

Christian Ministry Unit 1 - Module 1
Introduction to Theology
Week 5 – The Security of Our Salvation

Introduction

Both for your own sake and for other Christians whom you will serve, you will need to be able to provide biblical answers for the following questions:

- Once I've made a decision for Christ, can I lose my salvation?
- Do I receive God's forgiveness and acceptance via a process—or all at once?
- Is salvation earned (or kept) by good works or observing rituals?
- Can I forfeit my salvation through sin?
- Could someone have genuinely received Christ and not grow spiritually?
- What about people who claim to have received Christ, but no longer believe in him?
- How should I respond to those who reject eternal security?

The biblical basis for eternal security

“Eternal security”

Passages which clearly teach eternal security:

1 Pet. 1:3-5

Rom. 8:1*,31-39

8:1

8:33,34

8:35,38,39

Heb. 7:25

Jn. 10:27-30**²

² "Verse 28 is especially emphatic . . . In the clause 'and they shall never perish,' John uses the double negative *ou me* with the aorist subjunctive, which is a very emphatic way of declaring that something will not happen in the future. Jesus is categorically excluding the slightest chance of an apostasy by his sheep. A literal translation would be something like: 'They shall not, repeat, shall not, ever perish in the slightest.' . . . All in all, this passage is as definite a rejection of the idea that the true believer can fall away as could be given." Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987) p. 1010.

Eph. 1:13,14; 4:30*

“Seal”

“Pledge”

Phil. 1:6

Rom. 8:29

1 Cor. 1:8

The personal importance of eternal security

- *We cannot relate to God with confidence unless we know he accepts us as we are, with all of our sins.*

“‘I am accepted’ - accepted as though my life displayed the spiritual perfection of the Messiah himself - ought to be the automatic response of our hearts whenever we wake, like the compass needle that always points north. This is a response which is always relevant to our current spiritual condition. We never make such progress in sanctification that we can depend on it for (God's) acceptance. And our continuing record of sin and failure never expands beyond the limits of the love of Christ, who has covered our debts for all time, past, present, and future . . . (This is why) *assurance of salvation is necessary for healthy spirituality*. Christians need to know that they have a secure status as adopted sons and daughters of God in order to behave naturally in his presence. For us to be phasing in and out of sonship according to our behavior, constantly testing our experiences to make sure we are in a ‘state of grace,’ short-circuits the reality of grace.”³

“We all automatically gravitate toward the assumption that we are justified by our level of sanctification, and when this posture is adopted it inevitably focuses our attention not on Christ but on the adequacy of our obedience. We start each day with our personal security resting not on the accepting love of God and the sacrifice of Christ but on our present feelings or recent achievements in the Christian life. Since these arguments will not quiet the human conscience, we are inevitably moved either to discouragement and apathy or to a self-righteousness which falsifies the record to achieve a sense of peace.”⁴

³ Richard Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life*, pp. 142-143.

⁴ Richard F. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1979), p. 211.

- *We cannot relate to others appropriately unless we are secure in God's acceptance.*

“Christians who are no longer sure that God loves and accepts them in Jesus, apart from their present spiritual achievements, are subconsciously radically insecure persons . . . Their insecurity shows itself in pride, a fierce defensive assertion of their own righteousness and defensive criticism of others. They come naturally to hate other . . . styles . . . in order to bolster their own security and discharge their suppressed anger . . . Envy, jealousy and other branches of the tree of sin grow out of their fundamental insecurity . . . It is often necessary to convince sinners (and even sinful Christians) of the grace and love of God toward them, before we can get them to look at their problems. Then the vision of grace and the sense of God's forgiving acceptance may actually cure most of the problems . . . The faith that . . . is able to warm itself at the fire of God's love, instead of having to steal love and self-acceptance from other sources, is actually the root of holiness.”⁵

Ministry application of eternal security

- *Our conviction about eternal security affects how we communicate the gospel to non-Christians.*
- *Our conviction about eternal security affects how we assure other Christians of their salvation.*
- *Our conviction about eternal security affects how we discern others' professions of faith.*

Many Christian workers ask: “When did you become a Christian?”

Consider asking him to explain how one becomes a Christian.

Consider asking her how becoming a Christian has changed her life.

Four biblically objectionable views

RADICAL ARMINIANISM –

⁵ Richard F. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1979), pp. 211-213.

Heb. 6:4-8 – The author seems to be saying that true Christians can “fall away”—
forfeit their salvation and wind up in hell. But note:

Is this about falling into sin?

Were they Christians?

What is meant by the statement “it is impossible for them to be renewed to
repentance?”

