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Chapter 32 – Security Of Salvation

Can a person who has once been saved lose that salvation? The question is practical because if one has the fear of losing salvation then it can seriously affect his peace of mind and personal development.

There have been two basic answers to this question; that of eternal security and that of conditional security. Sometimes these are called “once saved always saved” and “loss of salvation”. Both views emerged out of the Reformation and became known as Calvinism and Arminianism even though both of these men were already dead.ⁱ Interestingly, Arminius never denied eternal security. Yet his Remonstrant followers did deny eternal security holding to conditional security.

I. **ETERNAL SECURITY VS PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS**

It should be noted that “eternal security” is not identical to “perseverance of the saints” (the fifth point in TULIP). A great many authors are confused on this point. “Eternal security” means that God preserves the salvation of the saved and can validly be called the “preservation of the saints”. The phrase “perseverance of the saints” means that the saved will persevere in the faith.ⁱⁱ Clearly the emphasis of eternal security is on a work of God while the apparent emphasis of the phrase “perseverance of the saints” is on man. But really there are two different things in mind here. Traditional Calvinists say that “perseverance of the saints” means the “perseverance of God in His saints”. They are not trying to emphasize the saint but God’s necessary work in a genuine saint. So, their emphasis is on the good works that they claim necessarily result from God’s persevering in the saint. If the so-called saint does not persevere in good works then the Calvinist says he was never a saint at all but a mere professing saint. So, eternal security and “perseverance of the saints” are really two different concepts. Fact is, many Calvinistic writers recognize this difference and reject “eternal security”. Thus, the real issue involved in eternal security has

nothing to do with whether a genuine saint will produce good works or not but whether God preserves the salvation of all who are genuinely saved.

II. ARMINIAN SECURITY

Present day Arminian's say that God does not preserve the salvation of all who are genuinely saved. Instead, they claim the Bible teaches "conditional security". By this they mean that "the believer is secure as long as he meets all the conditions mentioned in the Bible." Some 85 passages are listed as placing conditions on the believer to maintain salvation. If he fails to meet these conditions then he loses his salvation. There is no way we can evaluate each of these passages individually though they are listed on p 221 of *Major Bible Themes* (Chafer and Walvoord). Therefore, we will have to categorize these passages as to their contexts.

A. Passages in the Context of Rewards (John 15:1-6; 1 Cor 3:15)

1 Corinthians 3:15 If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

This passage is written to believers and demonstrates that a genuine believer's work may be burned up and this will be a loss, but it is not the loss of salvation for "he himself will be saved". Thus, a genuine believer can lose rewards but he cannot lose salvation.

B. Passages in the Context of Loss of Fellowship (1 John 1:6)

1 John 1:6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and *yet* walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;

Fellowship presupposes family relationship. One is admitted into the family of God by faith alone in Christ alone. Once in the family of God He deals with us in familial terms. The word "fellowship" is the familial term *koinonia* and means "sharing or participating". John's point here is that a genuine believer may "say" that he is participating with God, that is, going along with God's will "and yet walk in the darkness". If such is the case then the believer is lying and not practicing the truth. This and other similar passages have no bearing on eternal security. Rather, they deprive us of the joy of having the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23). Arminian's take 1 John 1:9 as a salvation verse rather than a fellowship verse.

C. Passages in the Context of Discipline

Hebrews 12:7-8 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline? ⁸ But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

This and other discipline passages show that when God disciplines it is an evidence that he is a child of God, not that he lacks salvation. As with fellowship, discipline is a family issue and only those in the family of God undergo God's discipline. Just like an earthly father's discipline grows out of his love so our Heavenly Father's discipline grows out of His love.

D. Passages that Exhort Believers to Produce Evidence of Salvation

In some passages genuine believers are exhorted to produce fruit in harmony with their salvation. That is, our lifestyle is to be consistent with our profession. These passages warn against antinomianism, living as if there are no laws for the Christian to follow.

However, because of fluctuating lifestyles it is dangerous to judge whether a person is saved or not on the basis of their works. On one hand, those who are not Christians can live moral lives. For example, Jesus warned of false prophets who appeared like sheep but inwardly were ravenous wolves (Matt 7:15; also cf Rom 2:3ff). On the other hand, genuine Christians can fall into sin and live lives that are indistinguishable from the world (1 Cor 3:1-3). Appearances can be deceiving and we must never quickly judge one on the basis of our limited observation of their lives.

