

Appendix A:
Eternal Security
(Rev. 05/25)

Can You Lose Your Salvation?

Over the years, I've been asked this in various ways. Usually my response has been to say "no", point to a couple of verses, and then move on. Why? Because it answers the question and, at the same time, doesn't require a lengthy discussion. For me, this is a very simple doctrine, backed up by numerous verses.

However, I've been challenged a couple of times in recent years, with people actually claiming that the case **against** "eternal security", as it's called, is actually stronger. And so, I decided to sit down and write a more "official" NDQ answer to address this.

As always, if you disagree with the conclusions of this paper, please come and talk to me. Bring your Bibles, though, and let's look up all of the evidence both for – and against – eternal security. Why? Because the Bible is the final source of Truth for a Christian, so we need to be sure that what we believe matches what the Bible actually says!

The Arguments FOR Eternal Security

To begin this paper, I want to lay out the support FOR "eternal security", or the fact that you cannot lose your salvation if, indeed, you were truly saved.

Proof Text 1: John 10:25-30

The first text to consider says this:

Jesus replied, "I have already told you, and you don't believe me. The proof is the work I do in my Father's name. But you don't believe me because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me, for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father's hand. The Father and I are one." - John 10:25-30 (NLT)

Just for context, Jesus says these words right after the people demand to know if Jesus is the Messiah. His response? "I've already told you. Then I showed you. You don't believe it because you want something different."

Then Jesus talks about eternal security. If we have been truly saved, we are held firmly in Jesus' hand and no one can take us from there. As one commentary put it:

For unless the Almighty can fail and the plans of the All Wise miscarry, this thing is going to work out. It is God himself who has committed these souls so dear to him to Christ's safekeeping. It is God himself who has thrown in upon their behalf all his divine resources. So that unless all God's all proves insufficient, nothing can snatch them from his hand. (Source: The Interpreter's Bible, The Gospel According To St. John)

If the “god” you choose to follow is not all-powerful, if his promises can’t be trusted, then it’s impossible to even HAVE “eternal security” because you don’t have a “god” who can do what he says. Such a “god” isn’t worthy of worship.

On the other hand, if God is all-powerful and can keep us protected in His hand, then we can be secure in knowing that we are saved by His grace and that it is “once for all”.

Protest:

I’ve had people say, “Well, God DOES keep us from others trying to take us from Him, but what if we choose to leap out of His hand on our own?”

To this, I have two responses:

First, Jesus doesn’t talk about being able to “jump out”. If that was possible, I think He probably would have mentioned it. Since He did not, it’s not something that we can discuss without reading into the text something that isn’t there to begin with.

Second, I’ve taught environmental education for 30+ years. When I pick up an animal to teach with or to show to students, I hold it in such a way as to keep it safe, no matter what it may choose to try to do. I’ve held thrashing alligators, venomous snakes, and a whole host of other creatures; some that wanted to be held and other that didn’t want anything to do with me. During that time, I held them in a way that kept them safe, no matter what their actions were. If I would do that with an animal, why do we think God would do any less with His children?

Proof Text 2: Romans 5:1-2

This next one requires some study:

Therefore, since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God’s glory. - Romans 5:1-2 (NLT)

The first thing to note is the context. (Just because it’s a new “chapter”, doesn’t mean it’s a different argument.) In chapter four, Paul explains that God “counts us as righteous if we believe in him”. Because of that, we get the “therefore” in Romans 5:1.

In Greek, the words “we have been made right” would be better rendered “having been justified”. The Greek tense of the verb Δικαιωθέντες (Dikaiōthentes) is aorist. The aorist tense means that something happened in the past and applies to the present.

In other words, “we have been justified” began with Christ’s substitutionary death on the cross and His resurrection. Now, through faith, we have right-standing with God that also began for us at the cross and continues forward.

There is nothing in the aorist tense that says, “You were saved by faith...and then you weren’t!” The action of the past is concluded and continues from that point forward. “We HAVE BEEN made right”,

and “We STILL are made right”. To try to argue any differently is to ignore the Greek wording of the text.