CONCLUSION:

Heb. 10:26-31 – The author seems to be saying that true Christians who persist in sin
will lose their salvation and go to hell.

Is this about falling into sin?

Were they Christians?

CONCLUSION:

Gal. 5:4 – Paul seems to be saying that true Christians can be severed from Christ and
fall away from God’s grace.

Were they Christians?

Is this about falling into sin?

Is this referring to loss of salvation? (see 5:1,2; 3:3)

Col. 1:21-23 - Being found holy and blameless on judgment day seems to be conditioned (“if indeed”) on continuing in the faith and remaining steadfast throughout one’s life.

How is Paul using “holy and blameless and beyond reproach?”

What does “if” connote?

2 Tim. 2:12 - This sounds like if Christians deny Christ, God will deny them (take away their salvation).

“If we died with him, we shall also live with him.”

“If we endure, we shall also reign with him.”

“If we deny him, he also will deny us.”

“If we are faithless, he remains faithful . . .”

NOTE: There are two different versions of non-eternal security which may appear similar, but which are very different:

Salvation can be lost by rejecting Christ (Heb. 6,10; 2 Tim. 2:12)

Salvation can be lost by moral lapses (Radical Arminianism)

- **ROMAN CATHOLIC SOTERIOLOGY** – According to official Roman Catholic doctrine, no one’s salvation is secure.⁶

Salvation is by faith alone (Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8,9), and it includes complete forgiveness of sins (Col. 2:13,14).

NOTE: *We should not say that there are no saved Catholics!*

⁶ “The Church affirms that for believers, the sacraments of the New Covenant are *necessary for salvation*.”
The Holy See, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori, Missouri: Liguori Publications, 1994) p. 292.

NOTE: *It is unwise to attack your Catholic family and friends!*

- WATER BAPTISM REQUIRED FOR SALVATION? - Acts 2:38; Mk. 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21; Rom. 6:3,4 and Col. 2:12 seem to teach this position. However, on closer examination, this teaching is not scriptural for the following reasons:

Salvation is by faith alone, apart from ritual performance (Gal. 2:16; see also Lk. 23:43)

Passages used support this view can be harmonized with the “salvation by faith alone” position described above:

Acts 2:38, when compared with Acts 3:19, means that water baptism is commanded by God, but not required for salvation.

Mk. 16:16 is part of the “long ending” of Mark (16:9-20) that was not part of the original text.⁷

In **1 Pet. 3:21**, baptism corresponds to Noah baptism into the ark, and refers to our baptism into Christ (1 Cor. 12:13), which occurs when we believe the gospel (Eph. 1:13,14).

CONCLUSION: (Matt. 28:19; e.g., Acts 2,8,10,16)

- LORDSHIP THEOLOGY – This view affirms eternal security, but overloads the meaning of saving faith.⁸

⁷ For more information on this textual issue, see Mark Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), pp. 601-605.

⁸ “. . . Eternal life is indeed a free gift . . . that does not mean there is no cost in terms of salvation's impact on the sinner's life. This paradox may be difficult but it is nevertheless true: salvation is both free and costly . . . It (saving faith) is an exchange of all that we are for all that Christ is. And it denotes implicit obedience, full surrender to the lordship of Christ. Nothing less can qualify as saving faith . . . This is the kind of totally committed response the Lord Jesus called for. A desire to follow him at any cost. Absolute surrender. A full exchange of self for the Savior. It is the only response that will open the gates of the kingdom.” John F. MacArthur, *The Gospel According To Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), pp. 140, 141.

This view rightly rejects mere mental assent to the gospel as saving faith, and insists that it involves a willingness to follow Jesus as well as to receive forgiveness from him.

BUT:

- If saving faith requires full commitment, then why do Paul and Peter call Christians to full(er) commitment (Rom. 12:1; 1 Pet. 3:15)?
- Why does Paul speak of genuine Christians who are living like non-Christians (1 Cor. 3:3,15)?
- Why does Paul urge Christians not to let sin reign (Rom. 6:12,13)?

Conclusion

Memory Verses

Romans 8:1* – Christians will never be condemned by God.

Ephesians 4:30* – Christians are sealed by God for safe passage to heaven.

John 10:27-30** – Jesus will not allow anyone to snatch believers out of his hand.

Assignment

1. Read John 12:32; Eph. 1:13; Rom. 2:4; 3:28; 4:4-5; 10:14. 2 Cor. 5:18-20; Matt. 28:18-20.
 - a. In one paragraph, summarize what they seem to say about man's role in evangelism. In another paragraph, summarize what they say about God's role in evangelism.
2. Church Visitation assignment