

Will the Unholy Be Saved?

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A review article on R. T. Kendall's, *Once Saved, Always Saved*¹

While the title of this book is controversial for those who believe that it is possible for Christians to lose their salvation, it would be a mistake to suppose that this work is primarily a doctrinal statement of the opposite view. As Dr Kendall says, enough has probably already been written in defense of the doctrine that true believers never fall from grace. His main interest lies elsewhere, namely, in what he considers to be the spiritual consequences of the doctrine of the security of the believer, especially with regard to the enjoyment of assurance. In fact, *Once Saved, Always Saved* carries as its subtitle, 'Biblical reassurance for every true believer'.

Once Saved, Always Saved initially provides a popular restatement of some of the biblical reasons why the salvation of a Christian is secure. These chapters may be helpful to those for whom the truths stated are new.

They show that faith is saving wherever it is *once* exercised and that the Christian's justification through the righteousness of Christ is complete and unchangeable. Further, the believer's faith is itself 'engendered by God's own Spirit' who will dwell in the Christian until the day of redemption. Kendall asserts that this security belongs to every believer whether he accepts it or not, yet he rightly insists that for true New Testament Christian living the teaching needs to be understood.

In Dr. Kendall's view, the chief hindrance to assured Christian living is the tendency to give *works* a place where they ought to be excluded. 'If a person thinks that living the most consistent godly life will help him along a bit with respect to his salvation, he

¹ Hodder and Stoughton, 1983, pp 163.

betrays his lack of belief in Christ's atonement' . . . 'All that is required of us in terms of *works* was provided by Him' (pp 43-44). He argues that for a person to aim at living a godly life either to keep himself saved, or to prove that he is truly saved, is to distort the New Testament. For salvation is absolutely free, Christ has done *all* that is necessary. No true godliness can exist until this is understood. 'It is not godliness to live a straight life in order to prevent the loss of our salvation. Godliness is not selfishness. Godliness does not "seek its own" [cf. 1 Cor 13.5]'. Godliness is not motivated by fear but by faith which 'worketh by love'. 'It is only when the matter of assurance of eternal salvation is, as it were, completely behind you that you are truly ready to move on in the Christian life. . . . Knowing how we are saved is the key to solid Christian growth, balanced evangelism and consistent biblical teaching'.

While emphasizing his pastoral concern, Dr. Kendall does not, however, disguise the fact that the case which he means to establish does necessitate a serious controversy. He announces it early in the book although only later does the full extent of the difference stand revealed. At the outset, (p. 17) he tells us that by the doctrine of 'the security of the believer' he does not mean the same as the teaching called 'the perseverance of the saints'. 'If all we are doing is upholding the traditional doctrine of the "perseverance of the saints", there is hardly a need for a book like this' (p 18). In other words, Dr. Kendall is not an advocate of the Calvinistic view of perseverance, for he considers that in one important respect the Calvinistic teaching has contributed to the undermining of biblical assurance.

Wherein, then, lies the difference between the Calvinistic view of the believer's security and the viewpoint of *Once Saved, Always Saved* ? In a nutshell, it is that Dr. Kendall believes that regeneration makes sanctification only 'possible' (pp. 81-82) because, he wishes to argue, a Christian may be saved without being sanctified. 'Sanctification was not a prerequisite for glorification, or Paul would have placed it in line with "calling" and "justification" [Rom 8.20]' (p 100). This is no slip of the pen on the author's part for the main thesis of his case is repeated four times the first 43 pages: 'I state categorically that the person who is saved *will go to Heaven when he dies no matter what work (or lack of work) may accompany such faith*. In other words, no matter what sin (or absence of Christian obedience) may accompany such faith' (p. 41, also pp 16, 38, 43; italics are the author's).

Kendall is here consciously departing from an understanding which has been traditional in all sections of historic evangelicalism, apart from the Arminian. Christians of Arminian persuasion have argued that Christians can fall from grace because, they allege (1) It is a fact (2) The New Testament often warns of such a possibility. To which arguments Calvinists have always responded (1) Those who do depart from Christ and from holiness prove that they were, in reality, never true Christians at all [2 Tim 2.18; 1 John 2.19] (2) The Epistles of the New Testament are written on the assumption that all who profess to be Christians may not be so in reality. All Churches are mixed; some profess Christ who, as time will show, never experienced a change of nature. Their 'believing' was not the result of regeneration and, accordingly, because their hearts were never transformed, they do not persevere in faith and holiness. No Calvinistic Confession of

Faith ever taught the perseverance of an individual to glory *irrespective* of the presence or absence of holiness and sanctification in his life.

