**VICTORIOUS LIFE CHURCH BIBLE STUDY**

**ASK THE PASTOR SERIES – ETERNAL SECRITY**

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*(Prepared by Bro. Mike Joyce)*

For starters, there are two (2) main schools of thought on the subject of Eternal Security – The Calvinist doctrine and the Arminian doctrine (named after the 15th Century theologians, John Calvin and Jacobus Arminius)

Calvinists proposes that a believer may never forfeit his faith and, consequently may never lose his salvation. On the other hand, the Arminian doctrine states that a believer may, in fact, forfeit his faith and thus lose his salvation.

Both entities use a variety of scripture references to support their beliefs, but often with varying interpretations. With which of these two camps would you most likely identify? Or better yet, where do you believe the COG stands on this issue? Let’s take a closer look.

***The Calvinist Doctrine:***

**12 Arguments for Eternal Security**

*(by familyfellowship.com)*

Can a child of God so apostatize as to be finally lost? The Word of God, and it alone, can authoritatively, satisfactorily, and finally answer this question.

None can answer but the divinely inspired, unalterable, and eternal Word. The Bible must be our final court of appeal in all matters of faith and practice. “**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine … for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16), “to the law and to the testimony” (Isa. 8:20). “Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures” (Matt. 22:29). Let us therefore “[reason] … out of the Scriptures” (Acts 17:2) and “search the Scriptures” (Jn. 5:39), and in so doing be “more noble” (Acts 17:11) than others and also shall through comfort of the Scriptures have hope (Rom. 15:4) and light (Psa. 119:130) and wisdom (Psa. 19:7) and faith (Jn. 20:31) and joy (Psa. 19:8). What, then, do the Scriptures teach regarding the safety of a saved soul?**

1st ARGUMENT FOR ETERNAL SECURITY: Because self-righteousness did not save us in the first place, it is not a basis upon which salvation can be continued or lost. Salvation is not earned by works, kept by works or lost by works.
**Titus 3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;**
2nd SECOND ARGUMENT FOR ETERNAL SECURITY: If God bestows initial salvation without effort, but then requires us to perform to maintain salvation, then salvation is no longer a gift. Salvation is not given or maintained by works. I’m certainly not minimizing living a life for God, but I’m saying that those maintaining a holy life is not a basis upon which you can boost your salvation, if it was, then it’s a doctrine of works. As most of you know, the Bible clearly teaches we’re not saved by works.

**Rom 11:6  And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.**

**See (Eph 2:8-9, Phil 3:9, Gal 2:16, 2:21 Rom 1:16, 3:20, 4:5, 5:1,11:6, Acts 13:39 etc)**
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3rd ARGUMENT FOR ETERNAL SECURITY: If a believer or if a Christian can lose his or her salvation, then eternal life is no longer eternal. Many passages teach that once you receive the free gift of God it is, in fact, eternal life (John 3:15-16, Jo 5:24, John 17:3, 1 John 5:13). The same Greek word in these verses translated as “eternal” (aionios) is used for God’s nature (an example is in Romans 16:26). Since God is eternal/forever, then the life in God that He gives you, by definition, has to last forever and it’s impossible to lose something that’s eternal. There cannot be a termination point if someone has really received eternal life any more than there can be a termination point in God Himself.

**Hebrews 9:12  Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.**

**Hebrews 5:9  And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;**

4th ARGUMENT FOR ETERNAL SECURITY: If a believer can lose salvation, then it makes the Bible’s promises untrue. There are some things God can’t do; He can’t do things that contradict His nature and He can’t lie and misrepresent. **See (Num 23:19; Rom 3:4; 2 Cor 1:20; Tit 1:2; Heb 6:18; 10:23)**

5th ARGUMENT FOR ETERNAL SECURITY: The Spirit’s seal cannot be broken (see Eph 1:13-14, 4:30, 2 Cor 1:22), so if a Christian could lose his salvation, then the Holy Spirit has failed in His sealing ministry. When the Spirit of God placed the seal on us, signifying that we belong to God & we are His property.

6th ARGUMENT FOR ETERNAL SECURITY. If eternal security is not a reality, then the assurance of salvation is impossible. Many churches do teach eternal security, but they’ll say you can’t really know if you have salvation or not and they claim if you’re really saved, you have eternal security, but you really don’t know if you’re really saved, because the proof of being one being saved is persevering to the end of your life. So, they’re teaching eternal security, but at the same time they’re denying what we would call the assurance of salvation, which is the idea that the Christian can know that they have eternal security. We teach the idea that once saved always saved. And beyond that, we teach the idea that you can actually know that you have this salvation; it’s not a guessing game.

