

## ETERNAL SECURITY (52)

Arminians tend to pull a few verses out of the Bible without attempting to harmonize those same verses with their immediate context or the rest of the Bible with its doctrines and theology. To sum up the main point, generally speaking, **the Arminian fails to study to rightly divide the Word of Truth.**

It will be immediately admitted that there are a couple of very difficult passages that upon surface reading have presented some difficulty to Bible interpreters. However, it must also be admitted that whenever one does come across one of these rare passage, one must always attempt to interpret it in light of many clear teachings and plain passages which deal with the theme in question. It is **never** right to interpret clear and plain passages in light of one or two obscure passages. It is **always** right to interpret obscure passages by several clear and plain passages.

Direct, clear revelation is always the basis of interpretation for seemingly difficult passages. In any form of study, one always moves from the simple to the complex, not the reverse.

In most instances, the context will clear up the supposed problem. But in situations where there appears to still be some difficulty, one must always begin with the plain teachings of other passages and the majority of teachings of key doctrines to help determine true meaning.

There are some major interpretive errors that Arminians, as we shall show, tend to make in their handling of the Word of God. For example, Arminians tend to totally overlook the dispensational setting of a passage. They also tend to fail to distinguish between passages that are dealing with false teachers. They fail to draw a distinction between the profession of salvation and the possession of salvation. They fail to distinguish between passages that pertain to fellowship as opposed to salvation. They also fail to distinguish between passages that refer to a believer's rewards rather than to his salvation. As Chafer says, "Failure to rightly divide the Word of Truth is the root of doctrinal evil" (Vol. 3, p. 292).

In order to systematize this section, we will examine the Arminian passages under two key interpretive headings:

- 1) Passages which are misinterpreted dispensationally.
- 2) Passages which are misinterpreted contextually.

**Interpretive Heading #1** - Passages of Scripture which are misinterpreted dispensationally.

There are certain passages that an Arminian claims will substantiate his belief that one can lose his salvation, which **do not even remotely refer to New Testament, Grace Age salvation, but refer to a completely different dispensation.** These passages are often thrown out as those that prove you may lose your salvation, which actually have nothing to do with N.T. salvation.

## ETERNAL SECURITY (53)

### (Passage #1) - Matthew 24:13

This verse is often cited as a proof that the condition for salvation is enduring to the end. The reasoning goes something like this - if one does not endure to the end, one forfeits his salvation. However, upon a close examination of the **context** we quickly discover that the passage is not dealing with the salvation of a soul in the Church Age, but the survival of an Israelite in the Tribulation. The primary thrust of this text is aimed at Israel .

The prophet Jeremiah predicted an unprecedented time of trouble and distress for the nation Israel. He also predicted that many of the nation Israel would be saved and delivered from this terrible time of Jacob's trouble (**Jeremiah 30:7**). The Apostle Paul would later reveal that this event would occur after the Church Age of the Gentile Age was completed (**Romans 11:25-26**).

The context of **Matthew 24** is that the disciples were interested in knowing when Christ would return to deliver Israel to her Kingdom in view of the fact that He had just told Israel that the program of God was leaving her for awhile (**Matthew 23:37-39 / 24:3**). These Jewish disciples wanted to know what signs would precede Christ's Second Coming in which He would deliver Israel to her Kingdom. We must realize that the book of Matthew is designed to present Jesus Christ as King of the Jews who came to Israel to offer Israel her promised Kingdom.

Christ, in answering the question, gives a series of things that will happen to Israel just prior to His return to establish His Kingdom (**i.e. Matthew 25:34**). One of the things He specifically points out is that **ALL** nations will turn against Israel (**Matthew 24:9**). The Psalmist describes the same event (**Psalms 79**). There will be a major, worldwide outbreak of anti-Semitism prior to Christ's return and many Jewish people will be killed. For the Jew living during this time, known as "Jacob's Distress or Trouble," it will appear that the entire race is about to be extinguished, which in fact it would be except for the sovereign intervention of God (**Matthew 24:22**). Christ promises that the Jews will not be totally extinguished and says that whoever endures to the end will be saved (**Matthew 24:13, 29-31**). The word "endure" is a Greek word that means to patiently wait. Jesus Christ is challenging Israel, the nation who will be His primary emphasis during the Tribulation (**i.e. Revelation 7**), not to give up hope during the Tribulation but to patiently wait for His return. He wants His disciples to realize that even though it may appear that the nation is going to be utterly destroyed, it will not be. Christ will return and will deliver many Jews who endure the seven year Tribulation to the Kingdom. At this point in history, every Jew will say - "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord" (**Matthew 23:39**).

This passage, this context, this verse has nothing to do with N.T. salvation or Christianity. This passage, this context, this verse has nothing to do with the doctrine of eternal security. In fact, for Israel this text proves just the opposite - God will always preserve His nation Israel. A proper application of this text is not using this verse to promote the idea that one may lose his salvation, but to use the verse to encourage the believer that if we patiently wait on God and endure troubles and distresses, God will deliver us from the troubles and distresses.

## ETERNAL SECURITY (54)

The proper dispensational application is to patiently endure hardships and wait upon the delivering power of God even though it may appear as though we will lose and be destroyed. This is the “rightly divided” interpretation of the text and application for our lives. Those who use this verse to claim one may lose salvation are not studying the Word to be approved by God (**II Timothy 2:15**).