Quotations to substantiate this point will be found in every Calvinistic author, old or modern. Dr. Lloyd-Jones, referring to Matthew 5.20, writes: 'Our Lord is teaching that the proof of our having truly received the grace of God in Jesus Christ is that we are living a righteous life'.² Spurgeon, speaking of the sins listed in 1 Corinthians 6.9-11, says:

Let there be no mistake concerning this matter, you cannot be Christians if you thus defile yourselves; you cannot be children of God and live in filthy sin; it must not be — it cannot be, and God here, by the pen of the apostle Paul, excommunicates all who pretend to be members of his Church, and yet are guilty of the sin of fornication.³

Kendall rejects this understanding. Referring to the same passage in 1 Corinthians he writes:

The Calvinists have tended to be woolly on passages like 1 Corinthians 6.9-10. . . The Calvinist dismisses the whole matter by saying that saved people do not "practise" or "continue" in such wickedness; for those who do merely show they were not saved in the first place (p 92).

Kendall's argument is that if perseverance in holiness is necessary to distinguish a true believer then the doctrine of 'once saved, always saved' loses its comfort:

For if it is strictly "perseverance", or even "sainthood", that we are after in order to establish the biblical teaching, there is really no point in having the doctrine in the first place. To put it another way, if only those who persevere in sainthood are saved, there would be hardly any objection to the teaching. If, for example, John Smith seems genuinely converted but lapses after a couple of years, it may be argued that he simply was not converted in the first place. . . Thus only the person who is living the godly life *at the time* of his death can be safely regarded as *saved*. If that is what the Bible teaches, then faith gives very little purpose or comfort whatever' (p 17). And the practical result of this will be, he continues, 'I will therefore not be deriving my comfort from Jesus' death . . . I will be deriving my *real* comfort and assurance from my own works.

Let us then be clear on the precise point of difference in the teaching which is here being proposed. Dr. Kendall agrees with the Calvinistic and evangelical doctrine that in justification God accepts the ungodly solely on account of the finished work of Christ. In justification, the Christian is brought into a new legal relationship to God, entirely apart

² *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, vol 1, 1959, p 208.

³ *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 1980, p 208.

from his own works. But there the agreement ends. The traditional teaching asserts that works have a part, not in *securing* the believer's change of status, but in subsequently *identifying* the person of the true believer. The saving faith which initially unites us to Christ has and needs no testimony from our lives to support it, we first believe because we see ourselves to be lost and undone. Yet that faith never occurs in a vacuum. Although he knows it not at the time, the faith of the believing sinner is the gift of God, a gift which occurs with regeneration and that same regeneration will secure salvation *from* sin, that is to say, a break with the *practice* of sin. 'If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature' [2 Cor 5.17]. So Calvinism says that Christ's work for us — that is the legal, forensic side of salvation — is never without Christ's work *in* us. Wherever there is a true change in a man's relation to God there is *also* a change in his subjective, moral, personal state. Thus, on this understanding, faced with the question, 'Do I belong to Christ?' the Christian is permitted to argue, 'Yes I do belong to Christ because I find in myself changes which he alone can work and changes which only his unbought love prompted him to work.'⁴

Dr. Kendall disagrees. His position is that the assurance of the believer must, from first to last, be severed from anything personal and subjective in the believer. Works must never be treated as an evidence of grace. Provided a man once truly believes, he says, then the presence or absence of holiness or sanctification has *nothing* to do with his assurance. To say otherwise, he affirms, would be to deny the 'sheer grace' of the gospel. Assurance, he argues, comes only in two ways, either from the comfort *immediately* involved in our conscious exercise of faith in the promises of the gospel or from the direct and extraordinary witness of God's Spirit to our souls. In neither instance is any subjective evidence resulting from sanctification involved in the least degree. 'Works' are to be totally excluded.