1. The person could be a genuine Christian who has fallen into sin
2. The person could be a professing Christian who never was saved
3. We could judge wrongly because we were deceived or

So, believers are exhorted to should produce fruit consistent with their salvation but this does not have any bearing on whether God preserves those who are genuinely saved.

E. Passages in the Context of a Walk Inconsistent With Grace

Galatians 5:4 You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

This passage uses particularly strong language. To understand it you have to understand the basic flow of Galatians. The Judaizers in Galatia were placing an additional condition beyond faith in Christ in order to be accepted by God; circumcision. Paul argues that we are accepted by God through faith alone. Thus, when we reach this part of the dialogue Paul argues that if they are fooled by the Judaizers then they “have been severed from Christ”. That is, if the Galatians are circumcised then they are nullifying grace by believing they can earn salvation by law-keeping. Christ would be of no effect to them because they would be returning to the worthless elemental things of this world. Acceptance before God is based on grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and to be circumcised would obligate the person to keep the whole law, which is impossible. Additionally, Paul says “you have fallen from grace”. Notice, it does not say you have fallen from salvation. Paul’s point is that if they submitted to circumcision by the Judaizers then they would fall away from the grace method of salvation in favor of a law method. Legalism never saves or sanctifies. This has nothing to do with them losing salvation.

F. Passages in the Context of False Teachers of False Professors

Jude 1:17-19 But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁸ that they were saying to you, "In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts." ¹⁹ These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit.

These false teachers are clearly “devoid of the Spirit”. They did not lose the Spirit they are simply devoid of the Spirit in the sense that He was never there to begin with. It is simply wrong to read into this and other similar passages that they lost their salvation.

G. Passages that Misread the Word Salvation

The semantic range of the words “saved” and “salvation” are amazing. The words basically mean “deliverance”. That “deliverance” can be physical deliverance from enemies, spiritual deliverance from the penalty of sin, spiritual deliverance from the power of sin, or spiritual deliverance from the presence of sin. Every context must be individually evaluated. To my astonishment many passages which speak of physical deliverance are confused with spiritual deliverance.

Matthew 24:11-13 "Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. ¹² "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. ¹³ "But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

This is in a Tribulation context. That many true believers will be martyred during the Tribulation and will go to heaven is clear from Rev 7:14. Thus, those who endure to the end, and will be saved cannot refer to spiritual deliverance but rather to the physical deliverance by Jesus Christ at His second coming.

James 5:19-20 My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, ²⁰ let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

Believers can stray from or drift away from the truth. Otherwise why would we be warned not to be taken captive through philosophy and empty deception (Col 2:8)? But drifting away from the truth does not result in loss of salvation. However, when we stray from the truth there are moral implications in our lives. Thus, James says, “let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins”. Throughout James the word “save” refers to physical deliverance and the word “death” refers to physical death (cf 1:15). Thus, James is warning against the “sin unto death” just as Paul did in 1 Cor 11:30 and John in 1 John 5:16-17. This has nothing to do with losing one’s spiritual salvation but with losing their physical life!

H. Who Does the Work of Salvation?

The ultimate issue in determining the question of the security of salvation rests on whether salvation is a work of God, a work of man, or a work of both. If God does the work of salvation then it is secure. If man or a combination of God and man do the work of salvation then it is insecure.

III. THE FATHER’S WORK IN SALVATION

A. His Promise

John 5:24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

God’s promise throughout Scripture is that if we believe in Christ we have eternal life. He is faithful even if we are unfaithful.

B. His Power

John 10:29 "My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father's hand.

The infinite power of God holds us firmly in His grip. No one, including our own selves, are able to snatch anything out of His hand.

C. His Righteousness

1 John 2:2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.

If Christ is the satisfaction for believers sins and also for the sins of the whole world then God is completely satisfied with Christ. Thus, God remains righteous in justifying men through faith alone. God is not forgiving sin arbitrarily but on the objective basis of Christ's death on the cross. If one doubts eternal security then he casts doubt on whether Christ's sacrifice was sufficient and therefore whether God is really righteous.

