

Security of Salvation

(13 August 2019)

Introduction

Can a person once saved become lost again? This security of salvation – also called eternal security, “once saved always saved”, perseverance of the saints, etc – is important because the fear of losing one’s salvation could seriously affect a believer’s peace of mind. With a right Biblical view, believers can have assurance and confidence in their salvation. Security of salvation is a Biblical fact based on the work of God and not man.

In the history of the church, there have been opposing interpretations on this subject. It is unfortunate that there is no universal agreement among Christians, but this does not mean that the Scripture is unclear. The problem appears to lie more with a right understanding of grace and the finished work of Christ on the cross.

The Bible and Salvation

Many of those who believe “one can lose their salvation” do so based on observing individuals they believed to be saved who ultimately leave the church and their faith. But at the heart of the controversy on this topic is the question of “who is a true believer?”. While in the mind of God there is no question on who is and is not saved, it is not always so clear to men. The question properly stated is whether one who is truly and actually saved and has received eternal life can lose that which God has done in saving him/her from sin.

Salvation is always a matter of mercy and grace:

From Genesis 1 to Revelation 22, men are redeemed (*saved*) by the mercy and grace of God alone and never on man’s merit or ability to gain or keep salvation:

- Titus 3:5 “He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy.”
- Eph 1:7-8 “In Him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that He lavished on us.”
- 1 Peter 1:3-5 “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. This inheritance is 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.”

Salvation is in opposition to man’s sinful nature:

The Bible clearly states man is a slave to sin, unable and completely powerless to save his self and is in fact an enemy of God:

- Rom 8:7 “the sinful mind (*man*) is hostile to God. It (*he*) does not submit to God’s law, indeed it cannot.”
- Col 1:21 “Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.”
- Additional references on man’s pitiful state of inability can be found in Gen 6:5, 8:21; Job 15:14, 25:4-6; Eccl 7:20, 9:11, 9:3; Jer 17:9; Is 64:6; Rom 3:10-11, 23; 5:12-21; 1 Cor 15:22; Gal 3:22; Eph 2:1-3; Col 2:13; Titus 1:15, 3:3, and more.

Only God and God alone can save a man from his sinful nature:

- 1 Cor 2:14 "The natural (*unsaved*) person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly (*foolishness*) to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned."
- Col 2:13 - "And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh (*unsaved*), He made you alive (*saved*)."

Study of Romans 8:31-39:

Romans is one of the primary books for correct doctrinal understanding of salvation. Here at the end of chapter 8, the Apostle Paul closes his teaching of man's sin nature, justification, and sanctification with questions and answers on the security of true believers. This section is often referred to as the "hymn of security":

- In v31, Paul states that "IF God is for us, who can be against us?" This is not a conditional statement and is best translated "SINCE God is for us, who can be against us?" God is without equal and all powerful, no one or nothing can thwart His will and plan.
- Referring to keeping one's salvation, in v32 the statement is made that God would not do less for His own children than He did for His enemies (us before salvation). Since God freely gave us forgiveness to save us He will also freely and graciously keep us saved!
- In verses 33 and 34, the scene is a heavenly courtroom and the question is "who shall bring a charge against God's elect (*chosen*)?" In God's court, Satan is the "accuser of the brothers" (Rev 12:10). God has declared believers righteous (free from sin and guilt) based on what Christ did on the cross. On the cross, Christ took all our sins – past, present, and future – onto Himself and paid all the penalty of sin once and for all such that God's perfect requirement for holiness has been satisfied. Therefore, there is no longer a charge against true believers! We have been made right (justified) by God through Christ.
- In verses 35-39, Paul lists experiences (v35) and persons (vs38, 39a) that could be imagined or feared by a believer to separate him from Christ who is our salvation. Note that these lists include being persecuted, killed for one's faith, fallen angels, and literally anything and everything created by God! Paul concludes that NOTHING "shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"!

