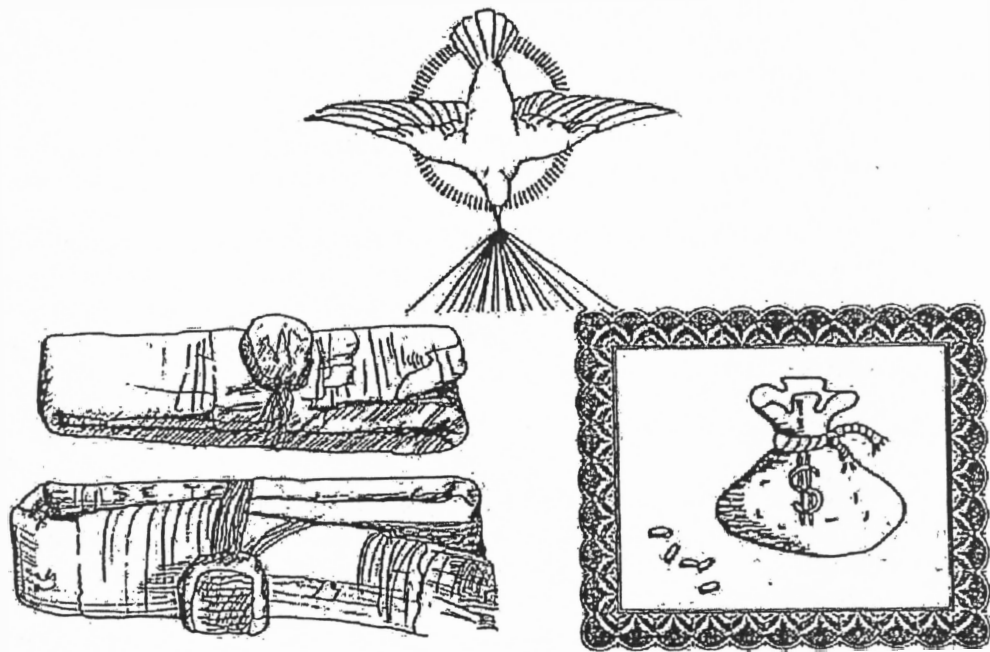


IS THE BELIEVER SAVED FOREVER?

The Case for Eternal Security



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ETERNAL SECURITY: *A Definite Doctrine or a Dreadful Delusion?*



1A. THE CENTRAL QUESTION:

Can a true believer ever lose his salvation by either sinning or ceasing to believe or in any other way?

2A. THE HISTORICAL PROBLEM:

1b. The teachings of Calvin:

John Calvin (1509-1564), the Swiss Reformer, emphasized in his teachings the sovereignty of God. His followers set up the so-called 5 points of Calvinism or T-U-L-I-P:

1. Total Depravity
2. Unconditional Election
3. Limited Atonement
4. Irresistible Grace
5. Perseverance of the Saints



In his famous *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536) he systematized biblical truth and taught forcefully the perseverance of the saints.

The Westminster Confession of Faith expresses clearly the Calvinistic viewpoint: "They whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end and be eternally saved" (Chapter XVII, Section 1).

2b. The teachings of Arminius:

James Arminius (1560-1609) was trained in strict Reformed theology, but he weakened in his position while a professor at the University of Leiden in Holland. His system, known as Arminianism, taught that man is not totally depraved, that he cooperates with God in salvation and that a believer may lose his salvation. Arminius admitted: "I never taught that a true believer can either totally or finally fall away from the faith and perish; yet I will not conceal that there are passages of Scripture which seem to me to wear this aspect" (*Works*, I :254).



3A. THE CONTEMPORARY DENIALS:

1b. The Roman Catholic position:

Mortal sin removes man from grace. Salvation depends on continued obedience.

2b. The Lutheran position:

Salvation is contingent upon man's continued activity of faith.

3b. The Arminian position:

Salvation depends on man's will to believe and his good works.

4A. THE CRUCIAL DISTINCTION:

1b. Assurance:

Assurance is what man knows.

Every believer is saved, but not everyone is sure.

2b. Security:

Security is based upon what God does.

To put it differently:

- Security is based on the work of God: the blood of Christ.
- Assurance is based on the word of God: belief in Christ.

The Council of Trent (1546) declared that "The believer's assurance of pardon for his sins is a vain and ungodly confidence."

Cardinal Bellamy called assurance "a prime error of the heretics."

3b. Scriptures:

1c. Job knew he was saved:

"For I know *that* my redeemer liveth, and *that* he shall stand at the latter *day* upon the earth: And *though* after my skin *worms* destroy this *body*, yet in my flesh shall I see God:" (Job 19:25-26)

2c. John said we could be sure of our salvation:

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

5A. THE BIBLICAL PROOF:

Abundant proof may be adduced from the Scriptures for eternal security. We will be selective for the sake of time and space. We will highlight two works by each member of the Trinity which guarantee our salvation.

1b. The work of God the Father:

1c. The purpose of the Father:

It is God's purpose to glorify those whom he has made the special objects of His favor.

1d. The span of salvation:

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to *his* purpose. ²⁹ For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ 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. (Rom. 8:28-30)

God has foreknown, predestinated, called, justified and glorified every believer. If one of those is true of the believer, all are true in this unbreakable chain. The words are in the past tense, guaranteeing that these works are as good as accomplished.

2d. The strength of security:

³¹ What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us? ³² 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? ³³ Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth. ³⁴ Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. ³⁷ Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. ³⁸ For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, ³⁹ 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. (Rom. 8:31-39)

1e. There is no chance that God is against us: v. 31.

2e. There is no charge because God is the justifier: vs.33-34.

3e. There is no change in God's love: vs. 35-39.