Now to prove that Dr. Kendall is truly reflecting the biblical teaching is not the same as proving that there is an *element* of assurance in all true faith or that the Spirit's witness may sometimes be extraordinary in the giving of assurance. The first of these statements is upheld by the Westminster Confession of Faith and the second has been not uncommon among Calvinistic theologians and preachers.⁵ The traditional teaching has never been that assurance is to be *based* upon works, but rather that the element of obedience and sanctification is *one* essential strand to the biblical teaching on assurance and perseverance. In a carefully balanced statement, the Westminster Confession says that an 'infallible assurance of faith' is founded upon 'the divine truth of the promises of salvation, the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made, the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits

⁴ The words are R. L. Dabney's in a review of the 'Theology of the Plymouth Brethren' whose doctrine of assurance largely passed into American Fundamentalism where it remains so prevalent today. Cf. Dabney's *Discussions: Evangelical and Theological*, vol 1, p 173 ff. These fine volumes were recently reprinted by the Trust.

⁵ For example, William Guthrie, John Duncan and C. H. Spurgeon.

that we are the children of God'.⁶ To uphold his case Dr. Kendall has to prove that *inward evidence of grace* has no place in the New Testament teaching and this, we regret to say, he attempts to do at some length.

The New Testament, Kendall argues, does not speak of continuance in obedience as necessary to salvation. This is so startling that the reader of this review who has not yet seen *Once Saved, Always Saved*, may be excused for supposing that the author has overlooked a considerable number of texts. For example, did not Paul exhort young disciples who had professed Christ 'to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God' [Acts 14.22]? Does the Epistle to the Hebrews not affirm, 'We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end' [3.14]. But Dr. Kendall has not overlooked these statements. Commenting on the reference just quoted from Acts, he says that Paul in speaking of entering 'the kingdom of God' was not referring to final salvation, for to require continuance for that purpose would be to deny Paul's own doctrine of justification and assurance (p 94). He proposes an alternative, 'The Pauline usage of the phrase "kingdom of God" almost always refers to faithfulness, obedience, reward or one's inheritance' (p 95). The young converts at Lystra, Iconium and Antioch were not being told to make sure of salvation, but to make sure of enlarged blessing and reward.

The same principle of interpretation is applied to Hebrews 3.14. The author of Hebrews relates being 'partakers of Christ' with holding 'the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end'. 'This is not', writes Kendall, 'a reference merely to being saved but to a lively partaking of the very person of Jesus'. In other words, salvation itself was not in view, only the enlarged blessing offered to obedient believers — 'a lively partaking of the very person of Jesus' (p 149).

From this it will be apparent that Dr. Kendall sees two grades of Christians in the New Testament: those who are 'merely saved', who may go to heaven without sanctification and without rewards, and those who are faithful and obedient. This is his yardstick for the interpretation of the book which might be expected to be the *bête noire* of his thesis, the First Epistle of John. On some of the most crucial tests in that Epistle no comment seems to be offered, for example, 1 John 3.14 or 5.2 ('By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments'). But treatment of verses in 1 John 3 makes Kendall's position very clear. John writes: 'He that committeth sin is of the devil. . . Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God . Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him'.

The question is, Are there two persons in view here, the unregenerate who live in the practice of sin and Christians who cannot live in the practice of sin, or are there three, unregenerate, believers and disobedient believers? Dr. Kendall asserts there are three.

⁶ Chapter 18, 'Of Assurance of Grace and Salvation'. The same careful balance is to be seen in John Murray's chapter on 'The Assurance of Faith' in his *Collected Writings*, vol 1, 1977.

He *must* so do, otherwise 1 John would be teaching that obedience, resulting from being 'born of God', identifies all true Christians. In that case Kendall's main thesis would collapse. He argues, therefore, that John is principally concerned to distinguish Christian from *Christian*, not Christian from unbeliever. 'Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not' refers, he writes, to the obedient believer: 'whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him' refers also to Christians but to those who are failing in obedience:

At the moment when we are abiding in Christ we are not sinning — at least not then. . . . When he says "whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him" he means that such sinful conduct or attitude betrays the actual condition of our heart at that moment. Do not claim God as being behind your actions when you act like that, says John. Obviously John does not mean such a person was never saved or he would be repudiating his own words in 1 John 2.1-2 (p 113).

