

## Faithfulness Despite Our Faithlessness: 2 Timothy 2:11-13 and Eternal Security

“If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.” These words from 2 Timothy 2:13 have been used, misused, and abused when it comes to the Christian world. The Bible is the Word of God, we believe, and it is inerrant, infallible, God-breathed (this is what the word “inspired” means in the biblical text), and authored by the Holy Spirit. So, it is in the context of a strong belief in God’s Word, and the view that God’s standards never change, even in a changing world, that motivates Christians to wrestle with the meaning of the biblical text.

2 Timothy 2:11-13 has been used, particularly verse 13, to create a theology with false promises and a false hope. In many books I’ve read, and even in some songs, verse 13 has been detached from verses 11 and 12 and used to say that “Despite our faithlessness, even when we turn away from God and go back into the world, God still gives us Heaven. We are eternally secure because God is faithful to His promise --- and He can’t renege on His promise.” In other words, “though we are not faithful to God, He is still faithful to deliver on His promise of eternal life.”

God is faithful in spite of our faithfulness, true, but in what way does this happen? Is God faithful to us despite the fact that some Christians give up their faith? Does a Christian who once believed, then falls away, still receive the gift of eternal life and live forever with the Lord? Some in the church believe that even the apostate, even someone who goes back into the world, still gets Heaven in the end, but we’ll examine Scripture to see just what it says and how it ties in to 2 Timothy 2:11-13.

Before we proceed, I must caution you: many a Christian presumes that eternal security as it has been espoused in the Church is as good as true, lock, stock, and barrel, but what you read in the pages to come just may surprise you. Are you prepared to have your view of eternal security challenged? Examine yourself before proceeding.

The Passage: 2 Timothy 2:11-13

**11** *This is* a faithful saying:

For if we died with *Him*,

We shall also live with *Him*.

**12** If we endure,

We shall also reign with *Him*.

If we deny *Him*,

He also will deny us.

**13 If we are faithless,**

**He remains faithful;**

**He cannot deny Himself.** (2 Timothy 2:11-13)

First, we see that Paul says that this saying or “word” (Greek *logos*) is faithful or worthy of belief (that is, all believers should accept it). There are other faithful sayings of Paul’s in Scripture:

**15 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance,** that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. (1 Timothy 1:15)

**This is a faithful saying:** If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. (1 Timothy 3:1)

**8** For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. **9 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance.** (1 Timothy 4:9-10)

**8 This is a faithful saying,** and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men. (Titus 3:8)

Paul had five “faithful sayings” in Scripture, things he wanted taught in the churches and accepted by all believers, and 2 Timothy 2:11 is one of those sayings. Since 2 Timothy 2:11-13 seems to start and finish a particular thought, it is assumed that these three verses are the entirety of the faithful saying. One thing that can be said about these three verses is that they teach

some serious theology that one would do well to heed and not neglect.

In verse 11, Paul says “if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him.” This death doesn’t refer to our mortal death, for mortal death is covered in the next statement. This death and life here refer to “dying to sin” and “living to righteousness,” statements that reflect the conversion or faith experience, coming to salvation, believing on the Lord Jesus.

Paul tells us that water baptism is symbolic of not only Jesus’ death and resurrection, but also of our own dying to sin and self and living unto Christ and God:

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? **2** Certainly not! **How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.**

**5** For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness of His* resurrection, **6** knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we

should no longer be slaves of sin. **7** For he who has died has been freed from sin. **8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. 10 For *the death* that He died, He died to sin once for all; but *the life* that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

(Romans 6:1-11)

Quite a bit of the excerpt from Romans 6:1-11 fits the “died with Him” statement that Paul mentions in 2 Timothy 2:11. What Paul is saying is that, if we died with Him in that we died to sin and are now living to God (as Jesus did), then we are walking with the Lord and mortifying (or putting to death, killing) sin in our lives. We are denying ourselves, picking up our crosses, and following Jesus, as our Lord commands us to do in Luke 9:23. Now that we have died with Him in that we have died to sin, we are living unto righteousness. “We will live with Him” is a vote of confidence that the Ephesian believers and his son in the ministry, Timothy, are in union with Christ --- that they have become believers, passed from death to life.

The idea of death in sin is one that Jesus discussed with the Pharisees:

**21** Then Jesus said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will **die in your sin**. Where I go you cannot come."

**22** So the Jews said, "Will He kill Himself, because He says, 'Where I go you cannot come'?"

**23** And He said to them, "You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. **24**

**Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins."**

(John 8:21-24)

Notice that "die in your sins" is connected to unbelief; those who have believed in Jesus have died to sin, unlike the Pharisees who in John 8 hadn't believed in Jesus and were still wrapped in their sin.

In Romans 7, Paul compares the law bringing sin to the death of a spouse:

Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? **2**

For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to *her* husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of *her* husband. **3** So then if, while *her* husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. **4** **Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. 5 For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. 6 But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not *in* the oldness of the letter.**

**7** What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."**8 But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all *manner of evil* desire. For apart from the law sin *was* dead. 9 I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. 10 And the commandment, which *was* to *bring* life, I found to *bring* death. 11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it**

**killed me. 12** Therefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

The knowledge of sin comes about because of the law; without it, Paul says, he wouldn't have known sin as sin. And yet, sin kills, and the law (which brings the knowledge of sin) kills. And yet, Paul tells the Romans to treat sin as the deceased spouse. When a spouse dies, the living spouse is free from the marriage bond. Thus, Romans 7:4-6: **Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. 5 For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. 6 But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not *in* the oldness of the letter.** (Romans 7:4-6)

We were formerly "married to the law," Paul says, but now, we're married to Christ, to the one who rose from the dead. Therefore, we shouldn't live as though we're still "married" to the law when Christ has freed us from our former marriage to the law. Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:11 that if we died with Him, we'll live with

Him, and this means that if we've died to sin, then we'll live unto Him, be married to Him. Every believer is married to Christ because He is the Bridegroom and the Church, full of believers, is His Bride.