Proof Text 3: Ephesians 1:13-14

This one requires some cultural understanding:

And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. The Spirit is God’s guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him. - Ephesians 1:13-14 (NLT)

Okay, first of all we need to address a different topic: When does the Holy Spirit indwell a believer in Christ? Some churches teach that the “Baptism of the Spirit” is a separate event, apart from salvation. Their proof texts are (typically) found in the Book of Acts, and, to be completely fair, they can make a solid case for their belief. But in Ephesians 1:13, we’re told that God gives us the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation; no secondary “baptism” required.

I don’t intend to get into that debate here. I just want you to notice that within the context of these verses we’re considering, the Holy Spirit arrives AT THE MOMENT OF salvation.

Okay, so in this text, what do we see? We see that the Gentiles heard the truth. They believed in Christ. Then they were “sealed with the Spirit”. So, what does it mean to be “sealed”?

A wax seal would have a mark of ownership or identification stamped in it, identifying who was attesting what was inside the container that had been sealed. Because it was commonly understood that the Spirit would be made especially available in the time of the end, Paul here speaks of the Spirit as a “deposit” (NIV) – a term used in ancient business documents to mean a “down payment”. Those who had tasted of the Spirit had begun to taste the life of the future world that God had promised his people.” (Source: The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament)

In other words, the transaction was completed and God has made a down payment: He put the Holy Spirit in our lives. This ONLY makes sense if our salvation is eternal.

Otherwise, we have the power to break God’s “seal” on our lives, we have the power to evict the Holy Spirit, and, in the case of being allowed to recommit our lives to Christ after apostasy, then we have the power to “reseat” ourselves and move the Holy Spirit back in. We are simply not that powerful...

Furthermore, God promises us – it’s a “pledge” – that He will make payment in full. If God promises to save us, if He seals us, if we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and then if God fails to fulfill His promise to us He cannot be trusted. He has said He will do something...and then not done it. Is such a God to be trusted in any other situation?

No, we can be assured that we are owned by God at the moment of salvation, that He has stamped us with His identity, and that He will do what He has promised to do.

Protest:

I've had people argue that this only applies in a "covenant relationship". In other words, if I make an agreement with God, then God promises to save me. However, if I then go on to break that covenant with God, then I lose my salvation.

The problem with this argument is that the down-payment has already been made, the deposit of the Holy Spirit has been received, and we are ALREADY sealed. In this passage, there is no room left for "ending the contract" on the part of either party. To read that in to the text is simply that: reading into the text. It's not there.

Proof Text 4: Ephesians 4:30

And continuing the idea of being "sealed":

*And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.
- Ephesians 4:30 (NLT)*

In fact, before you read my response here, please go read Ephesians 4:17-32, because all of it is related to this argument. In the second half of Ephesians four, we're given a laundry list of sins:

- Stop telling lies. (vs. 25)
- Don't sin by letting anger control you. (vs. 26)
- Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry. (vs. 26)
- Quit stealing. (vs. 28)
- Don't use foul or abusive language. (vs. 29)
- Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander. (vs. 31)

And according to Paul, why should we do this? So we don't "bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live". (vs. 30) Why? Because we "were sealed for [the] day of redemption".

In other words, if we DO any of those sins...they're sins. They won't cost us our salvation; instead they "grieve" the Holy Spirit. (The Greek words used means "to experience deep, emotional pain".) But, at no point are we told that our sins end our salvation. Paul echoes this idea in Romans 7:

I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate. But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is good. So I am not the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.

And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. - Romans 7:15-20 (NLT)

Paul says, "When I try to live life on my own, I can't! There are things I don't want to do, but I do them anyhow. There are things that I SHOULD be doing...but I don't. And God's Law shows me each

and every time I fail.” He concludes this argument by pointing out that we are to live by the Spirit, not the flesh. Our strength for resisting sin comes from God, not us!

But at no point, in no place, does Paul indicate that our sins can ever “re-separate” us from God. Despite our sins, we can never fall back into condemnation.