7th ARGUMENT FOR ETERNAL SECURITY. If a Christian can lose his salvation, then God has failed in His intention to keep or protect us (see 1 Peter 1:3-6)

8th ARGUMENT FOR ETERNAL SECURITY. If Christians can lose their salvation, then Jesus can fail in His ministries as our intercessor and advocate (John 17:11-12; Rom 8:34 36; Heb 7:24-25; 1 Jn 2:1).

9th ARGUMENT FOR ETERNAL SECURITY. Christ’s death perfectly dealt with all sins. If a Christian can lose his salvation and go to hell because of some sin, then Jesus Christ’s atonement must not have perfectly dealt with all sins, which is of course untrue. Some people mistakenly looking at/focusing on personal sin in their lives instead of looking at the Son, Jesus Christ (see Titus 2:14; Ps 103:12, Colossians 2:13 etc).

10th ARGUMENT FOR ETERNAL SECURITY. If a believer can lose their salvation, then they can become removed from Christ’s body (1 Cor 12:13).

11th ARGUMENT FOR ETERNAL SECURITY. The Bible never specifies which sin or sins removes salvation. If salvation could be lost by something we do or some sin we commit, wouldn’t the Bible say we should stay away from that particular sin? The reason the Bible never says stay away from that one, is because there is no sin you can commit that can undo your salvation.

Final ARGUMENT FOR ETERNAL SECURITY. Believers with unfruitful lives still have salvation. “What about a person who’s a believer in the Gospel and they don’t have any real fruit?” (they have an unfruitful life). Two options: either the person has never trusted in Christ, like Judas (Mark 14:18), or the person is a believer in an extreme state of carnality where there is a lack of fruit because of their carnality. We encourage people (in this second category), through motivation of God’s love to grow in their faith under God’s resources. Of course, we have no way of knowing for sure which category somebody is in, but we just need to be faithful with what God has called us to do rather than be worried about everybody else.

**Other Arguments for Eternal Security:**

**The Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed, “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no on can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand” (John 10:28-29b).** Both Jesus and the Father have us firmly grasped in their hand. Who could possibly separate us from the grip of both the Father and the Son?

**(Eph. 4:30)** tells us that believers are **“sealed from the day of redemption.”** If believers did not have eternal security the sealing could not truly be unto the day of redemption, but only to the day of sinning, apostasy, or disbelief (John 3:15-16) tells us that whoever believes in Jesus Christ will “Have eternal life” to begin with. If eternal security is not true, the promises of eternal life in the Bible would be in error.

The most powerful argument for eternal security is **Romans 8:38-39, “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** Our eternal security is based on God’s love for those whom He has redeemed. Our eternal security is purchased by Christ, promised by the Father, and sealed by the Holy Spirit.

***The Arminian Doctrine:***

(*The following are excerpts from an online article on this subject by David Pallmann)*

*Introduction*

The debate among Christians over whether or not a believer may forfeit his faith and, consequently, lose his salvation has been raging since the Reformation. There are a plethora of relevant biblical passages on both sides of this debate but I shall restrict myself to examining two relevant passages from the book of Hebrews. As will become clear, these passages are two of the most controversial in the New Testament because they appear to give clear testimony that believers can indeed fall away from the faith. Defenders of the doctrine of eternal security (the idea that a genuine believer will never lose his salvation) have a number of ingenious readings of these passages. This article will examine some of these readings and argue that they are not defensible. The conclusion will be that Hebrews 6:4-6 and 10:26-29 do indeed support the Arminian doctrine that genuine Christians may abandon the faith and lose their salvation.

*Setting the Stage*

The book of Hebrews is written to Jewish Christians. The recipients of the letter appear to be facing severe persecution because of their Christian faith and, as a result, they are facing pressure to return to Judaism. One of the author’s major themes is the superiority of Christ as a priest and sacrifice over and against the Levitical priesthood and the sacrifices conducted under it. This theme of Christ’s superiority functions as an argument for why these Jewish Christians ought to retain their Christian faith and should not return to Judaism. The author is concerned that the persecution his readers face will cause them to leave Christ, and this is the very reason he is writing. As such, apostasy is literally a theme of the book of Hebrews. Affirmation of eternal security, then, does not merely constitute a denial of a few texts found scattered throughout Hebrews. It actually constitutes a denial of the very thesis of the book.

