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The *Eternal* Security of the Believer

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A. The Plan and Nature of Salvation

1. Man's Problem

In the beginning God made Man in his own image (Gen. 1:27) for His glory. But, men sought their own glory by disobeying the command of God. This disobedience resulted in man being condemned to physical and spiritual death (eternal separation from God). Every lawless deed is sin (I John 3:4). The first parents did what was unlawful thereby becoming sinners. Because Adam sinned as the representative of the human race, his new propensity to sin and its penalty of death i.e. separation from God, was inherited by his offspring. Subsequently everyone is born under this curse with the same propensity to sin, is eternally separated from God, and commits willful acts of sin. Thus, the Bible declares, ‘all men have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God’ (Rom. 3:23).

God demanded death as the punishment for sin (Romans 3:23) and the shedding of blood from a sinless source for the forgiveness of sins. On the one hand God is just, and on the other hand God is also love. This presented a problem. How can God be just in forgiving the

sinner without requiring them to pay the penalty of their sin and yet show his love in forgiving their sin?

2. God's Solution

The solution! God demonstrated His own love for the world, in that he sent his Son into the world (John 3:16). The Son of God, Jesus Christ, became a man. Although Adam's curse was inherited by all, Christ did not inherit this curse since He was not born under sin. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He was sinless, never separated from God, not guilty of committing sin. Christ died voluntarily for the sins of the whole world. But God raised Him from the dead after three days. God's wrath was appeased by the death of Christ. He accepted His son's untarnished, life giving, blood for the forgiveness of sins.

3. Christ Our Substitution

But, how could man receive this forgiveness and be saved unto God? The Bible declares that we are saved by grace through the means of faith, so that there is no room for any kind of boasting (Eph. 2:8). Christ bore our penalty for sin (which is eternal death or separation from God). He became our substitute. On the basis of His resurrection, He promised the gift of eternal life. Placing one's total confidence in the substitutionary death and resurrection of Jesus is the only means of salvation.

This salvation is the means by which we can have eternal life. For the Bible declares that it is appointed for humans once to die and then face the judgement. The Bible declares that whoever believes on the Son will have everlasting life (John 3:16) and those who do not believe will be condemned (John 3:16,17).

So, if you have trusted in Jesus Christ as your substitution, you have been saved. But if you have not, what prevents you from trusting him right now?

Jesus said that 'whoever hears my words and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he **has crossed** from death to life (John 5:24). "Crossed" is in the perfect tense. This means that when he believed, he crossed from death to life with the present result that he has eternal life. It is secured. But, many believers fear that they may lose their salvation.

B. The Bible as Source

Since God revealed Himself and His will in the Scriptures, it is essential to derive our conclusion from the Bible. The question that must be raised is, does the bible support the notion that one can lose their salvation, or does the bible teach that one is eternally secure once he is saved? To be biblical is to evaluate the entire corpus of Scripture in light of its context to determine intended meaning. This article is intended to answer the question, Am I eternally secure?

1. Approach

The author will offer a definition of eternal security, give implications of this doctrine, and develop a biblical argument for this doctrine. Moreover, this author will discuss one particular portion of Scripture that is sometimes used to contradict this doctrine. In conclusion, a few applications will be suggested in light of the findings.

2. Definition

Charles C. Ryrie defines eternal security as ‘The work of God which guarantees that the gift of God (salvation), once received, is possessed forever and cannot be lost’¹

3. Implications

Many Christians who have not understood or accepted this truth lead a life filled with fear, legalism, and foster a judgmental attitude. Some try to somehow do good things to escape from losing their salvation through sinning. This causes such issues as the assurance of salvation, God’s forgiveness, faith alone as required for salvation, God’s love, and evangelism, et. al. to be at stake.² I am not advocating that those who hold this view of eternal security have a license to live anyway they like. On the contrary, this doctrine motivates the believer to humble himself to the glory God out of love and gratitude for such a great salvation.

¹ Charles C. Ryrie, *So Great Salvation*, (Illinois: Victor Books, 1989) 155

² Charles R. Stanley, *Eternal Security*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), 7-14

C. The Doctrine

1. Salvation—Does It Originate from Man or from God?

The Scripture is very clear that it is God who takes the initiative in salvation. The Bible declares that ‘none seek after God’ (Romans 3:10). Many may approach God, not because they intend to honor Him, but because they seek their own ends. In other words, they seek after things God offers and not God Himself. Thus, since salvation originates with God, what credit does man have in salvation?