As GotQuestions.org puts it:

Ephesians 4:30 tells us that believers are "sealed for 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. (Source: <https://www.gotquestions.org/eternal-security.html>)

Proof Text 5: Jude 24

And finally:

Now all glory to God, who is able to keep you from falling away and will bring you with great joy into his glorious presence without a single fault. - Jude 24 (NLT)

This one is kind of straightforward. God keeps us from falling away. In the Greek, it literally says “to keep you from stumbling and to present [you] in the presence of the glory of Him”. If God has that kind of power, then how can we fall?

Proof Text 6: Galatians 6:1

I had meant for Jude 24 to be my final “proof text”, but there is one other to consider:

Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. - Galatians 6:1 (NLT)

First, let me deal with an “NLT quirk”. In the Greek, it doesn’t say “another believer”; it simply says “a man”. However, within the context, it DOES seem to indicate another Christian.

Next, I LOVE the Greek word used here for “overcome”: προλημφθῆ (prolēmphthē). It literally can be rendered “overtake, surprise”. (Source: A Grammatical Analysis Of The Greek New Testament). In other words, a Christian is going along and suddenly falls into sin. Or, they’ve always struggled with the same sin, and it finally overtakes them. In either case, the believer “falls” and the church around them is ordered to help them back onto the right path.

Because of this passage, we can see a number of key points:

1. The Bible allows for “backsliding”. You can be a Christian and “fall back” into sin.
2. The cause of backsliding may be a continual struggle or a new temptation that surprises one.
3. The person who backslides DOES NOT lose their salvation.
4. The church is to support them and humbly help them back to the right path.

5. We, as Christians, are to be aware of sin in our own life!

So, can we go back to sinning? Yes. Does it mean we lose our salvation? No. This idea pairs up with what we see in: Romans 7, Galatians 5, Ephesians 4, etc. When we live by the Spirit, we produce good fruit. When we live by the flesh, we fall into sin. But sin in the life of a believer does NOT mean that they are no longer saved.

What About 2 Corinthians 5:17?

One of the first texts I used to go to was this:

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! - 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT)

In this passage, Paul is talking about sharing the Gospel with others. He explains that we are to work to share the Good News with others so that everyone can receive a new life in Jesus Christ. Then, in the middle of his discourse, we find this verse.

In this case, though, within the context it actually doesn't seem to apply. Why? Because it talks about how people who receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior do so as a result of putting aside their past beliefs, doctrines, habits, and feelings. In Jewish literature, it could symbolize a man who converted from idolatry to Judaism. (Source: Vincent's Word Studies)

Because of that, while a significant change IS indicated, I think it's taking the verse out of context to present it as an "eternal security" proof text, especially when there are better ones available to us.

Are There Other Texts?

For this paper, I only presented a selection of texts on "eternal security". If you want to read more on the topic, please go check out:

- John 1:11-13
- John 3:16
- John 17:12
- Romans 8:1
- Ephesians 1:7
- Colossians 1:14
- Hebrews 7:25
- Hebrews 10:17
- 1 Peter 1:13
- 1 John 1:7
- Jude 1

And there are a LOT more besides this!¹ In fact, if you have the time, do a word search on the phrase "eternal life" in the Bible. If the Bible is talking about us receiving eternal life, it's not really "eternal" if it's conditional and transitory, is it? Or, did we not receive it like the Bible says we did? In either case, it presents a significant argument against the ability to lose one's salvation.

¹ Please note that I haven't even touched on the subject of "adoption". If God has adopted us and calls us co-heirs with Christ – a legal term, by the way – then how do we get "un-adopted" and lose our rights?

The Joy Of Calvinism

I am NOT a Calvinist. I actually have problems with some of the tenets and the logical outcomes of that belief system. (For the record, I'm not an Arminian, either.) However, if you are a Five Point Calvinist, then the Fifth Point of TULIP is for you:

Perseverance of the saints.

In other words, not only does God choose who can and will be saved, but He also makes it impossible for them to NOT continue on in the path of salvation. Even if they want to, they cannot reject what they believed and return to their former way of life.