It will be seen that Kendall is here interpreting 'sinneth not' as meaning temporary sinlessness, that is, sinlessness for as long as the 'abiding' continues. But as 1 John 2.1-2 teaches that Christians do sin, he argues that the words 'he that sinneth hath not seen him' must refer to the same sinning Christians! 1 John, he insists, is speaking of two classes of Christians — some who 'walk in the light' and 'abide in Christ', and some who do not. This is not, we believe, an interpretation which can be sustained. For one thing, it requires a 'perfectionist' view of sanctification which is foreign to the New Testament. John's language makes clear that the alternative to being 'in the light' is being in the darkness of the unregenerate state [1 *John* 2.9]. The alternative to 'abiding' is the practice of sin which identifies those who are not 'born of God'. According to John, it is being 'born of God' which is the rubicon and *determinative* of Christian behaviour. 'He that is born of God sinneth not'; if that has to mean sinlessness (which patently it does not mean) then *all* Christians are sinless. For John knows nothing of two classes of Christians. 'And *every man* that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure' [1 *John* 3.3].

Of course, the Apostle John's teaching on abiding or 'continuing' (as the NIV legitimately translates the word) is derivative from our Lord's own teaching. John's Gospel chapter 15 identifies continuing with fruitfulness and the alternative is the unfruitfulness of a person who proves he was never truly united to Christ (the vine) at all: 'If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned' [*John* 15.6]. Dr. Kendall, consistently with his view of 1 John, claims that these awesome words of Christ are spoken of a true believer (pp 133-4). 'Withered' and 'burned', yet saved.

We have already said enough to show that the author's thesis requires a radically new understanding of New Testament passages. It is the *number* of the passages involved which we find breath-taking. Kendall means to maintain that the Scriptures do not call upon professing Christians to test their profession by their lives: nothing subjective and personal, apart from 'faith', is to be allowed as evidence of the reality of salvation. So

almost every passage which warns of the danger of unfaithful conduct is not to be understood as putting the salvation of anyone in doubt. Both Calvinists and Arminians have been *wrong* in supposing that ‘a good number of passages that speak of “falling away”, being “rejected” and not “inheriting the kingdom of God” ‘refer to being *lost* (p 91).⁷ They refer rather, he asserts, to people who will be saved yet without reward and blessing.

There are, perhaps two particularly crucial passages involved here. In one, 1 Corinthians 6.9-10, Paul lays it down as axiomatic, ‘Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?’ and in the other, Ephesians 5.3-6, he concludes with the express warning, ‘Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience’. Here Kendall concedes that the wilfully disobedient will ‘forfeit the Kingdom of God’ but, without any attempt at exegesis he asserts, as above, that their salvation is not in doubt. ‘The children of disobedience’ and ‘the unrighteous’ are not those who miss heaven as Spurgeon, and others guilty of ‘woolly’ thinking, have believed. The ‘proof’ which Kendall offers is another assertion, namely, that Paul, notwithstanding conduct in some New Testament churches, never causes church members to question their salvation. It is his belief that the ‘many’ Israelites described in 1 Corinthians 10, with whom God ‘was not well pleased’, who were ‘overthrown’ and ‘destroyed’ were nevertheless saved. ‘If obeying Moses’ command to sprinkle blood on the night of the Passover was not a type of saving faith, I do not know what is. These people were saved. We shall see them in heaven’ (p 115).

‘Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith’, or, more plainly, ‘Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith’ [2 Cor 13.5, NIV], does not mean, Kendall likewise says, ‘Make sure your profession of Christ is true’. ‘The contrast is not that of being saved or lost but whether, as saved people, Christ is openly manifest in them’ (p 130).

So the universal understanding of Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 6.9 and Ephesians 5.5 has been entirely wrong. According to Kendall, no one in these New Testament churches was being warned that certain conduct was contrary to salvation itself. Concluding his view of the position in the church at Corinth, he writes: ‘It was not salvation, then, but their inheritance in the kingdom of God these Christians were in danger of forfeiting. So with the Galatians. Their problem was slightly different from that of those at Corinth. The Corinthians were in danger of immorality (a fairly good synonym for “antinomianism” — lawlessness) whereas the Galatians were in danger of legalism. But the warning was the same. “They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” [Gal 5.21]. What things? “Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

⁷ Referring to a similar statement in the article to which we have already referred, Dabney writes ‘This is a type of modesty which church history teaches us is a pretty sure sign of doctrinal defection’. The unwary need to be aware of the author’s similar high-handedness in pronouncing upon the meaning of certain Greek words. Spurgeon’s view of Hebrews 6 is passed off with the (false) remark, ‘Unfortunately Spurgeon didn’t know Greek’ (p 132)!

idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like.” [Gal 5.19-21]. Are we to say that anybody who *does* any of these things (e.g. envyings, strife) is not going to Heaven? Not at all. But such things as “covetousness”, “foolish talking” as well as sexual immorality forfeit one’s inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God’ [Eph 5.3-5].