Salvation as related to Sanctification:

While we read this and believe all this, many still think they themselves can chose to leave Christ and forfeit their salvation. The doctrine of sanctification as taught in Romans 6-8 (and elsewhere) is necessary to understand. Sanctification means to be pure from sin and/or to be set apart to a sacred purpose. God, through Christ's work on the cross, has made us pure from sin and set apart for His sacred purpose of glorifying Himself. We teach three aspects of sanctification:

- First, *positional sanctification - Upon salvation we as believers are set apart* (seen as holy) unto God because we have been 'justified'. God made us right based solely on what Christ did on the cross. God sees us a pure and holy because Christ gave us His righteousness. He took our past, present, and future sins to the cross along with all the punishment we deserved. He died to sin once for all (Rom 6:10). Scripture teaches that we are indeed new creations in Christ (2 Cor 5:17). We didn't simply add a new dimension to ourselves when we became Christians, we literally became something totally new. Our new position is based on the finished work of Christ and absolutely nothing else, e.g. works, circumstances or emotions.
- Second, *progressive sanctification - This aspect of sanctification is our act of obedience, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to what Scripture commands* us to do out of love and gratitude for what Christ has done. We want to be obedient because we are saved and as new creations we hate our sin, love righteousness, and want to present ourselves as 'living sacrifices' (Rom 12:1). As we mature in our faith, we understand and see that God uses life in a progressive

manner to make us more like Christ – in fact He says in Phil 1:6 “that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” This verse connects the second and third aspects of sanctification.

- Third, *glorification* – *This is the final aspect of sanctification when at Christ’s second coming we are with Jesus and like Him* in that we are completely sinless and in our new redeemed bodies (1 Cor 15:35-54; Phil 1:6, 3:20-21; 1 John 3:1-3; Rom 8:29-30; and Jude 24-25). This is when we are physically dead as we know it but alive in Christ in our glorified (perfect) and new bodies that we’ll keep for eternity!

‘Positional sanctification’ and ‘glorification’ are solely and completely the work of God. We have no part in them and they were determined before the foundations of the earth were laid (Rom 8:29; Eph 1:4). They have already occurred in the mind of God even if we can’t grasp it in our limited human understanding. In contrast, ‘progressive sanctification’ is largely our responsibility to be obedient to our knowledge of Scripture. There is a ‘free will’ component in this aspect of sanctification to obey or disobey. Many believers confuse their disobedience here with the reality of ‘positional sanctification’ thinking they are able to lose their salvation. This is not the case. When believers are disobedient, God as the perfect Father deals with us by chastening and even death (Heb 12:6, 1 John 5:16) but never does He say we will lose our salvation. Rather, 1 John 2:19 addresses those who appear to lose their salvation or ‘fall away’: “They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.”

Other Key Scriptural support for work of God in our salvation

- Romans 8:28-29 “We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God: those who are called according to His purpose. For those He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers. **And those He predestined, He also called; and those He called, He also justified; and those He justified, He also glorified.**
- John 6:37-40 “However, **those the Father has given Me will come to me, and I will never reject them.** For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent Me, not to do my Own will. And this is the will of God, that **I should not lose even one of all those He has given Me**, but that I should raise them up at the last day. For it is My Father’s will that all who see His Son and believe in Him should have eternal life. I will raise them up at the last day.”
- John 10:27-29 “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and **they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. 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**”
- Others: Eph 1:12-14; Phil 1:6, 3:2-9; Jude 24,25; Col 1:3-2:20; 2 Cor 1:21-22, 5:4; John 3:16,18; 4:14; 5:24; 8:31,32; 17:2, 12, 20-26; Rom 5:1-11; 8:1,11:29; 1 Cor 1:4-9; Gal 3:1-5; 1 Thess 5:23,24; 2 Thess 3:3; Heb 6:17-19, 10:23; 1 John 3:9, 5:11-13; Luke 22:31; 2 Tim 2:13; OT: Ps 20:6; 31:23; 36:5; 37:28; 55:22; 121; Lam 3:23; Is 11:5; Ezek 11:19, 36:27; Deut 30:6; Jer 24:7; Jer 32:39,40