Because of that, eternal security is hard-coded into the world you live in, which means that you can't lose your salvation.

The Example Of Peter

One final example we need to look at when considering whether or not we can lose our salvation is found in the story of Peter (mostly) in John. I'm going to simply provide a summary of the events, but I would encourage you to read them for yourself:

Peter...

- Is a Disciple, called by Jesus to follow Him. (John 1:42)
- Confesses Jesus as the Messiah. (Matthew 16:16)
- Confesses that Jesus is the Messiah (Holy One) and the way to eternal life. (John 6:68-69)
- Witnesses Jesus do miracles. (One example is John 9)
- Sees Jesus raise a man from the dead. (John 11)
- Promises to lay down his life for Jesus. (John 13:37)
- Fights to defend Jesus when He was arrested. (John 18:10)
- **Denies he was a follower of Jesus. (John 18:17, 18:25, 18:27)**
- Sees Jesus crucified.
- Sees the empty tomb. (John 20:3-10)
- Meets the risen Jesus. (John 20:19-20)
- Gives up, goes home, and resumes fishing. (John 21:1-3)
- Is restored by Jesus. (John 21:15-19)
- Still questions Jesus about other events. (John 21:20-22)

All in all, I would argue that if anyone "lost" their salvation, it was Peter. Three times he denies that he was a follower of Jesus. That's pretty much the definition of "apostasy", right?

But if you go back and read John 13:37-38, you'll see that Jesus only mentions that Peter would deny Him; not that Peter would lose his salvation and have to start all over again!

Also, in the passages where Jesus restores Peter, all Jesus asks three times – in contrast to Peter's three denials – is whether or not Peter loves Him; and then Jesus asks Peter to take care of His "sheep". There is no discussion of lost salvation, no need to "re-repent", no mention of everlasting condemnation for denying Christ, etc.

If Peter didn't lose his salvation in light of his lack of faith, what does that mean for us?

The Arguments AGAINST Eternal Security (Conditional Security)

It would be wrong to say that there aren't arguments for what is called "conditional security". The biggest problem is that these contradict what God has said elsewhere in the Bible. Because of that, we need to look at them carefully and within context to try to determine what the writers are actually saying.

Conditional 1: Matthew 24:9-14

The first passage to look at comes from Jesus, Himself:

"Then you will be arrested, persecuted, and killed. You will be hated all over the world because you are my followers. And many will turn away from me and betray and hate each other. And many false prophets will appear and will deceive many people. Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come." - Matthew 24:11-14 (NLT)

Here, the key passage is verse 13: *But the one who endures to the end will be saved*. This would seem to indicate that there is a conditional nature to salvation, because we need to endure to the end to be saved.

But the answer to this is actually found in verse 14: *"the end will come"*. In this passage, Jesus is not talking about personal salvation; instead, He is referring to the age in which the people are living:

Matthew 24:13 has nothing to do with personal salvation in this present age of grace. "The end" does not mean the end of this life; it refers to the end of the age (Matt. 24:14). Those believers on earth during this terrible period, who endure in their faith, will be saved when the Lord comes at the end and delivers them. (Source: The Wiersbe Bible Commentary, New Testament)

Again, when we read these passage, we NEED to always be aware of the context of the surrounding verses. Otherwise, taken out of context, the words can be misinterpreted in any number of ways.

Conditional 2: Philippians 2:12

Another text that's often used is this one:

Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. - Philippians 2:12 (NLT)

Now, in the original Greek, the words are: "with fear and trembling your own salvation work out". Or,

as the ESV says, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”. This would seem to indicate that our salvation isn’t automatic but, instead, needs to be “worked out”. And who is to do the work? We are!

In Greek, the word used for “work out” is κατεργάζεσθε (katergazesthe) which does mean to “work out”, but it also means more literally “work down to the end-point” or “bring it to a conclusion”. In other words, we are to keep working to show the changes Christ has made in us until that point when our work is completed – in other words, until the day we die.