### (Passage #2) - Ezekiel 18:20-26

This is a very popular text used by the Arminian in the attempt to prove one may lose salvation. Before we examine the true interpretation of the passage, what immediately should be observed is that this is an O.T. passage specifically aimed at Israel several hundred years before N.T. Christianity. We may automatically assume then that this has nothing to do with N.T. Grace Age salvation or Eternal Security. It is not possible for a passage sitting in the O.T. to be revealing information about the N.T. Gospel, which to this point had not even been revealed.

As always, the context becomes extremely important to determine the true and accurate interpretation of the text. The context of this passage clearly has to do with Israel and her land (**Ezekiel 18:2**). The text specifically is addressing the matter as to whom, from the nation Israel, will have the privilege of living in the Promised Land.

In order to understand this matter, we need to grasp something from the historical background. Charles Dyer, of Capital Bible Seminary, writes: “The book of Ezekiel was written during the time of Judah’s bondage to Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar’s rule” (*Bible Knowledge Commentary*, p. 1225).

Ezekiel had predicted that Jerusalem would be destroyed as a judgment of God (**Ezekiel 4:4**). God would allow the Babylonians to dominate the land and destroy the children of Israel because of her abominations (**Ezekiel 7:1-4**). By the time Ezekiel writes chapter 18, the terrible destruction is very near (i.e. **Ezekiel 12:17-20**). It is very clear that what is being predicted is a physical destruction of cities, land, and people. The obvious question of chapter 18 is the question of any Israelite surviving this terrible ordeal. Since Israel’s abominations were the cause of this physical destruction and since these abominations, which brought death and destruction to Israel, had been committed by the Israelite fathers, some were wondering whether or not their children would have to suffer the same judgments (**18:2**).

The LORD, through Ezekiel, makes it very clear that each person will be judged on the basis of his own life. If a child chooses to walk in the ways of the LORD, when the destruction comes, he will live and not be killed (**18:9, 14-17**). If a child chooses to walk in the wicked ways of his father, who committed abominations, he will not live and will be killed when the destruction comes (**18:10-13**). God wanted the children of Israel to know that each person was completely accountable for his own relationship with the LORD. If a person chooses the way of righteousness, God would see to it that he would physically live. If a person does not choose the ways of righteousness, God would see to it that he would physically die. In **verse 21**, God even extends His offer to any wicked Israelite or Gentile who would turn from his wicked ways to the LORD. Those who turn to God would not be physically executed as a punishment for their

## ETERNAL SECURITY (55)

abominations. Living and dying, in this O.T. dispensation, were just that - living and dying. For Israel, the concept of life meant being allowed to live in the Promised Land and the concept of death meant physically dying before one had the opportunity to inherit and live in the Promised Land. **Israel would never consider herself not to be the nation or people of God, for God time and time again reaffirmed to Israel that she was His nation.** To use this text as a proof text for saying that a N.T. believer may lose his N.T. salvation is a terrible misinterpretation and misapplication of the Word of God.

The best N.T. application of this passage is this: Every believer in Jesus Christ is responsible to obey the Word of God. Those who choose to do so will enjoy many wonderful blessings of God and those who do not will experience many chastising judgments from God. Those who obey God will have a spiritual life that is alive and those who don't will have a spiritual life that is dead. **Verse 24**, if applied to the N.T. believer, would seem to suggest that it would be possible to lose all rewards and even end up being executed by God. But the context is clear - even when these judgments were being given, Israel was still Israel (**18:25, 30-32**). God was using this warning to get Israel to repent so she could live with His blessings in her land. This passage has nothing to do with the loss of N.T. salvation.

### (Passage #3) - Ezekiel 33:7-9

Here is another favorite passage of the Arminian in making the claim that one may lose his salvation. This is a strange passage the Arminian uses to suggest that it is possible for a Christian to lose his salvation if he refuses to warn or witness to an unbeliever. Those who hold to this suggest that if the unbeliever dies and the Christian did not witness to him, then the unbeliever's blood is on the head of the believer which means he loses his salvation. Before we give the proper interpretation of the text, it needs to be pointed out that the context of this O.T. passage is not a context dealing with the theme of N.T. salvation. The context is one clearly aimed at Israel (**33:7, 10**) in the O.T. dispensation at least 500 years before Jesus Christ came to this earth. To make this a proof-text for the loss of N.T. salvation is a great misuse of the passage.

In studying Ezekiel and in studying the context, it is possible to see the true interpretation. Ezekiel was a prophet and priest of God (**Ezekiel 1:3**). He was given a very difficult ministry, namely take God's Word to a stubborn and obstinate people of Israel who probably would not listen to him (**Ezekiel 2:1-7**). His job as a prophet and priest was to hear the Word of God and to speak the Word of God, even if that Word was a warning (**Ezekiel 3:16-21**). The prophet had been specifically chosen by God and was responsible to communicate His Word to Israel no matter what the state, receptiveness or rebellion. The entrustment of God's revelation was to the prophet. It was his job to proclaim the truth, regardless of the spiritual state of the hearer. If Ezekiel did his job and faithfully communicated the truth of God, he would be innocent regardless of the response of the people. If on the other hand Ezekiel refused to communicate the truth of God, he would be guilty and accountable for not sharing the warnings God wanted him to share. Ezekiel was not to water down any message of God but was to faithfully and accurately proclaim it.