2. Salvation—Is It Man’s Works or Is It God’s Grace?

Anyone who is honest will admit to himself that there lingers a hint of selfish motive behind any good thing he does. In light of God’s holiness, is there anything man can do to attain salvation? The Bible declares that ‘all our righteousness are filthy rags before God’ (Is 64:6). This salvation is received only by the grace of God. It is God’s gift and cannot be gained or earned. For this reason the Bible declares that ‘we are saved by grace through faith and not of works, lest any man should boast’. Now if anyone thinks they can add works to the grace of God, the Bible once again declares ‘If there was any work, then grace is not really grace’ (Rom. 11:6). Thus salvation is a gift of God and so man has nothing to boast about.

3. Salvation—Does Man or God Complete It?

My simple argument is this: **since we have been saved by the grace of God and not by our works, then how can we keep our salvation by works?** The activity of the Trinity in the plan of salvation demonstrates who completes the work of salvation. God the Father was completely satisfied with the death of his Son Jesus Christ. The moment Christ died on the cross, the veil (which separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Tabernacle) was torn in two. Christ’s resurrection and ascension provides another clear proof that the Father was completely satisfied with the blood of His Son. Jesus declares that none will be able to pluck the believers from the hands of the Father (Jn 10:28). The apostle Paul wrote ‘he who began a good work in you will complete it’ (Phil. 1:6).

The Son promised, ‘Those who believe on him shall not perish but have everlasting life’ (John 3:16). He also said, ‘The one who believed on Him who sent Me shall not face death, but have crossed

from life to death' (John 5:24). In addition to this, the Son makes continuous intercession for the believers (Heb. 7:25). We have been adopted as his children (Eph. 1:5).

The Holy Spirit is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance (Eph. 1:14).

There are few passages that warrant further clarification. Romans 8: 29- “ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.” It is 100% foreknowledge, 100% predestined, 100% called, 100% justified, 100% glorified. Notice that the number who started is the number that finished. All who are predestined are all who are glorified. Consider also that this, like so many of these scriptures, is written in the past tense even though it refers to a future time. What's the reason? As far as God is concerned it is secured. It is history. It is done. Then the powerful rhetorical question- If God be for us, **who can be against us?** (Rom. 8:31). 1 Peter 1:3 states,

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls”

In these verses we find God granting salvation by grace. God gives an inheritance to the believer that **does not fade**. Then we read that through faith we are shielded by the power of God until the coming of salvation.

D. Discussing the Seemingly Contradicting Passage

Many people use Hebrew 6 to defend their view that salvation can be lost. But, if they glean this view from the text, they will also

have problems as the text suggests that it is impossible if one falls away to be brought back to repentance, though they advocate that repentance can be brought about. Some view this text as referring to unbelievers, some understand this text as addressing to some people who thought they were saved, but were slowly contemplating going back to Judaism.

This author understands that the author is speaking to two different groups. In verse 4, the address is in the 3rd person, possibly to those who think they are saved. That it is impossible to be brought back if they have refused Jesus Christ as the sole source for their salvation. But, in verse 9, he speaks to the believers saying that ‘Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case-things that accompany salvation’. Here once again the author affirms his confidence.

Conclusion

C. H. Spurgeon once said that God’s sovereignty and man’s free will would always be parallel, like railroad tracks. They never can be reconciled or brought together. There is a mystery to how they work together.

Based on the utter depravity of man it is impossible for man to save Himself. But because of the death and resurrection of Christ, God can forgive man. Christ’s sacrifice is sufficient for God. Thus a man is saved by the grace of God by means of his faith. If man is saved by grace, he cannot keep his salvation by his own works. But as the man yields to the work of the Triune God, God eternally secures him. In Phil. 2:12-13 Paul commands, “work out your salvation because it is God who works in you.” Notice that Paul states it is God who works in you when you work out your salvation and it is upon that basis that we are commanded to work out our salvation. It is not because we, in and of ourselves, can work out our salvation. Our work is God’s work, not our own for our own merit.

Application

The believer can live with joy and hope. This doctrine should really humble the believer and cause him to glorify God by loving him, obeying him and loving other people. Having understood this doctrine, the believer should preach the glorious gospel to those who do not know Christ.