One of my commentaries expressed it this way:

This call to “work out your [‘own,’ as some versions have it] salvation” has troubled some. They have seen it as a demand to perform, or perhaps salvation will be lost. But this is not what Paul is suggesting here.

The word commonly translated “salvation” does look at personal salvation, in the Christian sense of salvation from sin. But that salvation has several aspects. There is the initial forgiveness won through faith in Jesus. There is present deliverance from the dominating power of sin in our lives. And there is ultimate salvation; deliverance from the presence of sin when resurrection day arrives...

What Paul was saying, then, is that the church is to work out (to express) in their lives together the deliverance which Jesus has won for them, and is to do this with a proper sense of awe, realizing that God Himself was at work within them, present to will and act according to His good purpose. (Source: The Teacher’s Commentary)

In other words, God through Christ is continuing to work in our lives to deliver us from the dominating power of sin in our lives and to bring us to our Heavenly home when our time on earth is over. At that point, our salvation is “worked out” and concluded because we are standing in God’s presence.

Again, this looks like an opportunity for us to lose our salvation if we don’t keep working; but, instead, it’s proof of God/Jesus/The Holy Spirit working in our lives. And that realization should keep us in constant awe of who God is and what He continues to do for us!

Conditional 3: Hebrews 6:4-6

Next, let’s take a look at a very popular “conditional security” passage:

For it is impossible to bring back to repentance those who were once enlightened—those who have experienced the good things of heaven and shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the power of the age to come—and who then turn away from God. It is impossible to bring such people back to repentance; by rejecting the Son of God, they themselves are nailing him to the cross once again and holding him up to public shame. - Hebrews 6:4-6 (NLT)

This one seems pretty straightforward, as well. This person was a Christian, shared in the Holy Spirit, and then turned away from God. Then the writer of Hebrews says that “it is impossible to bring such

people back to repentance”.

For this one, though, we need to look at the context within the entire book! There are five times in the Book of Hebrews where the writer seems to imply that Christians can lose their salvation.² (These are: 2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 6:4-8; 10:26-31; and 12:25-29.) Based on this repetition, it seems to indicate the writer of Hebrews:

...is focused on Jesus as the once-for-all atonement for sin (7:27; 9:12), the superiority of Christ over all others (angels, Moses, the Aaronic priesthood), and the importance of perseverance in faith (e.g., 12:1-3).

While the Hebrews warning passages seem to suggest it is possible for Christians to lose their salvation, across the history of the church numerous interpreters have read them as referring to those who initially profess a faith in Christ but whose apostasy proves that their faith was not genuine (cf. 1Jn 2:19). To put it another way, a faith that does not endure was not ever a true faith but was only the appearance of faith (lacking roots; Mk 4:5-6). In this view, such expressions as “enlightened,” “tasted the heavenly gift” and “shared in the Holy Spirit” indicate that such persons had come under the influence of God’s covenant blessings and had professed to turn from darkness to light. Yet they were in danger of a public and final reject of Christ, proving they had never been regenerated... (Source: Can Christians Lose Their Salvation?, NIV Study Bible, Zondervan Press)

If, as the NIV Study Bible indicates, it is someone who learns about God, but doesn’t actually put down roots, then there is sufficient doubt as to whether they were a Christian or not. As such, to use this as a “conditional salvation” example is unwarranted, at best, and irresponsible at worst.

Conditional 4: 2 Peter 2:20-21

For now, I think this is the final set of verses that we will look at:

And when people escape from the wickedness of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and then get tangled up and enslaved by sin again, they are worse off than before. It would be better if they had never known the way to righteousness than to know it and then reject the command they were given to live a holy life. - 2 Peter 2:20-21 (NLT)

Okay, as with all of the other texts, this seems pretty obvious. People become Christians and then become entangled in sin again. Peter then tells us that it would be better that these people “had never known the way to righteousness”. But is “conditional salvation” really what’s taking place here?