Romans 8 reiterates the "death to sin, alive to righteousness" motif:

*There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. **2** For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from **the law of sin and death**. **3** For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, **4** that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. **5** For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those *who live* according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. **6 For to be carnally minded is death**, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. **7** Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. **8** So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

**9** But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. **10 And if Christ *is* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin, but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness.** **11** But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

**12** Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. **13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die;** but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. **14** For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. (Romans 8:1-14)

Paul calls the law “the law of sin and death” in Romans 8:2, again connecting sin with death. In Romans 8:6, Paul says that to focus on the flesh, to be “carnally minded” is death, again showing that sin leads to death. Verse 10 says that the presence of Christ in the life of the believer means that the body is dead because of sin - again, that sin kills the body, that sin condemns the body. And yet, with Christ present, the believer is justified by faith and avoids the death sentence he or she deserves because Jesus took the death sentence on Himself and suffered death in His own body for sin. Romans 8:13 says that “if you live according to the

flesh, you will die,” again stating that living in sin leads to death but righteousness leads to eternal life.

The “died with Him” and “live with Him” language of 2 Timothy 2:11 refers to dying to sin and living to righteousness, to mortifying the flesh and quickening the spirit through our union to Christ by faith. So, as we can see here, Paul is talking about **believers**, not *unbelievers*. I state this point because, when we get to the end of verse 13, some will quickly switch their view to say, “all those things about falling away or denying Christ are about unbelievers, not believers.” And yet, who is Paul discussing here? Believers. Unbelievers haven’t “died with Christ” and put the deeds of the body to death. They haven’t resisted evil deeds and sinfulness; only believers can do that, and only with the aid of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Finally, let’s consider the conditional nature of the statement of “died with Him” and “live with Him.” “If” believers have died with Him to sin, then they will live with Him to righteousness. One cannot live unto righteousness unless one has identified with Christ in His death and has “put to death the deeds of the body,” Paul says in Romans 8:13. The condition must be in place for believers to live unto Him, because only sons of God, believers, have the Holy Spirit. Mortifying the flesh without the Holy Spirit is

impossible because, in such a state, a person still lives under the law of sin and death --- and the commandments kill because they offer no solution to sin but merely knowledge of it.

2 Timothy 2:12

If we endure,

We shall also reign with *Him*.

If we deny *Him*,

He also will deny us. (2 Timothy 2:12)

Two more conditional statements are placed before us in 2 Timothy 2:12. The first pertains to endurance and final salvation: "If we endure, we shall also reign with Him." Notice that we must endure; many in the Christian world think that endurance is automatic, that God automatically endures us, but this isn't true: the condition indicates that it is something that we must do, that it isn't done automatically for us. We must choose to endure, in the same way that we have chosen to "die with Jesus" to sin by putting sin to death in the body and living to righteousness instead. One can start out a believer, but if he or she does not endure to the end, the individual will not be saved.

Our Lord Jesus taught this to His disciples:

**16** "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. **17** But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. **18** You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. **19** But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; **20** for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

**21** "Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. **22 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.**

(Matthew 10:16-22)

Jesus tells the disciples of the troubles and tragedies that will befall them in their discipleship work and the gospel mission. They will be hated, arrested, and family members will kill one another. Perhaps the disciples themselves would be hated by their own relatives. And yet, Jesus tells them to "endure to the end" (Matthew 10:22). What does it mean? Endure, remain, stay in the Lord until the very end. It means to hold onto one's faith, persist in faith, continue in Christ, until one's last breath. In a passage such as Matthew 10, we see Jesus tell the disciples to

continue in Him, no matter how great the coming tragedy and the end of life may be. The disciples don't get an excuse out of suffering when tragedy hits; rather, they are to endure as Paul says, as "good soldiers of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3).

Jesus says the same in His words to the Smyrna church:

**8** "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write,

'These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: **9** "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and *I know* the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan. **10 Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.**

**11** "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. **He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.**" (Revelation 2:8-11)

In two places in Revelation 2:8-11, we see the Lord tell the Smyrna church to overcome: "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer...be faithful until death, and I will

give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10), and "he who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death" (Revelation 2:11). How does one overcome? Enduring to the end of life, the last breath, in faith. Our faith is how we overcome the world (1 John 5:4-5), and we must hold onto our faith until the end.

Jesus told the disciples to endure, and Paul tells us that we must endure. Not only does Paul mention the condition of endurance to inherit eternal life here; he also mentions it in his letter to Jewish Christians who, feeling the pressure to apostatize, wanted to go back to "comfortable" Judaism:

**19** Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, **20** by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, **21** and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, **22** let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. **23 Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful. 24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one***

***another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*** (Hebrews 10:19-25)

**32** But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: **33** partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; **34** for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, **knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. 35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:**

**37** “For yet a little while,

*And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.*

**38 Now the just shall live by faith;**

**But if *anyone* draws back,**

**My soul has no pleasure in him.”**

**39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.** (Hebrews 10:32-39)

Some believers wonder what Hebrews is all about, really. We see in Hebrews 10:32-34, these Jewish Christians saw their goods plundered, stolen, they were persecuted for their faith, and they identified and sympathized with those who were also being persecuted for their faith and seeing their goods stolen. They endured reproach for Christ's sake, and Paul says they did it "knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven" (Hebrews 10:34). They also identified with Paul in his chains, blessing him as they could.

Even as they were going through, even as they were in need of encouragement and blessing, these Jewish Christians were encouraging and blessing others who were going through. They were doing the work of the Lord, but they were feeling the effects of their trials and tribulations. This is why Paul tells them to "do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise" (Hebrews 10:35-36).

What does Paul say in verses 35 and 36? That, they've done good work, they've been enduring the race, but that they must continue until the end, when God will give them the promise. What is the promise? "The one that endures to the end, the same

one shall be saved" (Matthew 10:22). How are these Jewish Christians to endure? They are to endure by continuing to assemble together, not "forsaking the assembling" of themselves together as believers (Hebrews 10:25), continuing to encourage one another to do good works (Hebrews 10:24), by maintaining their confession of hope, their confession of salvation (Hebrews 10:23). These deeds would testify to the full assurance of faith they had (Hebrews 10:22). Here, their faith and thus, their assurance of salvation, would express itself in their continuing in the right path.

And yet, their assurance of salvation, their assurance of faith, wasn't because their eternity was guaranteed, but because they belong to Christ and lived by their faith. This explains why Paul quotes the Greek version of Habakkuk 2:4, not the Hebrew version:

**37** "For yet a little while,

*And* He who is coming will come and will not tarry.

**38 Now the just shall live by faith;**

**But if *anyone* draws back,**

**My soul has no pleasure in him."** (Hebrews 10:37-38)

If you read Habakkuk 2:4 in your English Bible, you will only read the first statement ("the just shall live by faith"). You won't find the last sentence of the verse because Paul quotes it from the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament), not the Hebrew Old Testament.

Hebrews 10:38 takes Habakkuk 2:4 and gives it a logical extension: if "the just shall live by faith," as Habakkuk 2:4 says, then the one who "draws back" no longer has faith, has given up his or her faith, and, as such, can no longer be considered "just" or "righteous." Thus, the Lord says the last sentence of Hebrews 10:38: "My soul has no pleasure in him." What we see with these words in Hebrews 10 is that a believer can have faith, shrink back from his or her faith, go back to their former way of life, throw off their salvation and confidence in God to grant them eternal life, and they can be lost eternally (God will "have no pleasure in him," He says in Hebrews 10:38). We cannot "reign with Him," as Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:12, reign with Christ, if our faith does not endure, if we "draw back," retreat in our faith; for, as Paul says in Hebrews 10, those who retreat and give up their faith "draw back to perdition" (Hebrews 10:39).

We cannot reign with Jesus if we don't endure, and to endure involves holding on to our faith, not throwing away our confidence, "which has great reward." "For you have need of endurance," we read in Hebrews 10:36. Let those words sink in: we need endurance, we must endure the race, otherwise we have no claim to the reward of eternal life.

Now, with Hebrews 10 having assisted the words of Jesus and the words of Paul elsewhere, we can understand why Paul would tell Timothy that this faithful or believing word involves endurance so that we can reign with Christ. We must endure because our Lord endured His race, His mission:

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and **let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

**3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and**

**discouraged in your souls. 4** You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. (Hebrews 12:1-4)

We can't overlook Hebrews 12 here. Paul tells these persecuted Jewish Christians who are "discouraged" in their own souls (Hebrews 12:3) to look to Jesus, look to their Lord and Savior, for encouragement, motivation, and inspiration: He "endured the cross, despising the shame" (Hebrews 12:2), "endured hostility from sinners against Himself" (Hebrews 12:3), and "resisted to bloodshed" (v.4). The Jewish Christians had not struggled and suffered persecution as Jesus had; if Jesus could endure His cross and He endured more than these Jewish Christians ever would, then surely, they could endure.

Paul would tell them the same message he gave to Timothy: "If we endure, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Timothy 2:12).

Divine Denial: Possible for Believers (2 Timothy 2:12b)

If we deny *Him*,

He also will deny us. (2 Timothy 2:12b)

There is another condition here: "if" we deny Him, He, Jesus, will deny us. Now this is an interesting statement indeed. How can we deny Jesus? If you listen to the teaching of most churches today, we are "Once Saved, Always Saved" (OSAS) and we can never deny the Lord. "Those who deny Christ are unsaved individuals" is the statement we tell ourselves. Well, if you've said that a time or two, prepare to be instructed by Paul because the apostle says here that "we," those who are saved, can deny Christ.

Throughout 2 Timothy 2:11 and 12, he's been talking to believers; Paul isn't switching his audience here, so Christians must grapple with this statement. We must endure to be saved, he's said earlier, and this statement on denial means that Once Saved, Always Saved (OSAS) is erroneous doctrine. If we can deny the Lord, then we can't consider ourselves to be "forever saved" here on earth because we can't say with 100% certainty that we'll never deny Christ. And many Christians have said, "we can deny the Lord but He'll still stick by us." Not according to Paul's words. If we deny the Lord, Paul says, the Lord will deny us.

Paul's words are only strange here to those who have given themselves over to traditional church doctrine and the theology of

John Calvin. Jesus Himself taught that it is possible for someone, having been saved and “receiving the Word,” can fall away because of temptation and later deny Him, something the Word of God says comes to believers:

**18** “Therefore hear the parable of the sower: **19** When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand *it*, then the wicked *one* comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. **20** But **he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word,** immediately he stumbles. **22** Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. **23** But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands *it*, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.” (Matthew 13:18-23)

Matthew 13:20-21 are the focus of our interest in Jesus’ interpretation of the Parable of the Sower and the Soils. Some

say, “see, the rocky soil believer has no root,” meaning that his salvation was never genuine. And yet, they forget the text proves this wrong because a few phrases: “hears the Word” (Matthew 13:20), “receives it with joy” (v.20), and “tribulation or persecution arises because of the Word” (v.21). The rocky soil believer hears the Word and receives it; is this not what genuine believers do in the gospel message? It is.

And then, trouble comes “because of the Word.” If the rocky soil person isn’t saved, then how are they suffering tribulation “because of the Word”? Doesn’t the word only mention tribulation for *believers*, not *unbelievers*? Indeed, the Word says that trouble comes to believers, that all who are saved suffer persecution:

**10** But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, **11** persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of *them* all the Lord delivered me. **12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.** (2 Timothy 3:12)

The Jewish Christians of Paul’s letter to the Hebrews were godly and were being persecuted and robbed. In 2 Timothy 3, one

chapter from our 2 Timothy 2 text, Paul recounted the persecutions he'd suffered. And then he says that he isn't alone, that all who are believers, all who name the name of Christ, will suffer persecution. No one in the Lord is immune to trial, hardship, tribulation, and distress. If you are a Christian, it's as certain as objects fall to the earth and gravity is in effect that you will suffer hardship like Paul and Timothy. In 2 Timothy 2:9, just a few verses above those of our study (vv.11-13), we see that Paul was writing while in chains:

**8** Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, **9 for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains;** but the word of God is not chained. **10** Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. (2 Timothy 2:8-10)

