fallen Israel. While there is grace to live a victorious Christian life, if someone loses his salvation because of sin, hope is not gone if there is a willingness to repent and obey the Lord. Restoration is offered to ALL people.

Let us consider the meaning of Hebrews 6:4-6 and Hebrews 10:26-29 in light of the above truth. These two passages in Hebrews coincide in meaning and interpretation. Hebrews 6:4-6 reads: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." On the surface, this scripture might appear that salvation is impossible to people who one time truly experienced the power of God's saving grace in their lives. Thankfully, study of the scripture reveals a

different truth. Take note that the reason given that it is impossible to "renew them again

unto repentance" is that they are presently crucifying to themselves Jesus again. How can people be saved if they deny the power of the blood of Jesus? When someone denies the power of Jesus to save from sin, it is impossible to be renewed unto repentance. If someone stops crucifying Christ afresh in his life and accepts the power of the blood, there is a place of restoration and he no longer brings shame on Christ. The scripture is not referring to backsliders but to people who have apostatized and rejected the very at

have apostatized and rejected the very atoning sacrifice of Christ Himself.

Similarly, Hebrews 10:26 states: "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." This scripture alone also seems to indicate that there is no sacrifice for sin for the backslider, but the following verses clarify the meaning. "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? (Hebrews 10:28-29). These passages bring further clarity on the subject at hand.

There is no sacrifice for sin except the blood of Jesus. If that sacrifice is rejected as unholy and incapable of bringing salvation, there is no other atonement or sacrifice for sin available. There will be severe punishment for those who have been saved and then rejected the blood of the covenant. The scriptures in question do not teach that the backslider cannot be restored to salvation, but they teach that salvation is impossible to the backslider if and as long as the blood of Jesus is rejected as the means of that salvation. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). When an apostatized backslider changes his heart and mind and accepts the sacrifice of the blood, God will save him by His mercy and grace.



77% of all Americans believe that personal salvation is a result of good works. 52% say good deeds help earn a spot in heaven.

60% believe that Jesus Christ's death on the cross is the only sacrifice which can remove the penalty of sin.

The State of American Theology, LifeWay Research, 2016

65% of all "Christians" believe there are multiple paths to Heaven.

U.S. Religious Landscape Study, Pew Research Center, 2014

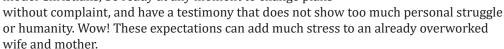


Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord. —1 Samuel 25:41b

Abigail's above response to David's marriage proposal demonstrated a willingness to serve in humble places, even in washing the feet of the servants. There are many ministers' wives who are daily living out Abigail's expression. They quietly work without

pay or recognition while serving the people around them. The life of a minister's wife has a unique set of challenges and she should be honored and respected for her life of sacrificial service. Minister's wives fill a unique role in the body of Christ and are to be valued.

The stereotypical minister's wife is "supposed" to always have everything in order, look nice, sit in the front in worship service, have a pleasant smile on the face, be the perfect wife, have children who never misbehave and are model Christians, be ready at any moment to change plans



Ministers' wives are human and have needs just like everyone else. They often feel lonely and inadequate to serve, feeling as though they are in a fish bowl without much privacy. There is pressure to measure to the high expectations of the congregation.

A true minister's wife is a hard worker whose duties extend far beyond wife and mother. She cooks for the sick, teaches the children, opens her home to visitors, organizes dinners for Sunday, counsels with and prays for people in need, responds to phone calls and texts, cleans and decorates the chapel, represents her husband, and the list goes on.

One of the greatest and most challenging functions she serves is to be that friend, confidante, and sounding board for her spouse. She listens to the raw frustrations and struggles of her minister husband. She sees firsthand the hurt that people cause him. She observes him giving the best he has and hears people criticize him. She finds that place of forgiveness in Christ to continue loving and serving those same people.

80 percent of pastor's wives say they are unappreciated by congregational members. So, to all of the minister's wives, thank you for all you do. We do not expect you to be perfect and we acknowledge your humanity just as our own. Thank you for continuing to serve. Thank you for loving us and praying for us when we are acting unlovable. Thank you for standing by your husband, our minister. Thank you for your godly love and service. We love and appreciate you!

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HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD