

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 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Rom. 8:1* Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Rom. 8:³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? ³³ 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? . . . 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.

Heb. 7:²⁵ Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Jn. 10:27-30**²⁷ “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; ²⁸ and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. 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. ³⁰ “I and the Father are one.”

“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.”¹

Eph. 1:¹³ 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.

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

“Seal”

“Pledge”

Phil. 1:⁶ For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

Rom. 8:²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

1 Cor. 1:⁸ (God) who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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.*

¹ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987) p. 1010.

“‘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.”²

“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.”³

- *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. . . 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.”⁴

Ministry application of eternal security

- *Our conviction about eternal security affects how we communicate the gospel to non-Christians.*

² Richard Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life*, pp. 142-143.

³ Richard F. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1979), p. 211.

⁴ Richard F. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, pp. 211-213.

- *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 – Many churches and denominations teach that Christians can lose their salvation through serious/recurrent sin.

Hebrews 6:⁴ For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame. ⁷ For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; ⁸ but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.

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:

Hebrews 10:²⁶ For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES. ²⁸ Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰ For we know Him who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY." And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE." ³¹ It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

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:

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

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)

Colossians 1:²¹ And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, ²² yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach— ²³ if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

Being found holy and blameless on judgment day seems to be conditioned ("if") 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 indeed” connote?

2 Timothy 2:¹¹ It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; ¹² If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; ¹³ If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

This sounds like if Christians deny Christ, God will deny them (take away their salvation). But this saying may encompass people in very different spiritual states:

“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, for He cannot deny Himself.”

IMPORTANT NOTE: There are two different versions of non-eternal security which may appear similar, but which are very different with regard to their stance on salvation by grace alone though faith alone:

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

Salvation can be lost by moral lapses (Radical Arminianism)

- **LORDSHIP THEOLOGY** – This view affirms eternal security. It also 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 it overloads the meaning of saving faith by insisting on absolute commitment to Christ to be saved.⁵

⁵ “. . . 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.

“(After quoting 1 Cor. 6:9-11) It comes to this, that unless my life is a righteous life, I must be very careful before I

Biblical problems with this view:

- 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)?
- **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!*

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

- **WATER BAPTISM REQUIRED FOR SALVATION** – Some New Testament passages 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)

claim that I am covered by the grace of God . . . Some of the most vital questions that can be asked, then, are these. Do you know God? Do you love God? Can you honestly say that the biggest and first thing in your life is to glorify Him and that you so want to do this that you do not care what it may cost you in any sense? Do you feel that this must come first . . .? Let every man examine himself.” (D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 208,209.

⁶ “The Church affirms that for believers, the sacraments of the New Covenant are *necessary for salvation*.” *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori, Missouri: Liguori Publications, 1994) p. 292.
 “Since the initiative belongs to God in the order of grace, no one can merit the initial grace of forgiveness and justification, at the beginning of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, *we can then merit for ourselves . . . the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life.*” *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori, Missouri: Liguori Publications, 1994) , p. 486.
 “Church teaching is that *I don’t know, at any given moment, what my eternal future will be*. I can hope, pray, do my very best—but I still don’t know. Pope John Paul II doesn’t absolutely know that he will go to heaven, nor does Mother Theresa of Calcutta . . .” ⁶ Cardinal O’Connor, *The New York Times*, February 1, 1990, p. B4.

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

Acts 2:³⁸ Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

By harmonizing this with Acts 3:19, Peter means that water baptism is commanded by God, but not required for salvation.

Acts 3:¹⁹ “Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord . . .

Mark 16:¹⁶ “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.”

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

1 Peter 3:¹⁹ in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison,²⁰ who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.²¹ Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

“Baptism” here 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: The New Testament teaches that water baptism is not required for salvation. In the book of Acts (Acts 2,8,9,10,16,etc.), the consistent pattern is that people hear the gospel, believe it for salvation, and then get baptized.

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.

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.

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 our role in evangelism.
In another paragraph, summarize what they say about God's role in evangelism.
2. Church Visitation assignment