2 Even assuming that these passages DO refer to Christians losing their faith, there is a cultural issue: *It could only be committed in the first century and by a Jew, or a Gentile proselyte to Judaism, and for the reason that conditions since A.D. 70 have been such as to make impossible the committing of that sin. The temple at Jerusalem was destroyed on that date. There are no Jewish sacrifices to leave nor to return to. (Source: Word Studies In The Greek New Testament, Vol. 4)* If this DOES refer to losing our salvation, then the conditions where it would be possible have long since passed because we aren’t Jews living in the first century.

Actually...no. (I'm hoping that doesn't come as a surprise at this point!)

Reread the Bible passage above before you go on. In fact, go look it up in your favorite translation(s). Go read it in the original Greek. In all of them, you'll notice two things:

1. If someone IS a Christian and then gets entangled in sin, they are worse off than before.
2. If someone IS a Christian and turns away, it would be better off if they had never known to begin with.

But, in all of the versions – whether Greek or English – what does it NOT say? It doesn't mention anything about them losing their salvation. It doesn't mean that they're condemned. It doesn't mean anything beyond the fact that they are "worse off". Why are they worse off? Because they'll have to stand before God and attempt to justify their views.

What I find most fascinating in this passage is not these people, but the reason that they turn to apostasy. If you read 2 Peter 2, the chapter is about "false teachers". These are people who:

- Live among us and teach about "God". (2:1)
- They "secretly introduce destructive heresies". (2:1)
- They deny Jesus as the sole method and hope for salvation. (2:1)
- They live ungodly lifestyles. (2:2)
- They create false stories and sell them as true. (2:3)
- They are already condemned. (2:4-10)
- They despise existing authority and seek to be the expert themselves. (2:10)
- They blaspheme angels. (2:10)
- They don't understand, but they talk anyhow. (2:12)
- They don't reason or try to investigate; they just accept everything, even the heretical. (2:12)
- They cause harm to the body of Christ. (2:13)
- They are guilty of every sin. (2:13-16)
- They are slaves to their own desires. (2:19)

These are not just "average Christians", but they are false teachers who, while saved, begin to make up their own religion, reject instruction, embrace heresies, create false stories, and encourage other people to do the same. THESE are the people Peter is talking about! And, because they have gone astray and are leading others astray, as well, God WILL judge them; but He never says that they will lose their salvation. It's not in the text.

This is why, if we truly claim to be Christians, we need to shut down YouTube; close heretical books; stop taking the words of teachers and preachers at face value; stop treating prophecies, dreams, and signs as coequal to the Gospel; and get back to the Bible as our one and only source of Truth. Otherwise, we, too can face the same judgment that Peter describes here – especially if we're teaching others!

What About The Other Texts?

There ARE other verses that are routinely pointed out to me, but these are the main ones. (Some, like Mark 4:5-6 are dealt with in some of these answers.) Honestly, at this point though, I think I've

covered the “main” verses.

I do know that on GotQuestions.org, they also listed these as commonly cited references in the case for conditional salvation:

- Romans 8:12-14
- 1 Corinthians 15:1-2
- Galatians 6:7-9

All of these can be dealt with, as well, by researching the original texts, examining the cultures, and looking at the context. Unfortunately, I don’t have time to finish these, just like I didn’t have time to dig into all of the verses that SUPPORT eternal security. (I may come back to “finish” both sides of this debate at a later time.)

I would like to point out, however, that I have MANY more verses waiting to be explored that relate to eternal security than I do for ones that relate to conditional security.

Doesn’t “Sin That Leads To Death” Mean We Can Lose Our Salvation?

This one was presented to me after I had completed this document...the first time. It’s actually a VERY interesting concept, and one that I think we should look at:

If you see a fellow believer sinning in a way that does not lead to death, you should pray, and God will give that person life. But there is a sin that leads to death, and I am not saying you should pray for those who commit it. All wicked actions are sin, but not every sin leads to death. - 1 John 5:16-17 (NLT)

The first thing to address here, is the Greek doesn’t say “fellow believer”; it says “brother”. (This will be important later on.)

