

ETERNAL SECURITY

I. Introduction

- A. Definition: When a person is truly born of God that person is forever a part of God's eternal family. He can never be lost again. It is sometimes popularly referred to as *Once saved always saved*.
- B. Basis for the teaching:
 - 1. The total inability of man to reconcile himself to God.
 - 2. Salvation from beginning *to the end* is the work of God's grace.
 - 3. Those who are saved from a state of depravity were chosen before the foundation of the world. Eph. 1:4.5.

II. The Objections to Eternal Security

- A. It will lead to license. Those who object to the teaching of eternal security believe if people know they can never lose their salvation they will sin with abandon.
- B. Those who do not believe in eternal security believe there is ample evidence from Scripture to support the fact that believers can lose their salvation.
- C. Those who do not believe in eternal security believe a person is saved by their own free choice and hence can lose their salvation by that same free choice.

III. Answers to the Objections

- A. A proper understanding of Grace never leads to license. It instead leads to Holy living. Our salvation is free to us but costly to God! The more we understand God's grace and what it cost Him the more we will hate sin. Paul addresses this issue in Romans 6:1ff: *What say we say then? Shall we go on sinning so that Grace may increase? By no means! If a person professes to be a Christian, yet is happy in his sin, something is wrong. Therefore if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!* IICor. 5:17. The bottom line is this: No one, saved or

unsaved, should feel secure in sin!

- B. There are indeed about 20 or so passages in the Bible that seem to teach that a person can lose their salvation. There are also many passages that clearly teach the security of the believer. Both cannot be true or we have a logical absurdity! One or the other must yield to the other in interpretation, or the Bible cannot be an authoritative book. It is our opinion that the verses which seem to teach that one can fall away, when interpreted in context, and in the light of the rest of Scripture, do not teach that salvation can be lost. Examples:

I Cor. 9:27. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

The context (vs. 23) of this passage is rewards not eternal salvation. Paul is concerned about becoming ineffective in the ministry.

II Tim. 2:18 ...who have wandered away from the truth.

Paul is talking here about Hymenaeus and Alexander, two who have defected from the faith, and who are leading others away. Here Paul seems to be saying clearly that they were never saved in the first place. Note his comment in verse 19: *...nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: 'The Lord knows those who are his,' and 'everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.'* There are many who profess who do not possess. See also II Peter 2:22 and I John 2:19 for similar passages.

Hebrews 6:4-6. It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

This is admittedly one of the most difficult passages in the Bible. One thing it says for certain: *if it is possible to lose one's salvation, it is not possible to again be saved.* Some light can be shed on this passage if we bear several things in mind:

1. This book was originally written to Jewish Christians just before the calamitous events of 70 A.D. when Titus destroyed the temple. The writer is warning his readers that the old covenant is finished. God is now going to fulfill the curses pronounced on the city by Jesus in Matt. 23.
 2. Fierce persecution of Christians was beginning, and many were tempted to go back to Judaism. The writer argues how foolish this would be since the old covenant will cease with the destruction of the temple. (Actually had already ceased with the rending of the veil in the temple at the time of Christ's death.)
 3. The writer admits that he is using an unusual form of argument. See vs. 9. He is using an *ad hominem* form of argument in which you assume your opponent's position and carry it to its logical conclusion. Paul may have had in mind the Judaizers who believed that salvation comes through Christ but one must adhere to the law for sanctification. Paul soundly condemns this heresy in Galatians. See Gal. 3:1ff.
- C. It seems preposterous that someone who truly experienced the grace of God would want to renounce their salvation! Opponents of Eternal security say it has to be possible or it violates man's free will. However, those who hold this view believe it cannot happen in heaven. Isn't this inconsistent? Do they lose their free will in heaven?

IV. Passages Teaching the Security of the Believer

- A. Phil. 1:6. *Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.*

What God begins He completes!

- B. I Peter 1:3-5. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

- C. Hebrews 10:14. *For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.*
- D. Jude 24. *To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy...*
- E. I John 1:9 *But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous one.*

Our security is based on the present work of Christ who intercedes for us. See also John 17 where Jesus prays for all future believers. Would God the Father not answer the prayer of His Son?

- F. See also these passages: John 1:12-13; 6:37ff; 10:27-29; Romans 8:1:31ff; Eph. 1:13,14; 4:30;

V. Problems with the position that salvation can be lost:

- A. What or how many sins can cause a believer to lose his salvation? Where do we draw the line? Remember Jesus taught that sin was not in the act but in the thought. If this be so, we would have all lost our salvation long ago shortly after we acquired it!
- B. They admit that salvation is of grace, but maintaining it becomes a matter of works. This is a system of salvation by faith plus works that Paul condemns in Gal. 3:1ff. If this is the case, the believer would have room to boast. Paul says no part of salvation is by works (Eph. 2:8,9). If we admit that human merit cannot save us how can we say that human merit can preserve us?

VI. Other considerations

- A. With a view to believers living today, when Christ died 2000 years ago, all our sins were paid for on the cross, even the sins I will commit tomorrow. When Christ died, all our sins were yet future. How then can commission of sin(s) cause us to lose our salvation?
- B. Consider the analogy of a father holding a child's hand as they walk together: In the opponents view, the safety of the child rests in the strength of the child's grip on the father's hand. If the child lets go he will perish. In the view of those who believe in eternal security, the child's safety rests

in the strength of the father's grip. If the child fails the father's grip holds firm.

VII. Questions

- A. Why do some people seem to be genuinely converted but then fall away and even deny the faith? We all know of examples. Jesus clearly taught in the parable of the sower (Matt 13) that not all converts are genuine. Note: Christians can and do deny the Lord. Peter is a prime example, but also note that he was restored. (See King David as another example.)
- B. What about Judas? He was a disciple and probably even led others to Christ. Jesus, however, stated that he was not one of his, but rather the *son of perdition*. Judas was a phoney and completely fooled the other disciples right up to the end. Never underestimate man's ability to deceive.
- C. Can a believer lose his assurance of salvation? Indeed. Job and David are two Old testament examples. Assurance of salvation is inward, in that the Holy Spirit bears witness (Rom. 8:16) with our spirit that we are truly saved, and outward, in that we see concrete evidence, visible fruit of our conversion. This appears to be the main message of the epistle of I John. See I John 1:5ff.