Paul was in chains (2 Timothy 2:9), "suffer[ing] trouble as an evildoer" because of his faith and preaching the gospel message. And this Paul said that all would suffer persecution. So, the rocky soil believer of Jesus' parable in Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8 (all the places where the Parable is found in Scripture) is one who was saved, suffered persecution and tribulation because Scripture said he or she would, and then, not having reached maturity, falls

away because “I didn’t sign up for this,” some would say. The person’s immaturity doesn’t mean that he or she wasn’t saved; maturity or immaturity in the faith doesn’t dictate or discount a saved individual because, if it did, then you’d have to discount the Jewish Christians we’ve been talking about in Hebrews. Yes, they were immature, and Paul told them so:

**12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God;** and you have come to need milk and not solid food. **13** For everyone who partakes *only* of milk *is* unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. **14** But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Hebrews 5:12-14)

They should’ve been far more mature than they were, but they weren’t. And yet, it’s this same immature crowd that Paul reminded about their suffering for Jesus and their eternal inheritance (Hebrews 10:32-34). Were these immature Jewish Christians saved? Yes.

## Peter: The Example of Denial

In 2 Timothy 2:12, we've not covered denial in its fullness just yet. For the best example of denial in Scripture, we can turn to Peter. Peter was one of Jesus' handpicked disciples who forsook everything to follow Christ. And yet, Peter denies Christ three times in one night before the rooster completes its crows:

**66** Now as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came. **67** And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with Jesus of Nazareth."

**68** But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are saying." And he went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed.

**69** And the servant girl saw him again, and began to say to those who stood by, "This is *one* of them." **70** But he denied it again.

And a little later those who stood by said to Peter again, "Surely you are *one* of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows *it*."

**71** Then he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this Man of whom you speak!"

**72** A second time *the* rooster crowed. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And when he thought about it, he wept. (Mark 14:66-72)

Mark's account is the earliest Gospel account we have, so Mark's record of Peter's denial of Jesus is the earliest we have. And in it, we see that Peter's denial of Jesus consists of the words, "I do not know this Man of whom you speak!" These are the words of denial: words that say, "Though I've walked and talked with Jesus, I do not know Him nor have any fellowship with Him." This is the textbook definition of what it means to deny Jesus. Peter was one of Jesus' disciples, the leader of the pack in fact, yet here, he denied he ever knew Jesus. He was a believer who denied his Lord. Peter wanted to defend his Lord, but Jesus told Peter he'd deny Him that very night (Mark 14:27-31).

And yet, some wonder why Peter denies him but doesn't fall away and is forgiven. Even in Peter's denial, Peter did not lose his faith in Jesus. His denial was one of weakness, but he weeps in the narrative because he really does love Jesus. His denial is one of weakness, not of a conscious decision to disown his Lord. And yet, his denial, as harmless as one may think it was, was

seriously lethal: Peter could've lost his faith through it, but he didn't. Jesus tells Peter that He prayed for Peter's faith:

**31** And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift *you* as wheat. **32** But **I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail;** and when you have returned to *Me*, **strengthen your brethren.**" (Luke 22:31-32)

There are a few things to note here: first, Satan asks specifically for Peter, to "sift him as wheat." In the Book of Job in the Old Testament, Satan roamed to and fro in the earth, "seeking whom he may devour." Here, he wanted to devour Peter and steal him from Jesus. And yet, Jesus tells Peter, "I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail." Satan still wants believers today. Eternal security tells you that Satan is afraid of you, but he isn't. Satan is afraid of no mortal man; in fact, he requests that he be given some of us, in the same way that he asked Jesus for Peter. Eternal security tells you that this is all a dream, but would you rather believe the text, or a theory you've been told all your life that looks highly unlikely in light of Jesus' words to Peter?

With the idea of Peter's denial comes the idea that Peter's faith could have failed. Yet, it didn't. If eternal security is in effect,

then why would Jesus pray for Peter's faith? If eternal security is true, then Peter's faith could never fail for any reason. If Jesus prays for Peter's faith, then Jesus prays for the faith of every believer today. And what this shows us is that, for all the talk of eternal security in our churches, it isn't true. Jesus' prayers for the faith of the saints doesn't spell out "eternal security."

Back to the denial. Peter's denial of Jesus brings with it a potential falling away and failure of his faith, but it doesn't happen. After the denials, Peter weeps bitterly and is truly remorseful over his actions. Though we don't read of his repentance, his sorrow is indicative of his true love for Jesus, a love that Peter vocalizes later on (John 21:15-17).

The denial of 2 Timothy 2:12 does not refer to moral weakness or duress, but rather, a willful, deliberate intention to depart from the Lord one formerly knew. Peter's denial was a coercion, but a *coercion* is not a *confession*. Coercions are forced, confessions are voluntary. Peter's weeping immediately after his denial of Jesus shows the true intention of his heart, not the coerced denials said out of fear of losing his life. It is the willful renunciation of union with Christ that is the subject of 2 Timothy 2:12, not coercion.

## 2 Timothy 2:13

We've reached the last verse in our excerpt of 2 Timothy:

If we are faithless,

He remains faithful;

He cannot deny Himself. (2 Timothy 2:13)

We've seen that if we die with Jesus to sin, as He died for sin when He died on the cross, then we'll live with Him by walking in the truth and doing that which the Lord commands. We must endure in order to reign with Him, in order to rule with Him in the end. Only believers who endure hardship until the end of life will reign with Him in glory.

In verse 12, we've seen that the Lord will deny those who deny Him. This is a blatant statement in the text, one that says that, if we turn our backs on the Lord, He will turn His back to us. Again, this statement is for believers, not unbelievers, which is startling for those who hold to eternal security as it is taught in churches and indoctrinated into believers in Vacation Bible Schools (VBS) and other such programs. The bottom line is that, if we deny the Lord and walk away forever, so will He.

This appears to be at odds with the Bible verses that we often use to justify that God will be with His people forever. "He will never leave us nor forsake us," some say. And yes, there are Bible verses that say God will not forsake His people. And yet, even in a passage where it is said that God will not forsake His people, the same passage says that God will turn from His people if they turn from Him:

**23** Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the Lord your God has forbidden you. **24** For the Lord your God *is* a consuming fire, a jealous God.

