

The Question of Eternal Security

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Abstract

Along with baptism, pre-trib and post-trib, the idea of eternal security creates controversy in the church. Can the centuries old debate ever be settled? The answer arrives in a surprisingly simple manner.

Satan wants to cause FUD (a TLA [three letter acronym] known in the computer industry — standing for **F**ear, **U**ncertainty and **D**oubt). For example, when the Israelites left Egypt and traveled towards the promised land, just before they entered in they sent twelve spies to search out the land.

Ten returned with bad news — giants exist in the land, and we are no match for them. Two of them said God is with us, it's no problem, let's go and take it. But Israel succumbed to Satan's old trick, FUD. Therefore, they wandered for 40 years — powerless and ineffective — and their children entered the land.

Don't we all want to have a spirit filled life? Then we must be able to resist the FUD of the enemy. Satan uses FUD to keep us wandering in the wilderness, unfocused and powerless to engage the enemy. Satan still uses his old FUD tricks today.

1 A SIMPLE PROOF

Through the years, one of the most heated debates involves losing salvation. It appears many people struggle with this issue, especially the Hebrews six passage. Since this topic causes so much anxiety and problems, let's step back and consider it from a different angle.

First, it's difficult for some people to accept if they did nothing to earn their salvation, that means they can do nothing to lose it. Most people accept salvation comes by faith alone (not works) but are unable to arrive at the conclusion that also means you can do nothing to lose your salvation either — the two statements being equivalent.

Math contains a concept called indirect proof. Beginning with a statement (assumption), then logically follow where that statement leads, and if it arrives at an impossibility or absurdity, the original statement

must be false (indirect proof is also called proof by contradiction).

Let's apply indirect proof to the possibility of losing salvation. First, assume it is possible to lose your salvation, where does that assumption lead you?

1. You *can* lose your salvation.
2. Thus, your actions cause either a keeping or losing of salvation.
3. Thus, salvation is based on your actions.
4. Thus, salvation is works-based.
5. Thus, Jesus' death on the cross was insufficient for salvation, and requires our works to complete the job.

Obviously, numbers four and five are absurd, thus the original statement (you can lose your salvation), is false. QED*. In the end, the possibility of losing salvation *requires* the following two ideas:

1. Salvation is by works, not faith, which contradicts Paul (Ephesians).
2. Jesus' sacrifice was insufficient and incomplete, requiring man's effort to complete the deal.

Neither of those are good choices, but for those believing it's possible to lose your salvation, you're left with those logical conclusions. Since they're both absurd, the original assumption you can lose your salvation *must* be false.

That's a simple proof; in essence we need go no further to prove you can't lose your salvation. Yes, it's really that easy to solve the question, as proponents

* Latin for "thus it is proved"

of the idea of losing salvation logically imply those ideas, while orthodox Christianity soundly rejects them.

Simply put, the idea of losing salvation is 100% incompatible with orthodox Christianity. Nevertheless, other issues pop up in this discussion, those we shall now dive into.

2 HOW MUST WE LIVE? CHEAP GRACE

One argument against eternal security is “if that’s true, it means I can live any way I want and still be saved”. Not so fast.

Don’t interpret the permanence of salvation to mean you can live any way you want. If people live in perpetual sin that’s a clue they might not be saved, no matter what they say. Works are a *result* of salvation, not a *cause* of it.

For example, I can say I’m the President all I want, and that doesn’t change the facts. Many people may *think* they’re saved, but if they don’t have the fruit, their proclamation contains no truth.

A Christian won’t *continue* living in habitual sin. It doesn’t mean you won’t occasionally fall, or you won’t struggle, but for the Christian it is impossible to continue in sin. If you can continue to live an unrighteous life and it doesn’t bother you, perhaps you should examine your commitment to Christ.

Consider this by looking at a farmer and a pig. The pig lives (actually, enjoys) wallowing in mud and muck — it’s his *nature*. For the farmer, however, it’s not his nature. That doesn’t mean he won’t from time to time have problems with the mud, but it certainly isn’t his desire.

You can take the pig out of the mud and clean him up, but the first opportunity he has he’ll jump back in the mud. Why? It’s his nature, what he looks forward to, and his desire. In contrast, the farmer may from time to time fall in the mud, but gets out, cleans himself, and analyzes the situation to make corrections to avoid falling in the pit again. Are you the farmer or the pig?

You did nothing to earn your salvation (it’s a gift from God), so there’s nothing you can do to lose it. Here’s another way to look at it:

Perhaps you recall an old episode of MASH (the old TV show, yes we’re old-timers), with BJ and Hawkeye talking about having an affair while stationed in Korea. Hawkeye (as you’ll recall) was the skirt-chaser, while BJ remained faithful to his wife, even in a time of war in a country far

away. Naturally Hawkeye didn’t understand how (or why) he could do that. BJ responded it wasn’t because he believed God would strike him down, or even that cheating on his wife was wrong, he simply didn’t want to.

*It’s all grace. If you truly love God, you simply won’t do certain things — not because a rule exists, but because you simply don’t want to.**

Many pastors and others suggest to those struggling with salvation to read 1 John. If you want a verse by verse study of 1 John see our book “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Security”†.

3 CAN YOU WALK AWAY?

One idea about losing salvation becomes the issue of you (of your own free will) walking away from God. God won’t force Himself on anyone — if you choose to stop following Him you certainly have that choice. In that sense you’ve “lost” your salvation, not because you’ve failed to live up to some list of requirements (works), but simply because you don’t want it.

