

Eternal Security

by Graham Jones - The Church at Gun Hill

The fact of eternal security, that it is impossible to lose one's salvation, is an important scriptural truth. Knowing the truth gives liberty, strengthens faith and creates assurance. Those who think it is possible to lose salvation are constantly beset by doubts and fears, wondering whether they are good enough, wondering whether the Lord is pleased with them and so on. They become victims of Satan's numerous accusing onslaughts.

Full Salvation

It is essential to realise that our salvation is not just a matter of having our past sins forgiven. According to those who teach against eternal security, it is possible for future sins to separate us from God's grace and thus for us to lose our salvation. This is not in accord with the Scripture of truth:

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ...Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans Chapter 8vv35-39.)

There is nothing in the future that is going to make you change your mind. Does sin in the life of the believer result in loss of salvation? No.

"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from ALL sin... these things I write unto you that you sin not. And if anyone sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous..." (1John 1v7 to 2v1).

Thus, on the basis of His own precious, shed blood, Jesus pleads our cause before the Father:

"Wherefore, He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." (Hebrews 7 v 25) A.V..

"Therefore He is able also to save to uttermost - completely, perfectly, finally and for all time and eternity - those who come to God through Him..." The amplified N.T.

"Consequently He is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through Him..."
RSV

"...for which reason also He is able to be saving completely and forever those who come to God through Him..." Expanded Translation - KS Wuest.

The Greek, **και σωζειν εις το παντελες δυναται ...** (Kai sôzein eis to panteles dunatai...) means, more literally, ***"and He is able to save to a full, complete end."***

It is because of His unchanging priesthood that He is able to do this and to keep us from falling (**Jude 24**).

However, salvation is not only a matter of pardon. It also involves regeneration. When we are saved, we indeed receive forgiveness for all our sins and are fully cleansed from sin, but God also does a work IN us. We are born again of His Spirit or, as Peter puts it:

"...being born again, NOT of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which lives and abides forever." (1Peter 1 v 23).

This seed remains in those who are born again (1 John 3 v 9).

Now, those who say that it is possible to lose one's salvation are denying this word of God. They are, in effect, saying that, either the incorruptible seed does not always remain in the born again believer, or that the remaining seed can become corrupt... Either way, this is contradicting Scripture. How can that which is born of God, with eternal life, become unborn or die? If it dies it was never eternal in the first place. What is eternal CANNOT die. That is what eternal means. Furthermore, the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. (Romans 11 v 29) In other words, God does not give salvation and eternal life and then take it back again.

A Work of God

Salvation is a work of God and what God does is forever:

"I know that, whatsoever God does, it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it." (Ecclesiastes 3 v 14).

This new birth is God's work and it is forever:

"Therefore if anyone be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold all things are become new. And all things are of God who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ..." (2 Cor.5 vv 17,18).

We who are saved, born again, are no longer our own; we are bought with a price (1 Cor. 6 v 20). What the Lord has bought, what the Lord possesses, He will never let go. So our faith is in the perfect work of God and NOT in what we can do.

"The Lord will perfect that which concerns me." (Psalm 138 v 8)

Our trust is in Him who said that we were secure in His hand:

"And I give unto them eternal life: and they shall NEVER perish, neither shall anyone pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all: and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." (John 10 vv 28,29).

That is pretty comprehensive and absolute. There is not even room for that feeble protest raised by some that the individual may remove himself from the Lord's hand. Utter nonsense. We are no longer our own; we are the Lord's possession and He will hold us securely in His hand. We shall never perish. Are you saved? Have you been born again of the Spirit? Then you can be confident of this very thing that, ***"He which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."*** (Philippians 1 v 6)

Not Works of Man

Ephesians 2 v 8 states quite plainly that we are saved by grace through faith, ***"...not of works, lest any man should boast, For we are His workmanship..."*** Yet this teaching, prevalent among so many well-meaning Christians, that one can lose one's salvation, has, in a subtle way, substituted works and human effort as the way of salvation. After this life, many would be able to glory in their own effort. This is contrary to the teaching of Scripture which shows that God saves us, God puts His desires in our heart and God keeps us by His mighty power.