**25** "When you beget children and grandchildren and have grown old in the land, and act corruptly and make a carved image in the form of anything, and do evil in the sight of the Lord your God to provoke Him to anger, **26** I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that **you will soon utterly perish from the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess; you will not prolong *your* days in it, but will be utterly destroyed.** **27** And the Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the Lord will drive you. **28** And there you will

serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. **29** But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find *Him* if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. **30** When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, **when you turn to the Lord your God and obey His voice 31 (for the Lord your God is a merciful God), He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them.** (Deuteronomy 4:23-31)

Read the Deuteronomy 4 excerpt carefully. It tells us there that, when God's people turn from Him and worship carved images and false gods, the Lord would scatter them among the nations and take them out of the land He'd given to them (vv.26-27). But, "When you turn to the Lord your God and obey His voice," Moses says, the Lord "will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers" (vv.31). When the people walk contrary to God's law, He will punish them; when they do as He commands and "turn to the Lord God and obey His voice," He will bring them back into the land He promised to give them. As Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:12, those who deny Him, including His own people Israel, will be denied. He denied them when they disobeyed and rebelled against Him.

Joshua reiterates what Moses says about the divine punishment should Israel turn to other gods:

**14 "Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord!"**

**15** And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

**16** So the people answered and said: "Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods; **17** for the Lord our God *is* He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, who did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way that we went and among all the people through whom we passed. **18** And the Lord drove out from before us all the people, including the Amorites who dwelt in the land. We also will serve the Lord, for He *is* our God."

**19 But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the Lord, for He *is* a holy God. He *is* a jealous God; He will not**

**forgive your transgressions nor your sins. 20 If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after He has done you good."**

**21** And the people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the Lord!"

**22** So Joshua said to the people, "You *are* witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord for yourselves, to serve Him."

And they said, "*We are* witnesses!"

**23** "Now therefore," *he said*, "put away the foreign gods which *are* among you, and incline your heart to the Lord God of Israel."

**24** And the people said to Joshua, "The Lord our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey!"

**25** So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

**26** Then Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak that *was* by the sanctuary of the Lord. **27** And Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness to us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord which He spoke to us. It shall therefore be a witness to you, lest you deny your God." **28** So

Joshua let the people depart, each to his own inheritance.  
(Joshua 24:14-28)

Joshua says in Joshua 24:19-20 that the Lord is holy and jealous, that He will not forgive them and pardon their idolatrous worship:

**19** But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the Lord, for He *is* a holy God. He *is* a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. **20** If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then **He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after He has done you good.**" (Joshua 24:19-20)

The words "He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after He has done you good" are words that none of us should forget here. The fact that the Lord blessed the Israelites to enter into the Promised Land didn't mean that He couldn't take them out of it. He would do them harm "after He has done you good," Joshua said, a reminder that one time or year of godliness didn't guarantee God's blessings for a lifetime. The Israelites had to continue in God's ways, to continue obeying Him, continuing living His commands, continue worshipping Him. When they turned to other gods, God turned them over to the nations

around them as a consequence. The Israelites didn't have eternal security. Anyone who thinks they did has never read statements out of Deuteronomy, Joshua, or the rest of the Old Testament.

Some will question that this happens, even with the above Scriptural support. Unfortunately for them, the remainder of Scripture supports Paul's statement in 2 Timothy 2:12 and the statements of Moses and Joshua. Prepare to be shocked by the following Bible excerpts.

**2** Then King David rose to his feet and said, "Hear me, my brethren and my people: I *had* it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God, and had made preparations to build it. **3** But God said to me, 'You shall not build a house for My name, because you *have been* a man of war and have shed blood.' **4** However the Lord God of Israel chose me above all the house of my father to be king over Israel forever, for He has chosen Judah *to be* the ruler. And of the house of Judah, the house of my father, and among the sons of my father, He was pleased with me to make *me* king over all Israel. **5** And of all my sons (for the Lord has given me many sons) He has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel. **6** Now He said to me, 'It is your son Solomon *who* shall build My house and My

courts; for I have chosen him *to be* My son, and I will be his Father. **7 Moreover I will establish his kingdom forever, if he is steadfast to observe My commandments and My judgments, as it is this day.'** **8** Now therefore, in the sight of all Israel, the assembly of the Lord, and in the hearing of our God, **be careful to seek out all the commandments of the Lord your God, that you may possess this good land, and leave *it* as an inheritance for your children after you forever.**

**9 "As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever. 10** Consider now, for the Lord has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong, and do it." (1 Chronicles 28:2-10)

In 1 Chronicles 28, David recounts his desire to build the temple for God but the Lord didn't allow him to because he was a man of war who "shed blood," probably a reference to his murder of Uriah the Hittite, a righteous man, in order to have Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, for himself. In any case, the Lord chose David's son Solomon to be the one who would build the temple. The Lord said

that Solomon would have descendants on the throne of Israel forever if Solomon obeyed Him: “Moreover, I will establish his kingdom forever, if he is steadfast to observe My commandments and My judgments” (1 Chronicles 28:7). Again, “if” implies a condition must be met for the promise to be dispensed. There is no blanket guarantee here by the Lord.

Solomon didn’t continue in the truth, and the Lord tore a number of tribes from the hands of his son, Rehoboam, in line with the terms of the agreement He made with David’s son:

But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, *and* Hittites— **2** from the nations of whom the Lord had said to the children of Israel, “You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love. **3** And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. **4 For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David. 5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the**

**Ammonites. 6 Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not fully follow the Lord, as *did* his father David. 7 Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that *is* east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. 8 And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.**

**9 So the Lord became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, 10 and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the Lord had commanded. 11 Therefore the Lord said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. 12 Nevertheless I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David; I will tear it out of the hand of your son. 13 However I will not tear away the whole kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen." (1 Kings 11:1-13)**

David told his son to obey the Lord or else "He will cast you off forever" in 1 Chronicles 28:9. Solomon disobeys and rebels in his

old age, and the Lord tears the kingdom away from his son and only leaves one tribe for the sake of Solomon's father, David, in 1 Kings 11:12-13. In 1 Kings 11:9, we read that Solomon "turned from the Lord God of Israel." We read here that God forsook individuals when they forsook Him. We don't read of eternal security where Solomon kept the tribes or Rehoboam kept the tribes despite their wickedness and waywardness.