There are numerous warnings throughout the book of Hebrews that vary in terms of their severity. But in this article we will concern ourselves with the two strongest warnings found in 6:4-6 and 10:26-29.

*Hebrews 6:4-6 in Context*

Chapter 6 begins with the author proposing a solution to a problem which he has been detailing since 5:11. The author has just finished explaining that Jesus is a high priest “after the order of Melchisedec.” Suddenly he changes his tone, says that the things he wishes to impart to his readers about Jesus are difficult for him to say because his audience is not yet mature enough to receive them. He gently rebukes his audience for their spiritual immaturity throughout the remainder of chapter 5. He tells them that by now they should have matured beyond the point at which they currently are spiritually. They should have a deeper understanding of the things of God even to the point that they should be able to teach others.

Chapter 6 continues in this line of thought. The author says, “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.” This is an exhortation for them to move on to maturity. This follows from the immediate context and is not controversial. He continues by saying, “Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.” Here the author is listing specific doctrines that his audience should understand by now. In 6:3 the author goes on to say “And this will we do, if God permit.” The question arises at this point as to why God would not allow someone to move beyond these rudimentary doctrines. Why would God not permit a believer to go on to maturity? The author answers this question in the next three verses. These verses are the most controversial in the book of Hebrews (if not the entire New Testament) and they are verses with which we will be concerned.

The author writes, “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, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 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.”

*The Case Against Eternal Security*

In order for Hebrews 6:4-6 to give evidence against eternal security, we must establish two things:

1. That the passage is indeed describing believers.
2. That the “falling away” refers to loss of salvation.

Let us first turn the question of whether or not believers are in view. As already noted, Hebrews 6:4-6 appears within the middle of a discussion exhorting the readers to go on to maturity. This is important because it forms the context for the warning. Since obviously unbelievers are not being exhorted to go on to maturity, it is evident that the warning appears within a section which is addressed to genuine Christians. Defenders of eternal security acknowledge this, but they point out that there must have been some unbelievers within the community.

While it is quite true that there were probably some false converts within the church, this does not touch the argument against eternal security. The argument is that the specific descriptive terms used in 6:4-6 can only be properly applied to *genuine* believers. A general reference to the fact that there may have unbelievers within the congregation does not explain how unbelievers can properly be said to have been enlightened, tasted of the heavenly gift, become partakers with the Holy Spirit, and so on. Any serious interpretation of this passage which wishes to maintain that unbelievers are being warned needs to seriously grapple with these descriptions. So let us take a closer look at these descriptions and see if they can be reasonably applied to unbelievers.

*Enlightened*

First, they are said to have been “enlightened.” If the meaning of a word in Scripture is ever unclear, it is always advisable to see how the word is used elsewhere by the same author. Fortunately, the author uses the word again in 10:32-33. Here he writes, “But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by sharers with those who were so treated.” The enlightenment described here seems to be a reference to conversion. Remember that the author is addressing persecuted Christians (he addresses the recipients of this specific statement as brethren in 10:19). In this passage he directly connects their suffering to this enlightenment. Since the persecution was taking place as a direct result of their faith in Christ, it seems that “enlightened” is a synonym for salvation here.

*Tasted the Heavenly Gift*

Second, these people are said to have “tasted the heavenly gift.” First, we should ask what the heavenly gift refers to? It would seem reasonable to see the heavenly gift as equivalent to the gift of God which is repeatedly identified as salvation in Scripture (Eph 2:8-9, Rom 6:23, 2 Cor 9:15, John 4:10). It is difficult to see what else could rightly be called the gift of God.

Sometimes believers in eternal security will try to suggest that the word “tasted” means to have merely nibbled or sampled. But this seems unlikely in view of how the same word is used in Hebrews 2:9 where the author says that Christ “might taste death for everyone.” Obviously Jesus did not merely sample or nibble at death. Christ fully experienced death. F. Leroy Forlines says, “It is my position that the word taste is one of the strongest words that could have been used. In tasting, there is always a consciousness of the presence of that which has been tasted.” Thus, we should understand the phrase “tasted of the heavenly gift” as saying “fully experienced the salvation of God.”