‘What is the kingdom of God? It is God’s *Heaven below*’ (pp 96-7).⁸

If it should be said that Dr. Kendall is minimizing the gravity of sin he would answer that, on the contrary, he is stating the danger of carelessness and disobedience in Christians in far stronger terms than is customary. He is not condoning spiritual laxity: all he wants to do is to allow the truth of ‘once saved, always saved’ to stand uncompromised by any return to ‘works’. He does not, therefore, discount the warnings of Scripture, he only insists that they be treated in their proper context, namely, believers may suffer serious loss in this life and, worse, they may incur both loss of rewards and punishment at the Day of judgment. Being saved ‘does not exempt us from rewards or punishment’ (p 123). Careless Christians who live in ‘continued rebellion against God’s will’, he says, will meet God as ‘the avenger’ (p 107), they will ‘fall into the hands of the living God’ (p 136):

Do not be surprised if there is actually weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth *among the saved* who stand before the Lord in that Day of days (p 125).

On the basis of this interpretation some of the most alarming texts in the New Testament are thus turned upon ‘Christians’. Kendall steadfastly refuses to accept the principle, stated well by R. L. Dabney ‘The Bible theology teaches that there is a dead and fruitless faith which neither justifies nor sanctifies, and whose uselessness is to be practically tested by its fruitlessness’. This refusal drives him to desperate exigencies in interpretation. Thus the terrible words of James, ‘He shall have judgment without mercy’ [James 2.13], are not applied to the unholy nominal ‘Christian’ but to the true believers. It is of *such* persons. Kendall believes, that James asks the question, ‘What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him’ [James 2.14]. ‘Yes, it can!’ answers Kendall, though fruitless faith will incur the punishment threatened in verse 13, ‘He shall have judgment without mercy’. The almost universally understood meaning of this passage, well substantiated by commentators of varied schools of thought, Kendall puts aside with these words:

Our natural reaction to James 2.14 is almost always to assume that James is questioning whether the man who has faith without works can be saved. “Can faith save him?” But this is in fact a hasty interpretation. James is not raising that issue at all. He is not questioning whether we can

⁸ At no point, perhaps it is necessary to say, have we introduced our own italics into quotations from Dr. Kendall.

be saved without works (or he *would* be opposing Paul) but whether our “faith alone” does anybody *else* any good. The “him” of James 2.14 is no doubt the same “poor man” of James 2.6 (p 128).

Precisely the same treatment is given to the whole of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The many warnings in Hebrews, it is insisted, are not against apostasy from Christ but against falling into the group of Christians who are going to be ‘burned’. Those who sin wilfully [*Heb* 10.26], who neglect ‘so great salvation’ (‘neglect’, not ‘reject’, says Kendall, (p 131), and who crucify Christ a second time, putting him to an ‘open shame’ [*Heb* 6.6] are all Christians. It is of some Christians, so Kendall likewise asserts, that Hebrews 6.6 says they cannot be renewed again unto repentance. Concerning them he is prepared to say, God ‘swears in his wrath’, they are the ‘thorns and briars’ which are ‘rejected’. ‘They reached the place where God simply rejected them for Heaven below and any reward in Heaven above. They would be saved by fire’ [*1 Cor* 3.15], (p 134). So disobedient Christians, notwithstanding their salvation, face the wrath of God. Not possessing ‘any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ’ is related by Paul to the coming ‘wrath of God’ [*Eph* 5.5-6]. Yet Kendall sees no reason to retreat from the plain consequences of his teaching.

But if sin is to be *punished* in the day of Christ what is to be said of the merit of Christ’s shed blood? *Once Saved, Always Saved* anticipates the question. The answer is, that *the blood of Christ has ceased to be efficacious*. Those Christians, Kendall writes, who fail to ‘walk in the light’, who sin wilfully, are those for whom ‘there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins’ [*Heb* 10.26]. ‘In other words, the blood of Christ will *not* cleanse from all sin because “sinning wilfully” is hardly walking in the light’. The precious promise of 1 John 1.7, he argues, is conditional, and it ceases to apply to some Christians. ‘The “sacrifice for sins” has been taken away so that such sins will stare him in the face at the judgment. All that remains is “a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation”’ [*Heb* 10.27], (p 134).