Now the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded. **2** And he went out to meet Asa, and said to him: "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. **The Lord is with you while you are with Him.** If you seek Him, He will be found by you; **but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you.** (2 Chronicles 15:1-2)

Azariah became a prophet for King Asa, and he gave Asa a message: "The Lord is with you while you are with Him" (2 Chronicles 15:2). Did you read that? "The Lord is with you while you are with Him." In other words, "if you forsake Him, He will forsake you" (2 Chronicles 15:2c). Does this sound like eternal security? Does this sound as though the Israelites were guaranteed the favor of God when they sinned and turned from Him? No, not if you're reading the words of 2 Chronicles 15 rightly.

What we see with Azariah is that the Spirit of God came upon him, which means that the words he delivers to Asa are the words of God. The Spirit spoke through Azariah, saying that “the Lord is with you while you are with Him” and “if you forsake Him, He will forsake you.” The text couldn’t be more blunt if it had said, “The Spirit says that the Lord is with you while you are with Him,” and “the Spirit says that if you forsake God, God will forsake you.”

Someone will say, “But what about the verse that says ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you?’” That’s a good question. The verse itself pertains to believers:

**5** *Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”* (Hebrews 13:5)

The verse itself pertains to believers, since Paul begins Hebrews 13 with the words “Let brotherly love continue” (Hebrews 13:1). And yet, even as the people of God, God has no more respect for us in the New Testament than He did Israel in the Old; rather, God made promises to the Israelites (as we’ve seen) that were

unfulfilled because of their disobedience. The Lord was not always with the Israelites, either, and when they disobeyed, He would tell them not to go up and fight because He was not with them:

**39** Then Moses told these words to all the children of Israel, and the people mourned greatly. **40** And they rose early in the morning and went up to the top of the mountain, saying, "Here we are, and we will go up to the place which the Lord has promised, for we have sinned!"

**41 And Moses said, "Now why do you transgress the command of the Lord? For this will not succeed. 42 Do not go up, lest you be defeated by your enemies, for the Lord is not among you. 43 For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and you shall fall by the sword; because you have turned away from the Lord, the Lord will not be with you."**

**44** But they presumed to go up to the mountaintop. Nevertheless, neither the ark of the covenant of the Lord nor Moses departed from the camp. **45** Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that mountain came down and attacked them, and drove them back as far as Hormah. (Numbers 14:39-45)

The Lord “promised” (Numbers 14:39) that He would be with them. And yet, they transgressed against the Lord by not believing in His promise, that He had promised them the land. They lacked faith and then attempted to stone His servants in the midst of the nation. Moses told them, “Do not go up...the Lord is not among you...because you have turned away from the Lord, the Lord will not be with you” (Numbers 14:42-43). The people went up to the mountain, presuming God’s protection and victory would still be with them. Sadly, they were disappointed because they didn’t understand that God’s promise came with a condition: faith, trust, obedience.

Paul says as much about the Israelites early on in the Book of Hebrews:

Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. **2 For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. 3 For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said:**

“So I swore in My wrath,

‘They shall not enter My rest,’ ”

although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. **4** For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh *day* in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works"; **5** and again in this *place*: "They shall not enter My rest."

**6** Since therefore it remains that some *must* enter it, and **those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience**, **7** again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "Today," after such a long time, as it has been said:

"Today, if you will hear His voice,

Do not harden your hearts."

**8** For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. **9** There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. **10** For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God *did* from His. (Hebrews 4:1-10)

In Hebrews 4:2, 3, 6, we see that the Israelites, the ones to whom God promised the Promised Land, didn't enter into it because the promise "wasn't mixed with faith in those who heard it" (Hebrews 4:2) and they were disobedient (v.6). The divine promise came with a condition, and the Wilderness Generation didn't meet the condition of faith. They didn't believe the Lord and distrusted God and His servants at every turn, even wanting

to stone the Lord's servants and eventually appoint someone to lead them back to Egypt (Numbers 14:4). They wanted to go back into the spiritual bondage God had freed them from. They were, to use a modern term with which we'd be familiar, *apostate*. Peter gives the human condition of the Israelites and modern-day apostates:

**20** For if, **after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome**, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. **21** For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. **22 But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."** (2 Peter 2:20-22)

These apostates are those who "have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"; they are saved because they have knowledge that Jesus is Lord. They have come to the knowledge of the truth (a phrase Paul uses in the Pastoral Epistles) but then "are again entangled in them," the word "them" referring to the "pollutions of the

world” from which they escaped in 2 Peter 2:20. Peter compares them to a sow who, “having washed,” goes back and wallows in the mire again. The notion of having washed already means that the sow is clean, but rather than stay clean and free from spiritual pollution, sin, the sow returns to the mud and dirt to become dirty and polluted again. It is the perfect picture of what happens to an apostate when, after being saved and coming to the knowledge of the truth, he or she returns to the sinful world and its sinful ways (a world he came out of when he accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior).

When one examines that, “if we deny Him, He also will deny us,” one sees that God doesn’t continue to promise us eternal life if we deny Him, having formerly believed.

So many today in the church believe that Jesus will still give us heaven, even if we depart from Him, but unfortunately, that’s just not true. If we deny Him, He will deny us. If we disown our Lord, He will disown us. He has given us the same promise He gave the Israelites, eternal life, and if we don’t persist in faith and obedience, we will find ourselves in the same position as the Wilderness Generation: on the outside, looking in, while others cross over into it. Just like the Israelites went on the mountain in Numbers 14, looking to have the victory because “God promised”

and found themselves defeated, we will experience the same tragic fate if we presume God will grant the promise of eternal life based on a one-time confession we made twenty years ago, for example.