IV. THE SON'S WORK IN SALVATION

A. His Substitutionary Sacrifice is Sufficient

1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the* just for *the* unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

When someone says you can lose your salvation it is usually because we still sin. This assumes that Christ's substitutionary sacrifice on the cross was not sufficient to take away all the sin of the world. On the contrary, "Christ died for sins once for all". There is no longer any need for sacrifice. Every sin committed past, present and future was nailed on the cross. No matter how terrible the thought or deed no sin was not bore in Christ's body on the cross. Additionally, if His death was a substitutionary one and we can lose our salvation then His death was not truly substitutionary.

B. His Resurrection Secures Believer's Resurrection

Romans 4:25 *He* who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.

Christ's resurrection demonstrated that God was completely satisfied and that justification had been provided on the human condition of faith alone. If Christ is raised and we have trusted in Christ then we too will be resurrected.

John 11:25-26 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Christ's resurrection guarantees the resurrection of all who believe in Him.

C. He Is Our Advocate

1 John 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;

While sin is never condoned if we do sin we have an Advocate with the Father. The word Advocate means "an unpaid lawyer". One who graciously takes up your case and represents you in the court of heaven. From here, Christ, who is righteous, pleads your case everytime you sin in the court of heaven. When Satan tries to bring a charge against you Christ says "I paid for that!" His payment was sufficient for all sin and His advocacy in heaven assures our eternal security.

D. He Is Our Intercessor

As our advocate Christ interceded for us on earth before His ascension.

John 17:20 "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;

John 17:24 "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

If Christ prayed He always prayed in the will of God and since in the will of God His prayer must be answered. Thus, for all who have genuinely believed in Christ here is a guarantee that we will be with Him where He is.

As our advocate Christ also intercedes for us in the heavenly throne room of God.

Romans 8:33-39 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; ³⁴ who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." ³⁷ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

If this isn't eternal security I don't know what is.

V. THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN SALVATION

A. His Regeneration

Titus 3:4-6 But when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared, ⁵ He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

The Greek word for regeneration is *paligennesis* and literally means "born again". Just as you cannot reverse your physical birth into the world you cannot reverse your spiritual birth. They are both irreversible events. Since it is irreversible there is no reason why it should not continue forever and secure our salvation (also cf John 3:1-15).

B. His Indwelling

During the Church age beginning on Pentecost (Acts 2) the Spirit has permanently indwelt all believers. Jesus promised,

John 14:17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

The Spirit, also known as “the anointing” which believers receive is permanent.

1 John 2:27 As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

The word “abides” (*meno*) means “to remain, to stay”. This affirms that the Holy Spirit, who is the anointing remains or stays permanently “in” believers. He does not depart when we commit sin but it does “grieve” Him (Eph 4:30). And when we do not allow Him to work in our lives we “quench” Him (1 Thess 5:19). But we never do anything that makes Him leave us. As individuals we are temples of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

His permanent indwelling in our bodies is another solid evidence for eternal security.

C. His Baptism

Galatians 3:27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Those who believe in Christ are baptized by the Spirit into Christ Himself as well as into the body of Christ, the church. This ministry is unique to the church age. To be taken out of the body of Christ would destroy Paul’s teaching that every part is necessary (Eph 4:16).

D. His Sealing

Ephesians 4:30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Ephesians 1:13-14 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory.

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, ²² who also sealed us and gave *us* the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.

The Spirit Himself is the seal and the word “seal” (*sphragis*) means “protection”. Thus, those who have believed the gospel are protected by the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption which is when we receive our resurrection bodies. If we are sealed until that day then we cannot lose our salvation. For to be devoid of the Spirit is to rest in spiritual death (Jude 19).

The Father’s promise, the Father’s power, the Father’s righteousness, the Son’s substitutionary sacrifice was sufficient, the Son’s resurrection secures the believer’s resurrection, the Son’s advocacy, the Son’s intercession, the Spirit’s regeneration, the Spirit’s indwelling, the Spirit’s baptism, and the Spirit’s sealing all assure our eternal security. These many proofs are impossible to controvert by a few passages taken out of their context and misinterpreted. But such appeals to the natural desire of men to have a part in their salvation. Yet the word of God will not permit it. Salvation is a work of God and because of this it is a perfect work that abides forever. None can be lost who are genuinely saved.

ⁱ Later other strains emerged such as Amyraldianism, Salmurianism, Lutheranism, and Wesleyanism

ⁱⁱ Arthur Pink writes, “Those who persevere not in faith and holiness, love and obedience, will assuredly perish.”

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