

“I need a hug!” These were the words of my grandson when we arrived for a visit. There is nothing like a hug. No feeling is more secure than being embraced by a loved one. As we come to the end of our F.A.I.T.H. acrostic, this is the joyous conclusion of the matter.

The “H” stands for “**Held by God**” (Traditionally **Perseverance of Saints**). We are held by God securely for all eternity. People express the notion of being held by God in different ways:

- “Once saved, always saved”: We cannot lose our salvation.
- “Perseverance of the saints”: Saints are sinners saved by grace. We persevere through to the end, through to heaven.
- “The perseverance of God”: It is really God who perseveres, not us. God brings us through.
- “The preservation of the saints”: Again, the emphasis is on God’s action, not ours.
- “Eternal security”: Our destiny is certain.

What does understanding the doctrines of grace mean to me? It means I do not have to worry about losing my salvation. I am held by God.

Listen to the teaching of Scripture: “In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory” (Eph. 1:13-14, RSV).

We have an inheritance in heaven, but right now we have the guarantee that we will indeed receive it. That guarantee is the presence of the Holy Spirit within us. With that guarantee in hand (or should I say “in heart”!), we do not have to worry that we might lose heaven in the very end.

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pet. 1:3-5). We have an eternal inheritance, and God is guarding it for us.

In John’s gospel, the Jewish leaders gathered around Jesus and asked him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.” Jesus answered, “I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father’s name testify about me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one” (John 10:24-30).

A popular insurance advertisement claims, “You’re in good hands with Allstate.” The Bible tells us that we are in better hands with God. No one, not even Satan himself, can snatch us out of God’s hands.

In his letter to the Roman church, the apostle Paul explains that all people – both Jews and Gentiles – are sinners in need of salvation, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). He goes on to reveal that people are saved by grace in Jesus Christ – “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23) – and that the grateful response of those who are saved is a life of service. We come into that grace by God’s action, not our own: “those God foreknew he also predestined.... And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified” (Rom 8:29-30).

Then Paul raises the question of our eternal security: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:35-39).

What a fantastic statement! Nothing in all of heaven or earth can separate us from the love of God. Why? Because our salvation does not depend on us. It depends totally on God. Many Christians today do not experience the peace and joy that Jesus Christ brings because they are afraid that they can lose their salvation. They think that their salvation depends on their faith; they’re afraid that a lapse in their faith will cause them to fall out of God’s hand.

In contrast, the Bible teaches that our eternal security does not depend on our hanging on to God, but on God holding on to us. Picture a father and his son holding hands, walking along a treacherous path. If the child is holding onto his father’s hand and lets go, he can fall. If the father is holding securely onto the child’s hand, the child is safe. The comfort of Scripture is not that believers are hanging on to God, but that God is holding on to them. Salvation is completely God’s work. We can rest secure in God’s loving grip.