Then, one must ask, what degree of sin makes one lose salvation, if that doctrine were true? Murder, adultery, stealing? These certainly may be evidences that someone has never been saved or known that new birth, for no murderer has eternal life dwelling in him. But if we offend in the smallest point, we offend in all (**James Chapter 2 v 10**). On that basis, if we are doing anything less than 100% of the perfect will of God, we are living in disobedience. The whole idea is untenable in the light of Scripture which shows that it is God who justifies the ungodly, it is Jesus, our Great High Priest, who ever intercedes for us on account of our failures and shortcomings, but we are kept by the power of God. Some make the accusation that the doctrine of eternal security gives Christians a licence to sin, because their salvation is guaranteed. Paul faced a similar allegation when he proclaimed the grace of God. Those accusers do not seem to have understood the nature of the new birth.

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. (definitely not) How shall we that are DEAD to sin live any longer therein?" (Romans 6 vv 1,2)

John explains:

"Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin; for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin because he is born of God." (1 John 3 v 9).

The new creation that we are in Christ Jesus, born of God, born of incorruptible seed, is incapable of sin... the scriptures declare it; it is written. Yes, we may certainly experience trouble with the flesh, but we are instructed to reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin; the old man was crucified with Him that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. **Rom 6 vv 6-13**. We thus encounter three enemies, the flesh, the world and the devil, but we have the victory. We have been saved from the penalty of sin, delivered from the power of sin (**Rom 6 v 14**) and one day we shall be taken from the presence of sin. Within is the new, Divine nature.

Salvation is secure; sin is not condoned. In **1 Cor. 5**, a believer in the assembly was living in gross sin. The sin was not to be condoned:

"In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together and my spirit, with the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." (1 Cor 5 vv 4,5).

Paul showed in **1 Cor 3 v 15**, that some Christians would suffer loss but nonetheless be saved, yet so as by fire. No, our salvation is secure:

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord and he delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand." (Psalm 37 vv 23,24).

The backslidden Christian is most miserable while he or she remains in that state (just like the man in Corinth), because they are living contrary to the desires of the new nature.

Blessed Assurance

There can be no assurance for those who oppose the doctrine of eternal security. One can never be certain that one will eventually be saved with a home in heaven or whether one might lose it all and go to hell. Their notion is that if you keep on believing to the end, then you will be saved. Now **Acts 16 v 31** has an imperative, an instruction, in the present tense, which, in Greek, usually carries a continuous sense. Therefore it can be translated ***"Be believing (continually) and you will be saved."*** But the context shows the enjoyment of a present salvation on the part of the Philippian jailer. The command has to be in the present tense but to force into that a condition that a person has to believe and then maintain himself in that belief to gain salvation is to depart from sound principles of translation and interpretation. The alternative Aorist tense would mean believe, at one point only in time - and you will be saved. That

would be nonsense. The present tense conveys the correct idea, that the person who comes to belief in Jesus Christ, will continue to believe, but will know salvation from the initial moment of belief and forever. No other tense could have been used. Thus one call upon the name of the Lord is sufficient for salvation and a lifetime of believing. (**Romans 10 v 13**) Paul declared, **"...the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God..."** - not my faith, not me struggling to believe, but the faith of the Son of God. (**Galatians 2 v 20**).

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may know that you have eternal life..." (1 John 5 v 13).

If you have eternal life now, you will have it in ten years time, in twenty years time and when you depart this life. If you lose it, it was not eternal life. It is a contradiction in terms for everlasting life to come to an end.

**Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine;
Oh, what a foretaste of glory Divine.
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.**

Nothing can alter that, praise God!

"And we know that ALL things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son... Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8 vv 28 – 31).

Scriptures that Seem to Contradict

This is where we need rightly to divide the word of truth. Not all scripture applies to the Church.

Hebrews 6 vv 4 – 6

These verses must be understood in the light of the whole epistle. Paul (and I do believe that Paul was the inspired author of Hebrews) was writing to Jewish people, some of whom were saved, but many were in the process of turning to Jesus as their true Messiah and Saviour. Some, however, who may have been having second thoughts, were drawing back to Judaism and not entering fully in. Here were professed believers who fell short of faith in Christ after advancing to the very threshold of salvation, even 'going along with' the Holy Spirit in His work of enlightenment and conviction. It is not said that they had faith. This supposed person is like the spies at Kadesh-barnea (**Deut 1 vv 19-26**) who saw the land and had the very fruit of it in their hands and yet turned back. (C.I. Scofield Bible - footnote)

God's Holy Spirit will not always strive with man. If after such revelation, such enlightenment, such conviction, such sure knowledge, people still reject the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Saviour, then if they shall fall away it is impossible to renew them to repentance. (If one interprets this scripture as an example of a believer falling away, then there is no hope for those that backslide, probably no hope for anyone.)