What then has to be said, in conclusion, on Dr. Kendall’s reformulation of the doctrine of Christian security? On the positive side his insistence that sinners look to Christ and to the promises of God for assurance is a necessary one; the same insistence is to be found in many of the best Calvinistic authors⁹ and it warrants constant emphasis. But Dr. Kendall has so isolated this strand of assurance from other scriptural testimony that the real meaning of what it is to be a Christian is undermined. To state the doctrine of faith and assurance in such terms as to promise salvation to the unrighteous and the unholy is to do violence to the Word of God. Is Spurgeon too strong when he writes, ‘I dread the men who say, “We believe, and therefore are saved”, and do not live in holiness; for these divide Christ’s offices, setting up his priesthood and denying his

⁹ E.g. John Colquhoun, *A Treatise on Spiritual Comfort*, 2nd edition, 1814. For believers ‘the sight of their evidences of grace, indeed, cannot fall to be delightful to them; but the sight of Jesus, by faith, ought to be a thousand times more delightful’, p 216. See also J. C. Ryle’s *Holiness*, easily one of the most important volumes in print today, first re-issued in the 1950’s due to the pressure of D. M. Lloyd-Jones.

kingship. Half a Christ is no Christ.¹⁰ Dr. Kendall does profess to recognize a difference between faith in profession only and faith in reality; brief mention is given to this fact in *Once Saved, Always Saved*; but the many scriptural tests to discriminate between the two are nullified by their constant misapplication.

R. T. Kendall has done what others have done before him. Starting with an assertion of the freeness and the sheer grace of the gospel, saving faith is stated in terms of 'believing that Christ died for me'. Accepting universal redemption is thus made an integral part of saving faith and consequently believing and assurance are treated as virtually one and the same thing.¹¹ A consciousness of faith is regarded as full and complete as a ground of assurance. To test such faith by the evidence of life is condemned as a return to a legalism which, it is claimed, inspires fear instead of love. Yet this very system which in theory ought to do the opposite, itself leads irresistibly to an emphasis upon works and upon fear. What secures sanctification, according to Dr. Kendall, is *not* the same sovereign grace as secures justification. What decides whether a Christian is only 'merely saved' (to use the author's unhappy phrase) or whether he advances to be among those who 'enter the kingdom of God' is not the grace of God but our *works*. 'Not committing sin' is not secured by being 'born of God' but an additional effort achieved by some Christians and not by others. Kendall writes: 'If we deal with our sin before God, as it were, "catches up" with us, we shall *be completely spared* His fierce judgment later on. God does not chasten us for a sin we have truly repented of. The way to deal with our sin is by "walking in the light" [1 *John* 1.7], (pp 108-9).

Dr. Kendall's argument does not secure the honour of divine grace. Discounting all need for doubt in believers, it finishes up inculcating a type of fear and anxiety which ought to be no part of Christian experience. Universal redemption, an antinomian view of the law which disparages the law as a rule of life for the believer,¹² and an unwillingness to

¹⁰ *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 1882, p 94. On this see also A. A. Hodge's chapter, 'Sanctification and Good Works — Higher Life' in his *Evangelical Theology*, 1890, presently reprinted by the Trust, where he writes, 'If there was one who attempted to receive Christ with justification and not with sanctification, he missed it, thank God! He was no more justified than he was sanctified'.

¹¹ As John Murray says: 'Faith is self-commitment to him. It is not the belief that we have been saved, not even the belief that Christ died for us, but the commitment of ourselves to Christ as unsaved, lost, helpless, and undone in order that we may be saved'.

¹² Dr. Kendall appears to believe that the Law of God (the 10 Commandments) is not a standard for Christian holiness. Failure to assert the spirituality of the Law and its character as 'holy, and just, and good' has commonly coincided with perfectionist views of sanctification. It is a dangerously loose expression to say, 'many think that holiness is nothing more than keeping the works of the Law' (p 53), when our Lord's exposition of the Law in the Sermon on the Mount clearly makes it normative for Christian behaviour. The Law still defines obedience and sin for Christians [1 *John* 3.4]. Professing Christians who suppose they have reached some higher, victorious life, almost

assert that the grace both reconciles and sanctifies sinners, have commonly appeared together in church history. While claiming to be wholly evangelical, the invariable tendency of such schemes is anti-evangelical. The redeeming love of Christ is not invincible and efficacious. Paul's mighty question, 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?' [Rom 8.32] has lost its force. Grace, after all, does not reign. 'All that Christ did and suffered for the salvation of the human race is of *no value* until we believe' (p 66), and, after that, sanctification likewise depends upon us. The end of such teaching is not liberty, it is bondage.