So, what do we do with this? Well, there are a few options:

First, this could be an actual sin that leads to physical death. Let me show you:

But there was a certain man named Ananias who, with his wife, Sapphira, sold some property. He brought part of the money to the apostles, claiming it was the full amount. With his wife’s consent, he kept the rest.

Then Peter said, “Ananias, why have you let Satan fill your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit, and you kept some of the money for yourself. The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was also yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren’t lying to us but to God!”

As soon as Ananias heard these words, he fell to the floor and died. Everyone who heard about it was terrified. ...

And Peter said, “How could the two of you even think of conspiring to test the Spirit of

the Lord like this? The young men who buried your husband are just outside the door, and they will carry you out, too.”

Instantly, she fell to the floor and died. When the young men came in and saw that she was dead, they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. Great fear gripped the entire church and everyone else who heard what had happened. - Acts 5:1-5, 9-11 (NLT)

So Ananias and his wife Sapphira tried lying to the Apostles – and to God – and they were killed for it. Literally their sin led to death. But note that this was a physical death, not a spiritual one. At no point did Peter indicate that they were condemned to Hell.

We also see this in:

So anyone who eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily is guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking the cup. For if you eat the bread or drink the cup without honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God’s judgment upon yourself. That is why many of you are weak and sick and some have even died. - 1 Corinthians 11:27-30 (NLT)

Here, people are abusing the Lord’s Supper. We’re told that they aren’t really interested (vs. 20), they aren’t sharing (vs. 21), they’re allowing some to go hungry (vs. 21), while others are getting drunk (vs. 21). Because of their abuse of a sacred moment, they’ve become sick and some have even physically died.

Again, there is NO reference to spiritual death here. Instead, when God judges them for not honoring Christ in the ceremony, they become sick and/or die. This is a “sin that leads to death”, but it’s a physical death, not a spiritual one.

You can also see this pattern over and over in the Old Testament. Israel rebels against God, they go their own way, they worship idols, and then God sends an enemy in to deal with them. Many Israelites physically die. In other words, their sins led them to physical death.

The problem is that, in the context of 1 John 5, it doesn’t seem to indicate a physical death...nor does it indicate a spiritual one, either. In fact, we’re not specifically told what type of death this sin will lead to; just that it leads to...death!

So again, what do we do with this?

In the article, “What Is The Sin That Leads To Death? By Crossway.org:

While there has been much discussion about the identity of this “sin that leads to death,” we should look for clues within the context of this letter. John has been particularly concerned throughout the letter with sins that show that one does not have eternal life abiding in him, that is, with sins that do, in fact, lead to death. John has particularly identified such sin as rejection of belief in Jesus as Messiah and Son of

God, unwillingness to obey God and pursue holiness, and failure to love fellow believers. Thus, “Sin that leads to death is deliberate refusal to believe in Jesus Christ, to follow God’s commands, and to love one’s brothers.” This was the behavior of those who were seeking to deceive John’s hearers (1 John 2:26). This interpretation makes the most sense within the context of the letter. (Source: <https://www.crossway.org/articles/what-is-the-sin-that-leads-to-death-1-john-5/>)

So, within context of the entire book of 1 John, it’s NOT that a true Christian can do a “sin that leads to death”. Instead, it’s the actions of people who pose as Christians – or who may actually think that they’re Christians, even though their life and doctrine deny it – and who are failing to follow God. Since they have never repented of their sins, they stand condemned already. They’re eventual apostasy simply reveals that they were never saved to begin with.

Taken out of context of the book of 1 John, it can easily seem to say that there IS a way for a Christian to sin and lose their salvation. Within the context of the book, it appears to be a matter of nonbelievers who thought they were saved...and weren’t.

Final Summary

So, where do we stand? I think that the argument for eternal security is definitely more conclusive than the argument for conditional security. The texts used to prove eternal security are internally consistent, culturally-relevant, and grammatically correct. The texts for conditional security, on the other hand, suffer from misinterpretation or “reading into the text”.

