

"Even if you are on the right track, you will get run over if you just sit there."

—Bennie Bargaen

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## **The Problem with 'Leader Security'**

Within Protestantism, a major cornerstone of belief is the doctrine of "Eternal Security"—commonly called "once saved, always saved." It is the airy assumption that once a man accepts [Jesus Christ](#) as his personal savior, and accepts His perfect sacrifice for the remission of his sins, his salvation is assured for all time. Under this line of reasoning, from this point on he is eternally saved, and nothing he does can ever take away his salvation.

The problem with this vain assertion—in addition to it being entirely unscriptural; see [John 15:4-6](#); [I Corinthians 9:27](#); [Colossians 1:22-23](#); [Hebrews 4:1-2](#); [6:4-6](#); [10:26-31](#); [Titus 1:16](#); [II Peter 1:10-11](#)—is the effect that it has on the Christian. True, it gives a sense of relief, and imbues its adherents with a tremendous amount of confidence, both of which may be seen as good. But it is a false confidence, and a destructive one because it steals the urgency and zeal to overcome, to become holy, and to take on God's spiritual image. It gives the euphoric sensation of invincibility—that God's judgment cannot touch such a man, and God's law no longer needs to be considered. In short, it stalls the whole sanctification process by giving the impression that one is already at the end of his race.

Even though the church of [God](#) in general rejects this doctrine, an unofficial corollary has sprung up which is wreaking a similar havoc: the tenuous assertion that casting one's lot in with the right man, or being a part of a certain group or church will instantly cause God to look more highly upon a person. We may be sure, though, that God does not work through such a system of "salvation by association"—except in the sense of association with *Him*. But the unstated doctrine of "Leader Security" (or "Church Security"), based on the premise that one's standing with God is assured once one accepts a human leader or organization, is as destructive as the false doctrine of "[Eternal Security](#)," and for the very same reasons: it instills false confidence, it steals the urgency and zeal to overcome and learn how to walk with God, it tempts one to fall into the trap of thinking "that can't happen to me", and it can seriously impede—if not outright end—the sanctification process of growing in [holiness](#).

This is not to suggest that church leadership is unimportant, or that the doctrines of an organization should remain unproved by its members. On the contrary, our teachers and learning environment are both vital factors in our spiritual development. Nor are all churches the same in God's eyes—the letters in Revelation 2 and 3 are addressed to assemblies of varying degrees of faithfulness. But the danger lies in trusting in a man—any man—or organization to see us across the finish line—or, worse yet, believing that we are essentially already there because of our affiliation with a certain man or church. The simple truth is that human leadership cannot take the place of God in the lives of the individual without devastating consequences, nor can it stand in the place of the individual in the eyes of God.

By way of example, let us suppose that we find a "perfect" human leader (note the contradiction) whose teaching does not have a trace of doctrinal impurity, and we pledge allegiance to him. How should we now spend our lives? Should we rest easy in the confidence that we will not go through any tribulation? Should we become a cheerleader for a servant of God? Should we spend our days trying to convince others to hop on the bandwagon on which we are currently riding? Should we pray for God's wrath to fall on those who do not see things as we do?

Clearly, such ideas are absurd. They would serve no purpose in developing our own relationship with God. They would add nothing to our walk with

Him so that we, like Jesus Christ, can be a "faithful witness" of the Father ([Revelation 1:5](#); [3:14](#)). The development of character—the putting on of the "new man," the growing in holiness, the working out of our own salvation with fear and trembling—are all things that must take place as a result of a joint effort between God and the child of God.

The apostle Paul states the position of church leaders in [II Corinthians 1:24](#): "Not that we have dominion over your [faith](#), but are fellow workers for your [joy](#); for by faith you stand." Similarly, in [Ephesians 4:12-13](#), Paul states that the various types of servant leaders are given

for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Paul tells us that God has provided the ministry for our instruction and edification, and as such we are to respect them. But the responsibility falls on each one of us to make sure our relationship with God is spiritually sound and continually growing, for that is where our security lies.

- David C. Grabbe

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## From the Archives: Featured Sermon

### [Avoiding Superficiality](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

There are no hollow threats with God. Confusion, disorder and scattering (the current state of the greater church of God) are the automatic (God-engineered) results of sinning against His law. Under the current scattering, we must acquiesce to the responsibility that God has called us to, and not presumptuously attempt to do something we were not appointed to do. Success in spiritual things does not consist in growing large and powerful, but humbly living by faith, overcoming, being faithful, and yielding to God's shaping power, establishing a dynamic relationship with Him. Unity will

only occur when we are yielded to God's leadership. If we were scattered because of sin, we will be unified because of righteousness.

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## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[Guard the Truth!](#)**

by John W. Ritenbaugh

How does God define the church? What comprises it according to the Bible? The *ekklesia*, the Greek word translated "church" in the Bible, is not a humanly defined corporation, but the mystical body of Christ, having the Spirit of God. The true church of God is an invisible, spiritual organism, of those people that have and are led by the Spirit of God. And such a person will not turn away from the teaching delivered by the apostles.

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