*Partakers With the Holy Spirit*

Third, these people are described as having been made partakers with the Holy Spirit. This is, perhaps, the most difficult description for defenders of eternal security to get around. Some have tried to say that this merely means that the apostates have been *influenced* by the Holy Spirit. But this is not a possible meaning for the word used here. The Greek word translated as “partakers” is *metochos* and it means to be a participant, an associate, or a partner. All of these terms require a real connection with the Holy Spirit. This conclusion is further strengthened by an examination of how the word “partaker” is used throughout Hebrews. Not only does the term always denote a full participation, but it is also used exclusively of believers.

*Tasted the Good Word of God*

Although less conclusive than the first three descriptions, the statement, “have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come” seems to also describe genuine believers. As we have seen, “tasted” refers to a full experience. The good word of God is likely a reference to the gospel, though it could also refer to Christ (John 1:1). The powers of the age to come is plausibly a reference to the spiritual gifts. If so, then this strengthens the conclusion that believers are being described since the spiritual gifts were bestowed upon believers. Aside from the evidence we have already considered, all of the descriptive terms are in the *aorist*tense and denote completed actions. The fact that the author chose to describe these apostates with *aorists* suggests that he intended to describe a full experience rather than coming close to one. Even more significant is the fact that the author gives absolutely no indication whatsoever that he intends for these people to be understood as being unsaved.

*And Have Fallen Away*

It is my considered opinion that the evidence against viewing these apostates as being “almost saved” is decisive. So, we turn to the question, what does the falling away refer to? There are several reasons to believe this falling away refers to losing one’s salvation. In the first place, the falling away seems to parallel the drifting away in 2:1. I am convinced that a careful examination of the language in 2:1 will show that this is a reference to drifting away from salvation. If the passages are parallel, then it would be reasonable to infer that the falling away here is also from salvation. Second, it is said that the apostate cannot be brought back again to*repentance*. This is significant. Repentance is a condition for salvation (Luke 13:3). Since, repentance is what they cannot be brought back *to*, it would seem that this is also what they fell *from*. Moreover, the author says that they can’t be brought to repentance *again*. The presence of the word “again” means that they had already repented previously. After all, you can’t be brought back to something if you haven’t already done it!

*Hebrews 10:26-29*

While Hebrews 6:4-6 is probably the most controversial warning in debates over eternal security, it is my opinion that Hebrews 10:26-29 is far more conclusive. The passage reads. “For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 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?” We should ask 1) Who is addressed? and 2) What happens to them? The text seems to clearly describe saved individuals. First, the author includes himself among those he is addressing by saying “if *we* go on sinning.” This suggests that he considered himself capable of committing this willful sin. The willful sin here is generally understood to be the same concern addressed throughout the book. So it can be seen as the same as the drifting or falling away in chapters 2 and 6. This sinning is said to happen *after* one receives the knowledge of the truth. Wayne Grudem tries to argue that this is merely a reference to hearing the gospel saying, “To “receive knowledge of the truth” simply means to hear and understand the gospel, and probably to give mental agreement or approval to it” However, the word here translated “knowledge” is*epignosis* and it means to have a full or complete knowledge of something. This is significant both because the New Testament uses it as a synonym for salvation (1 Tim 2:4) as well as because the author could have easily used the weaker Greek word *gnōsis* if he had wanted to convey merely intellectual knowledge. Grudem’s thesis is, therefore, unlikely in view of the author’s word choice here.

*Sanctified by the Blood of Christ*

The major problem for defenders of eternal security is that the apostate is said to have actually been *sanctified* by the blood of the covenant. While some try to say that this is a reference to the old covenant sacrifices, the context will not permit this. The author is comparing the judgment these apostates deserve with the judgment that violators under the old covenant deserved. As Oropeza says, “There is no other sacrifice for sin apart from Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice, and hence the apostate who rejects Christ cannot be brought back to restoration again even though such an individual was once sanctified. Apostasy is viewed as violating a greater covenant than that of Moses, and the defector can only expect a fearful retribution from God.”

*Conclusion*

In conclusion, the warnings in Hebrews are strong and powerful. Attempts to say that they are not directed towards believers in danger of losing their salvation cannot be sustained by sound exegesis. Based on Hebrews 6:4-6 and 10:26-29, it seems reasonable to conclude that the author believed that the apostasy of a genuine believer was a real and ever present danger. Therefore, it should remain a danger for those who desire to take Scripture seriously. As believers we would do well to apply such warnings to ourselves, using them as a motivation to hold fast our conviction and move ever onwards in our spiritual maturity.

* *End of excerpt from David Pallmann’s article*

***Summary:***

So, after considering the facts, with which camp would you most likely identify?

Or more importantly, where do you think VLC/COG stands on this issue?