Some of Dr. Kendall's statements on future rewards are good and necessary but, all in all, his presentation of that truth is inimical to what all believers are to anticipate in glory.¹³ The Lord *himself* is their inheritance. All will be like him, for all were chosen to 'be holy and without blame before him' — 'a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing'. All true believers love holiness and they will not be disappointed. At the day of resurrection they will awake in his likeness and be *satisfied*. Any treatment of the subject of rewards which supports 'wailing and gnashing of teeth' is alien to the land where 'they shall see his face and his name shall be in their foreheads'. Indignation and wrath are only applicable to the place where the unrighteousness 'that defileth' *do* enter. To be with Christ and to behold his glory is the supreme motive for the Christian and the stronger that motive is the more the dread of sin and the pursuit of holiness will characterize our present lives. Yet the very brightest of Christians, while in this life, are far from attaining to sinlessness. They have, in the words of the Heidelberg Catechism, 'only a small beginning of this obedience'.

T. E. Peck speaks for orthodox Christianity of all ages when he writes:

If Jesus, the holy, harmless, and undefiled One, did not die for the purpose of bringing his redeemed into the likeness of himself, then the Bible, the Church, the Sacraments, have all alike been given in vain. To be left to the corruption of our nature is to be left to the worm that never dies.¹⁴

Kendall has not re-affirmed a sound doctrine of Christian security. On matters of great moment *Once Saved, Always Saved*, represents a departure from evangelical religion.

invariably view sin in terms of outward acts — the result of an erroneous understanding of God's Law [Matt 22.37-40].

¹³ There is not space here to discuss Dr. Kendall's treatment of texts relating to the Christian and future judgment. R. L. Dabney deals thoroughly with 1 Corinthians 3.13-15 in his *Discussions*, vol 1, p 551 ff. 2 Corinthians 5.10 is frequently dealt with by the Puritans, e.g. five sermons in Manton's Works (vol 13). Thomas Brooks discusses differences of opinion on the question, whether the sins of believers will be made known at the day of judgment. Hebrews 6 is treated by D. M. Lloyd-Jones in his *Romans, The Final Perseverance of the Saints*, chapter 26.

¹⁴ Banner of Truth magazine, August-September, 1983, p 58.

POSTSCRIPT

A published sermon by Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones on Ephesians 5.5 deals so closely with the very position which Dr. Kendall is advocating that we quote the following extract:

What is the ultimate object of this Christian message, this Christian faith? It is to make us *holy*. We can never emphasize this too much. In Scripture the first thing, the great thing, the central thing, is that we be made *holy*. . . In the first chapter of his First Epistle John says: "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth". And again in his second chapter: "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments is a *liar*" — there is nothing else to say about him, he is just a barefaced liar! — "and the truth is not in him". In the very last book of the Bible, as if to remind us, just at the very end, of a thing we are so prone to forget, we find it written, "There shall in no wise enter into it (the holy city) any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life . . . Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie" [Rev 21.27; 22. 14-15]. Oh! this is an eternal distinction — *without!* there they are, the people that John is talking about, that have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God, they are *without*, and outside eternally, and there they remain. They have no entrance into this *holy* city. Our Lord Himself said the same thing in the Sermon on the Mount: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" [Matt 7.21]. This is New Testament Christianity. Scripture speaks about holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for *they*" — and nobody else — "shall see God."

But a very subtle danger arises at this point, and I have no doubt the Apostle had it in mind when he wrote the very words we are considering. There are people who will argue, "But wait a minute; are you not preaching the law to us? You are to be a minister of grace, and yet you seem to be preaching pure law. You are reminding us of the Being and the character of God, as expressed in the Ten Commandments and in His moral law; are you not just putting us back under the law? Are you not excluding every one of us from the kingdom of God? Surely you are forgetting the gospel! you have been referring to the original kingdom, and the original law that God held before mankind; but now the Lord Jesus Christ has come, and we are confronted by something quite new; we are no longer confronting the law; all we are asked to do as Christians is to

believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. We could not be saved under the law, for the law made it impossible, saying, 'There is none righteous, no, not one'. But now God has brought in another way which makes it easier for us; we are no longer confronted by the demands of the law and the tremendous holiness of God. It is just a matter of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, and we shall be saved". Now that is their argument, but I am bound to say that it is one of the most subtle, dangerous heresies that can ever be offered to men and women. And yet it characterizes a great deal of modern evangelism.