That’s the idea behind “enduring to the end”, and “he who overcomes” — it’s not a works-based salvation, rather it’s a *characteristic* of those saved; they don’t walk away.

Some say you can walk away after truly being saved, others that those were never saved in the first place. Since a person’s eternal status isn’t written on their forehead, it’s more of an academic debate which can’t be resolved, so don’t take a dogmatic position on it as it’s unresolvable.

However, that academic discussion remains distinct from losing your salvation — the idea you can do something to lose your salvation if you desire it. Jesus as the good shepherd doesn’t cast away any sheep.

4 TROUBLING VERSES

4.1 2 Peter 2:20–21

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

2 Peter 2:20–21

* “The Troubled Church”, Darrin Yeager, ISBN 978-0-9831117-0-2, page 24–25

† “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Security”, Darrin Yeager, ISBN 978-0-9831117-2-6

Taking just these verses is a critical mistake. Chapter two begins with a warning about false teachers, with the thought continuing throughout the chapter. They are “wells without water” (17) “for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever”.

When we arrive at verse 20, the subject remains false prophets. It is not *about* Christians, it is a warning *for* Christians. When Peter uses the phrase “knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”, does this imply they were saved? Hardly. James gives us a commentary on what knowledge is good for in terms of salvation.

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well. The demons also believe, and tremble.

James 2:19

Are the demons saved by their knowledge? I don't think so. Knowledge does not imply salvation! An important distinction exists between the two. The passage in Peter talks about false prophets never saved in the first place; it does not — can not — apply to Christians.

4.2 Hebrews 6:4–6

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

Hebrews 6:4–6

“Enlightened” means to make see, and both enlightened and illuminated are born-again references (Chuck Missler). “Tasted” implies a total experience. Thus, the people referred to in this verse are believers!

Yikes! Does this mean a Christian can lose their salvation? What can they not be renewed to, salvation? NO! The word used is *repentance*. We equate repentance with salvation, but that's not necessarily so. To fully understand this, we look to another passage in Hebrews and a few other of Paul's writings.

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us

Hebrews 12:1

Paul always concerned himself with running his race well. He did not fear losing his salvation, but being unfruitful. He exhorts us to lay aside any weight

hindering us, and run with endurance the race before us. As Christians, it's important to remember the kind of race it is. It's not a sprint, it's a marathon. That's the reason we need endurance, as Paul brings similar ideas in his other writings.

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

1 Corinthians 3:11–15

It's clear Paul talks of rewards, not salvation. Even if a person loses all their rewards by living a carnal and unfruitful life, they are still saved.

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

1 Corinthians 9:24

Paul's primary focus was always heavenly, not earthly; the issue is the jeopardy of heavenly rewards, not salvation, as Paul makes the distinction between the two. Thus, the conclusion about the passage in Hebrews is the following:

The primary reference of this passage is to Jewish believers in the sense of them being called out of Judaism. Thus, this is NOT a Salvation passage. It is talking of the fruits, the making of our lives into useful ministries. . . . Those who have lost their first love (Revelation 2). As we emphasize the idea that Jesus did the whole deal, we run the risk of sitting back on our security and not recognizing that we are in a race. Paul was preoccupied with this idea of being in a race. Only Christians are in this race, Paul was not running a race with sinners. Paul's fear was not that he would lose his salvation, but that he would have an unproductive life and have his witness curtailed.

Chuck Missler “Hebrews” page 73

5 MORE PROOF OF ETERNAL SECURITY

You may ask does additional evidence exist? Certainly.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 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.

John 10:27-29

Notice the explicit phrase here, “shall never perish”. If you could lose your salvation, you would perish, and Jesus would be a liar, thus it must not be possible. Also notice two hands, the Father and the Son. The picture of one hand over the other (a complete enclosure), so that “no one is able to snatch them out”. That’s comforting, because I’m a man, and if no one can snatch them out, I can’t snatch myself out.

It’s not up to us to maintain our salvation. Jesus does all the work. Whose job is it to keep the sheep? Certainly not the sheep, they are too stupid. It’s the shepherd’s job to keep the sheep. If Jesus is the shepherd, He isn’t going to lose any sheep. By myself, I’m sure I could mess it up, but fortunately it’s not my job.

Paul raises another issue in Ephesians. In chapter 1 verses 13–14, he speaks of being “sealed” with the Holy Spirit of promise. If God seals something, I don’t see how it could be unsealed. Paul continues to speak of the Holy Spirit as “the guarantee of

our inheritance”. The old King James uses the word “earnest”, as we would use today in earnest money when purchasing a house. The earnest money means you are serious about the transaction; God remains serious about completing His transaction. We retain this earnest “until the redemption of the purchased possession (Revelation 5), to the praise of His glory”.

Unfortunately, we frequently rely on feelings and experiences, which not only are unreliable, but can easily be used by the enemy for deception. Satan himself can transform into an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:13–14). We must anchor ourselves firmly to the rock of the Word of God.

Finally, it is not possible for a person to lose their salvation, for it’s not theirs for the keeping. We contribute nothing. Second, we must run the race set before us with endurance. Third, it is possible to have assurance of salvation; we must be careful not to rely on feelings or experiences, as they can be deceptive.

Finally, think of Paul’s final words to Timothy, just before his execution at the hands of the Romans.

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith

2 Timothy 4:7

Good advice from a man who would know.

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