2c. The power of the Father:
While “the perseverance of the saints” emphasizes man's part, it is actually God who perseveres. His infinite power keeps the believers secure.

1d. The power:

“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1 Peter 1:5)

2d. The promise:

Even if the time should come in a Christian's life that he can no longer believe, God's promise is clear,

“If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.” (2 Tim. 2:13)

Other passages speak equally forcefully about God's keeping power. Jude says that “he is able to keep you from falling.” (v. 24) and Matthew 18:14 teaches that God is not willing that even one should perish. The syllogism would be thus:

God is able to keep us (.Jude 24).

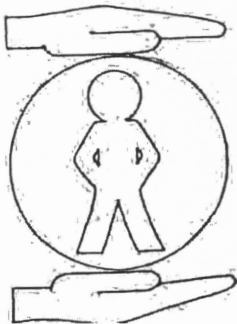
God wants to keep us (Matt. 18:14).

Therefore God *will* keep us (Perry Lassiter, ***Once Saved, Always Saved***, p. 34)

2b. The work of Christ the Son:

1c. The promise of the Son:

Perhaps the strongest prooftext for eternal security is John 10:28-29:



“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.”

Our Lord said that we are secure in His hand as well as in the Father's hand and that no one can remove the believer from the safe position. The “no one” would apply to the individual himself. An old, sweet Christian saint was asked whether she was not afraid that she might some day slip out of the Father's hand. “No,” she replied, “because I am part of His hand.”

2c. The prayer of the Son:

A two-fold aspect of Christ's prayer assures us of our salvation. Christ in his intercession prays in a preventive ministry (John 17) and in his advocacy prays in a curative ministry (1 John 2:1). Dr. Ryrie has well stated the case for the intercession of the Son:

“His prayer in chapter 17 illustrates the preventive aspect. There He prayed that we might be kept from the evil one (v. 15), that we would be sanctified (v. 17), that we would be united (v. 21), that we would be in heaven with Him (v. 24) and that we might behold His glory (v. 24). Because of His unceasing intercession for us He is able to save us completely and eternally (Heb. 7:25).” (*Basic Theology*, p. 331).

In verse 24, Christ prays that we would be with Him in heaven. In John 11:42 Christ assures us that his prayers are always heard by the Father. All prayer prayed in the will of God will be answered by the Father. The Son always prayed in the will of God, therefore, this prayer, that we will be with him forever in glory will surely be answered.

Christ secured our salvation by His provision on the cross. When He cried, “It is finished” (John 19:30) He meant His death paid for sin in full. All we can do is accept His salvation, but we cannot add to His salvation. But Christ also secured our salvation, as we have seen by His prayers. Hebrews 7:24-25 says:

“But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

As the unchanging and unchangeable Priest, Christ is praying for us. Therefore, He can save us to the uttermost—that is completely, totally, eternally!

3b. The work of the Holy Spirit:

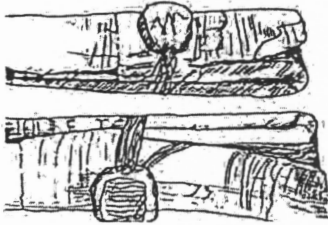
Every believer has residing in him the Holy Spirit. Christ promised that He would abide with us forever (John 14:16). Two ministries of the Spirit especially relate to our eternal security: the earnest and the sealing of the Spirit.

1c. The sealing of the Spirit:

“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise. Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” (Eph. 1:13-14)

“Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God: Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” (2 Cor. 1:21-22)

Lewis Sperry Chafer, commenting on these two passages, observes:



“Nothing could be more final than this. The Spirit Himself is the seal. His blessed presence in every true child of God is the divine mark of ownership, purpose and destiny. The Spirit Who was sent to abide in us will not withdraw. He may be grieved, or quenched (resisted), but He abides. This He does as the divine guaranty that there shall be no failure in any purpose of God and the sealed one will reach his eternal glory and the eternal blessedness of 'the day of redemption.’”
(*Salvation*, p. 125)

2c. The earnest (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14)

Well stresses Charles Ryrie the significance of the earnest in relation to the believer's security:



“The principal idea in the earnest is pledge. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer's heart is the pledged guarantee on the part of God that he will receive all the promised future blessings of his salvation. The fact that God gives the earnest of the Spirit binds Him to complete fully the salvation which He has begun in the heart. Even in human affairs, once earnest money has been given, the purchaser is pledged to go through with a transaction. What a sure guarantee is the presence of the Spirit, God's earnest, that He will never fail any of His promises connected with our salvation!” (*The Holy Spirit*, p. 26)

6A. THE SINNING BELIEVER:

The Bible teaches eternal security, but sometimes a problem arises with this teaching. Some individuals get the impression that they can sin with impunity and immunity. The Word of God is clear that a believer will never lose his salvation, but if he persists in sinning he will lose much nonetheless:

- 1b. He can lose fellowship (1 John 1).
- 2b. He can lose joy (Ps. 51:12).
- 3b. He can lose rewards (1 Cor. 3:11-12).
- 4b. He can lose his health (1 Cor. 11:30).
- 5b. He can lose his life (1 Cor. 11: 30).

(G. Michael Cocoris, "The Doctrine of Eternal Security," *Biblical Research Monthly*, April/May 1982, p. 10).

A believer cannot lose his salvation but that is not an endorsement or an encouragement to sin. Sin will lose fellowship but not relationship, rewards but not redemption.

SALVATION

*From Eternity Past
To Eternity Future*

Ephesians 2:7

GLORIFICATION

JUSTIFICATION

CALLING

PREDESTINATION

FOREKNOWLEDGE

Ephesians 3:11

Romans 8:28-30

²⁸ 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.

²⁹ For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

³⁰ 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.

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