But someone may say, "I cannot reconcile these things in my mind as principles; theologically I do not understand what you are saying. Surely by putting it as you have done, you really are teaching justification by works again. Are you not saying that it is our life that admits us into the kingdom? Are you not saying that if a man is guilty of these things he is outside, whereas if he is not guilty he is inside? Is not that going right back to justification by works? Are you saying in effect that a man is justified by his sanctification? That if he is a sanctified man he is justified, but that if he is not sanctified he is not justified and is outside?" People are often in trouble about this. They are in trouble in exactly the same way about the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. They say, "Look at those terrible warnings there; we are told that *if* this man who believes goes back, then he is outside for ever; we cannot reconcile this justification by faith only, and this pure grace teaching of yours, with this other emphasis which seems to put it all back upon us and upon our conduct and behaviour. How do you reconcile these things?"

A very important question! We reconcile them by asserting again that God justifies the *ungodly*, not the godly. Justification is by faith *alone*. It was while we were yet enemies that we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; it was while we were ungodly, while we were sinners. There is no question about that; it is a cardinal doctrine, a first great principle. But justification is only one step, an initial step, in a process. And the process includes not only justification but regeneration and sanctification and ultimate glorification. Justification and forgiveness of sins are not ends in and of themselves; they are only steps on a way that leads to final perfection. And that is the whole answer to the problem. Some Christians persist in isolating these things, but they are not isolated in the Scriptures. "Whom he called, them he also justified and whom he justified, them he also glorified!" "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom *and* righteousness, *and* sanctification, *and* redemption!" There is the whole process. And the truth is, that if you are in it at all, you are in at every point. We cannot divorce justification and forgiveness from other parts of truth. And the remaining steps are put very clearly before us in the First Epistle to the Corinthians: "Such", says the Apostle, having given his terrible list of sins — "Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye

are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" [6.11]. It means that God does not justify a man and leave him there. Not at all! If God justifies a man, God has brought that man into the process. If you can say that you are justified, I say about you that you have been washed, that you have been sanctified, that you have been taken out, you have been removed from the old, and you have been put into a new realm, into a new kingdom; you are in this process of God that is leading to your ultimate, entire perfection.

I remind you again of the words of the Apostle John in his First Epistle: "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" [3.3]. Of course, a man may say glibly, "I want to go to heaven, I have got this hope in me". "You have not!" says John. Here is the test. If you have really got this hope in you — the hope of entering the holy City at the end, and of spending your eternity in it — every man that really has this hope in him, purifieth himself — of course he does, he is bound to — even as He is pure. But the man who has only got the hope on his lips and not in his heart does not purify himself, he goes on living the old life; and the truth about him is that he has no inheritance at all in the kingdom of Christ and of God. He does not belong there. He says, "Lord! Lord!" but speech is cheap and easy.

The question is, Is the hope in our hearts? If it is, we recognize the truth; we say, Yes, we *do* know this, that people who cleave to sin obviously cannot have any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. There is no contradiction between these statements and the doctrine of free grace and justification by faith only, for the God who justifies goes on with the process. And unless we are giving evidence of being in the process and of being perfected by it, there is but one conclusion to draw — we have never been in the kingdom at all, we must go back to the very beginning, we must repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁵

¹⁵ *Darkness and Light*, Exposition of Ephesians 4.17 to 5.17, pp 344-353.

A reference in Dr. Lloyd-Jones' volume on *Romans*, Chapter 8: 5-17, p 401, shows that part of Dr. Kendall's view is not entirely novel: 'According to the Apostle all Christians are the heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, not merely some Christians. There are those who teach that this is only true of some Christians, and that, though you are saved, if you do not live a good life, if you are not entirely sanctified, you do not become an heir. That is not the Apostle's teaching. . . There is teaching in the Scripture which suggests that there may be a variation in the amount of the inheritance dependent upon our conduct and behaviour. But what is established here is that we are all heirs, that we are all going to the same glory. Though "one star differeth from another star in glory" we are all inheritors of the same glory.'

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