"But beloved, we are persuaded better things of you and things that accompany salvation..." (Hebrews 6 v 9).

Hebrews 10 v 26

Again, this must be understood in the same light or else there is no hope for anyone:

"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins but a certain fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation..."

If those Jews who have seen that Jesus is the Messiah, the fulfilment and completion of all that God had spoken to His people in the past, if they refuse to come to Him, reject Him, sinning wilfully, then they have only hell to look forward to. But if they hold fast the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end (or to completion), then they will be made partakers of Christ; they will be reconciled to God; saved. (**Heb. 3 v 14**) The rest of chapter 10 can be understood in this way. Verse 32 recalls their initial illumination, their realisation of the truth, verse 33 the conflict as they began to turn from dead Judaism and move towards Christ; verses 35 to 37 contain the exhortation of the apostle to go on to embrace Christ fully, to yield all to Him and receive His salvation. Go on unto perfection or completeness (**Heb 6 v 1**). Verse 38 warns of the danger of drawing back and not going on to full faith - chapter 12 v 25 has a similar warning. Therefore, it has nothing to do with losing salvation but everything to do with falling short of it.

Verse 39 is the key as far as true believers are concerned. They have and will keep their salvation:

"But WE (We who are saved as opposed to YOU who are moving in the direction of the Lord) are not of them who draw back to perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

2 Peter and Jude

Peter also warns Jewish believers and potential Jewish believers (for his epistles are to the dispersion, Jews scattered from their homeland (In **1 Peter 1 v 1** the Greek word is **Διασπορα** (**Diaspora**), dispersion, but translated as 'scattered' in the AV) - to make their calling and election (as Jews) sure by believing upon Jesus Christ as Saviour and entering His kingdom... then they would never fall. (**2 Peter 1 vv 8-11**)

In **2 Peter** and **Jude**, there are warnings, with examples from the Old Testament, about the fate of apostates. What we must realise is that these apostates were never saved in the first place. Apostasy is not the saved falling away from salvation, but rather unbelievers rebelliously and deliberately 'standing apart from' salvation. This what the Greek word literally means.

In **2 Peter 2 vv 20,21**, these apostates seek to bring others into similar corruption. They have been brought to a place of escape from the corruption of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ but have stood apart from Him and become entangled in the pollutions of the world. The dog turns again to his own vomit, the sow that was washed to its wallowing in the mire. In other words, there was no real change, no new birth; the dog was still a dog; the sow still a sow.

"But if anyone be in Christ, he is a new creature...." 1 Corinthians 5 v 17.

In Jude, examples are brought from the Old Testament of those saved from Egypt whom the Lord destroyed, the angels which kept not their first estate and Sodom and Gomorrah. But these are not examples of believers losing salvation. These are examples of 'filthy dreamers' (v8),

"these be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit" (v19).

"And if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." (Romans 8 v 9)

By contrast, the saints in Jude are

"sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ and called...." - verse 1.

Further, verse 24 reminds us that He is able to keep us from falling and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

Matthew 10 v 22; 24 v 13

He that endures to the end shall be saved. The context of this is not the gospel of salvation by faith. For the believer in this time of God's grace, it is **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved."**justification by faith.

During the Great Tribulation, after the Church has been raptured, then it will be a case of enduring to the end. The allusion in these Scriptures is to those troublous and terrible times and has particular reference to the people of Israel.

The backslidden Christian cannot lose his salvation but his life will be most miserable, as restored backsliders will confirm. One thus hopes and prays for their restoration. Of course, people will always be able to remember someone they knew who seemed to be a Christian, was perhaps baptised in water, even, seemingly, filled with the Holy Spirit, but who went away from the Lord, rejecting and renouncing everything and now appears utterly lost. Such were never saved:

"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they no doubt would have continued with us but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." (1 John 2 v 19)

Doubtless, there are many more scriptural references, types and pictures we could study, but the above is sufficient to show the scriptural basis of the doctrine of eternal security. Now, you who are saved...

".....in everything you are enriched by Him, in all utterance and all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you; So that you come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall also confirm you unto the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful...." (1 Corinthians 1 vv 7-9)

You too can rejoice and say with Paul,

"For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

"And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom:"
2 Timothy 1 v 12 and 4 v 18