We have yet to get into 2 Timothy 2:13, but, as one can see, the “if we deny Him” also ties into the final line of our excerpt: “If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself.” This fits with the denial clause because it shows us that God remains true to Himself, even if we don’t remain true to Him. The “He remains faithful” is in contrast to “if we are faithless,” the Greek word *apistoumen* referring to “we do not believe.” And yet, the believers are who Paul has in mind here.

The word really refers to a change in our stance, a change in our character, that we humans could go from believing to unbelieving or disbelieving. That one Greek word *apistoumen*, means that we can change our stance with God from believing Him and believing His Word to distrusting Him and ceasing faith in Him altogether. Now, how does that fit the traditional view of eternal security?

The passage says that, even if we change our stance and change who we are, God never changes who He is. He remains true to

Himself, despite our faithlessness. One may ask, "What evidence is there for this claim?" The evidence is found in the information we've shared regarding 2 Timothy 2:12 --- that is, the promises God made and then rescinded because the humans involved didn't do what God commanded. God remained true to Himself when He took the other 11 tribes from Solomon's son, Rehoboam, because He made a promise to Solomon that mandated Solomon's obedience. Solomon didn't fulfill that obedience, so God was right to not fulfill the promise. God didn't fulfill the promise anyway, despite Solomon's failure to obey. When God promised the Israelites that they'd enter the Promised Land, He meant every word of it; their failure to trust and obey Him meant that God could only rescind the promise from the Wilderness Generation and deny them the benefit of the promise. God was true to His character because He told them, "If you obey Me, you'll enter; if you disobey Me, you will not," and then, God made good on His warning: He didn't give them the Promised Land and say, "Well, it's yours, regardless of the fact that you disobeyed Me and rebelled against Me."

God is not a Judge that can be bribed; He rules justly. Bribes don't sway the Almighty as they often do human judges. God is not a parent who fails to chastise His children. He chastises them

when He promises to do so. God doesn't reward His children when they sin; instead, He punishes them, as He did King David.

### King Saul: A 2 Timothy 2:13 Example

There are some good examples of the verse in question that have been discussed already. A good biblical example of 2 Timothy 2:13 that we haven't examined yet is King Saul. King Saul was selected by God (yes, "elected," to use a biblical term) to be Israel's first king, and the Lord was with him. The Lord approved of his installation as Israel's first king. The prophet Samuel told Saul as much when he anointed him:

**Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured *it* on his head, and kissed him and said: "Is *it* not because the Lord has anointed you commander over His inheritance? 2** When you have departed from me today, you will find two men by Rachel's tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say to you, 'The donkeys which you went to look for have been found. And now your father has ceased caring about the donkeys and is worrying about you, saying, "What shall I do about my son?" ' **3** Then you shall go on forward from there and come to the terebinth tree of Tabor. There three men going up to God at

Bethel will meet you, one carrying three young goats, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a skin of wine. **4** And they will greet you and give you two *loaves* of bread, which you shall receive from their hands. **5** After that you shall come to the hill of God where the Philistine garrison *is*. And it will happen, when you have come there to the city, that you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with a stringed instrument, a tambourine, a flute, and a harp before them; and they will be prophesying. **6 Then the Spirit of the Lord will come upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man. 7 And let it be, when these signs come to you, that you do as the occasion demands; for God is with you.** (1 Samuel 10:1-7)

“The Lord has anointed you commander over His inheritance” (1 Samuel 10:1) and “for God is with you” (1 Samuel 10:7) are statements indicative of the mood. The Lord was with Saul; Saul was God’s man, God’s chosen man for the Israelite kingship. The Spirit of the Lord was upon Him, and God’s grace was with Him. These statements show Saul in the finest hours of his life --- and the kingship.

And then, Saul disobeyed God, not once but twice, and he was no longer with the Lord -- and God was no longer with him. As the Lord told Samuel on both sinful occasions:

**13** And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. **You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God**, which He commanded you. **For now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever.** **14** But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has commanded him *to be* commander over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you." (1 Samuel 13:13-14)

Saul was told to wait for the prophet Samuel before offering the sacrifice at Gilgal. He didn't wait and offered it before Samuel arrived. In the Lord's indictment against Saul, the Lord told Saul twice that he had disobeyed: "You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God" (v.13) and "you have not kept what the Lord commanded you" (v.14). Above this, we are told that "the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue." If Saul had been obedient to the Lord, Jesus would've likely come from Saul's line instead of David's. Saul's sin, disobedience, and failure to trust God explains why he lost the kingship. But there's more

than just the loss of the kingship here at play. The Lord promised Saul that he could be on the throne of Israel forever, but his disobedience cost him what could've been a lasting legacy.

The next time Saul disobeyed God, it was with regard to King Agag and the possessions of the Amalekites. 1 Samuel 15 details the event:

Samuel also said to Saul, "The Lord sent me to anoint you king over His people, over Israel. Now therefore, heed the voice of the words of the Lord. **2** Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'I will punish Amalek *for* what he did to Israel, how he ambushed him on the way when he came up from Egypt. **3** Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.' "

**4** So Saul gathered the people together and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand men of Judah. **5** And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and lay in wait in the valley.

**6** Then Saul said to the Kenites, "Go, depart, get down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them. For you showed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up

out of Egypt." So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites. **7** And Saul attacked the Amalekites, from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is east of Egypt. **8 He also took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. 9 But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all *that was* good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.**

**10 Now the word of the Lord came to Samuel, saying, 11 "I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments." And it grieved Samuel, and he cried out to the Lord all night. 12** So when Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul, **it was told Samuel, saying, "Saul went to Carmel, and indeed, he set up a monument for himself; and he has gone on around, passed by, and gone down to Gilgal."** **13** Then Samuel went to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed *are* you of the Lord! I have performed the commandment of the Lord."

**14** But Samuel said, "What then *is* this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?"

**15** And Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to

sacrifice to the Lord your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.”

**16** Then Samuel said to Saul, “Be quiet! And I will tell you what the Lord said to me last night.”

And he said to him, “Speak on.”

**17** So Samuel said, “When you *were* little in your own eyes, *were* you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the Lord anoint you king over Israel? **18** Now the Lord sent you on a mission, and said, ‘Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.’ **19 Why then did you not obey the voice of the Lord?** Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do evil in the sight of the Lord?”

**20** And Saul said to Samuel, “But I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and gone on the mission on which the Lord sent me, and brought back Agag king of Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. **21** But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal.”

**22** So Samuel said:

“Has the Lord *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,

As in obeying the voice of the Lord?

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,

*And to heed than the fat of rams.*

**23** For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft,

And stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry.

**Because you have rejected the word of the Lord,**

**He also has rejected you from *being* king."**

**24** Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. **25** Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the Lord."

**26 But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel."**

**27** And as Samuel turned around to go away, *Saul* seized the edge of his robe, and it tore. **28** So Samuel said to him, "**The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, *who is* better than you.**

**29 And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent.**

**For He *is* not a man, that He should relent."** (1 Samuel

15:1-29)

Saul was told by God to kill King Agag and destroy all the Amalekites' possessions, animals, etc. Saul kept Agag alive (instead of killing him) and preserved the best of the Amalekite possessions instead of destroying them and burning them. In other words, he sinned again.

Here's the Lord's final response to Saul, a response that had Samuel up crying all night:

**10** Now the word of the Lord came to Samuel, saying, **11** "I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, **for he has turned back from following Me**, and has not performed My commandments." And it grieved Samuel, and he cried out to the Lord all night. (1 Samuel 15:10-11)

In 1 Samuel 15:11, the Lord says that "he [Saul] has turned back from following Me." How did Saul "turn back from following Me," God says, if Saul was never following God to begin with? So we know that Saul was godly at some point. Except, at this point in the narrative, Saul had built a monument for himself at Carmel (1 Samuel 15:12). The monument is a testimony to how egotistical, self-centered, and disobedient he was. Saul no longer saw God as the one to listen to; he had gone from "hiding among the stuff,"

shy and afraid to assume leadership, to building statues of himself as a tribute to "his greatness" throughout Israel. The shy young man that assumed the kingship had turned into an egotistical apostate in a matter of about two years.

And after this, the worst happens: Saul not only loses the kingship, but he also loses the Holy Spirit:

**14** But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the Lord troubled him. (1 Samuel 16:14)

The word for "distressing" is the Greek *poneros*, referring to an evil spirit. Apart from that, we read that "the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul." The Holy Spirit left Saul. Yep, those words you're reading rightly. If it seems unreal, it probably felt unreal to Saul, who couldn't remember a time when the Holy Spirit didn't speak to him. And yet, God left Saul, God abandoned Saul, because Saul "has turned back from following Me," God said in 1 Samuel 15:11. Saul abandoned God, and God, in return, abandoned Saul. Saul did what Paul refers to in 2 Timothy 2:13 --- he "became faithless." But while Saul changed and threw away his faith and turned apostate, God remained the same; the Lord didn't change. He didn't deny Himself, though Saul denied God in word and deed. God remained true to Himself because, as

Samuel the prophet said about Saul, God gave Saul his sentence and the Lord didn't relent:

**27** And as Samuel turned around to go away, *Saul* seized the edge of his robe, and it tore. **28** So Samuel said to him, "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, *who is* better than you. **29** **And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He is not a man, that He should relent.**" (1 Samuel 15:27-29)

In 1 Samuel 15:29, Samuel says, "the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He is not a man, that He should relent." In other words, God doesn't go back on His word; as Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:13, "He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself." God doesn't deny who He is. He says what He means and He means what He says. He promises and rewards, and warns and punishes. The Lord says it best in Malachi 3:

"For **I *am* the Lord, I do not change;**

Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.

**7** Yet from the days of your fathers

You have gone away from My ordinances

And have not kept *them*.

**Return to Me, and I will return to you,”**

**Says the Lord of hosts.**

“But you said,

‘In what way shall we return?’ (Malachi 3:6-7)

In Malachi 3:6, the Lord says that He does not change. Men change, humans change, Saul changed, but the Lord God did not change. And then, in the same passage where God says that He doesn’t change, He says to Israel “Return to Me, and I will return to you” (Malachi 3:7). In other words, God hasn’t changed; He has always been a God who responds favorably when His people return to Him and negatively when His people turn from Him. He has never reneged on His promises when they are unconditional, and has always punished when His people fail to walk upright before Him.

God has never said, “I will return to you though you fail to return to Me.” That has never been God’s character, has never been God’s standard. God has always beckoned His people to return to Him. He’s always been willing to forgive His people, but He’s

never given that forgiveness without demanding repentance from them in return.

## Conclusion

We're at the end of the road of the discussion. We've examined the passage of 2 Timothy 2:11-13 to see what it means when Paul says that "if we endure, we shall also reign with Him," "if we deny Him, He will also deny us," and "if we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself."

What we've seen from our examination of the passage and the whole counsel of Scripture is that the passage does not refer to eternal security. The conditions of endurance (2 Timothy 2:12), not willfully denying the Lord and ceasing to walk with Him(v.12), and to remain in faith (to not be faithless, v. 13) show us that eternal security is not guaranteed. We are not "saved anyhow," but saved in faith, to continue in God's goodness, as Paul tells the Gentiles in Romans 11:22. If we deny the Lord after having confessed Him as Lord and Savior, He will deny us.

We've seen these statements in Scripture: "be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life"; "Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draws back, my soul has no pleasure in Him"; "For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise"; "let us run with endurance the race that is set before us"; "If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after He has done you good"; "if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever"; "Therefore the Lord said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant"; "The Lord *is* with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you"; "because you have turned away from the Lord, the Lord will not be with you"; "For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard *it*"; and, "after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning."

All of these statements tell us that those who received the promises of God persisted in faith and obedience. Those who look to receive eternal life must also persist in faith and obedience. And those who turn from God will find themselves like the Israelites, without the presence of God. God was with them while they were obedient and faithful to Him. God was with Saul while Saul was obedient to Him, but when Saul "turned back from following Me," God said, the Lord turned back from Saul and the Holy Spirit departed from Him --- the Lord bringing an evil spirit upon Saul.

Where in any of this does one find eternal security? The answer to that question is still one of the greatest theological mysteries of our time.