Could I be wrong? Certainly! But I would need to see more convincing proof texts than those that I’ve dealt with here. Furthermore – and perhaps more importantly – I would need someone to help me understand why Jesus talked at length about “eternal life” when that was clearly a mistake. The issue at hand for those who disagree is what to do with these passages. If God is not speaking the truth, then He is NOT a God worth following.

By the same token, those who claim a conditional security are arguing that their salvation rests firmly in their hands, not God’s. They are advocating a works-based salvation where we can come and go in our relationship with God as we like. God has to both accept us when we sincerely return, and let us go when we choose to walk away. God has no power in that type of relationship, we do. And that is a belief that I find expressed NOWHERE in the entire Bible.

Salvation is by faith in Christ alone. Any attempt to place salvation on our continual efforts negates that viewpoint and denies Christ as Savior.

Finally, and I think this is a very sad concept, what about sins that you never confessed? That lie that you told once in third grade that you’ve forgotten about. If salvation is conditional, do you stand condemned because you failed to confess each and every sin you’ve ever committed? If Jesus is the final sacrifice, if His blood covers all of our sins, then this isn’t an issue. If not, then how do you ever know for sure? How do you find peace?

One Last Thought

In closing, there IS one final thing to consider: someone who thought they were a Christian...and weren't.

Jesus gives us the example of that in Matthew 7:21-23. These people may have lived like a Christian for a time, they may have learned the Bible, they may even have done miracles, but they were never saved.

Again, we see this in the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13 (or, as stated above, in Mark 4:5-6). There are people who hear the Gospel, they accept it gladly, and they appear to be a Christian. But, it's all surface, there is no root.

I think if you want to make a case for eternal security, one of the main considerations is the idea of people who were never saved to begin with and who then "fell away". They looked like a Christian, became an "apostate", but they never were a true believer in Jesus to begin with.

So, can we ever know who is saved and who is not by simple, external views? No, only God sees what's in a human's heart. Because of that, we don't assume that someone is saved just because they read the Bible and pray; we base it on their fruit and we trust God to be God.

Appendix A: How Do I Know That I'm Saved (Short Answer)

One of the questions that I've seen in other videos about this topic – and one raised by one of my proofreaders (Hi Dean!) is how do you know that you really ARE saved? If eternal security is based on truly being saved, how can you truly know? To answer that, let me give you the short answer:

Short Answer:

Paul tells us in Romans 10:9-10:

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved. - Romans 10:9-10 (NLT)

There are two steps described here:

First, you have to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that He died for your sins, and that God raised Him from the dead.

Second, you have to “confess with your mouth” these truths. In other words, you have to tell God – and others – that you believe. (We call this “prayer”.) Some people will tell you that you HAVE to do this in a public place, like a church; but I don't believe that.³ I think you can pray and talk to God where you are and He will both hear and forgive you.

If you feel sorry for what you've done wrong – the Bible calls these “sins”; if you believe that Jesus is the Son of God; and if you want to be forgiven today, you can pray a prayer like this:

God, I know that I've done things wrong. I've made mistakes, I've sinned, and I'm sorry. I believe that You sent Your Son, Jesus, to die for me. I need You in my life. I believe in You and Your Son. Please forgive me for my sins. I want to follow You. With the faith I have, I choose you today. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

By the way, it's not the words that “save” you...it's faith! It's believing that Jesus is who He says He is and will do what He says He will do! In other words, if we ask Jesus to forgive us...He will. He promises that.

Now with that being said, I NEED to stress something: ***Whether or not you FEEL like God has forgiven you is completely pointless.*** Our feelings change. Today, I'm feeling tired and mildly stressed. Tomorrow, I will feel joyful and happy. Does that mean that today God hasn't forgiven me but tomorrow He has? Nope!

The way that we know we're saved is that we KNOW we're saved. If you've done that, you ARE saved, whether you feel like it or not...

³ My question for these people is what if someone is born mute? Does that mean, since they can't make a “public confession”, that they can never be saved? Of course not!

Appendix B: How Do I Know That I'm Saved (Checklist)

In Appendix A, I explained that we can KNOW we're saved simply by trusting that Jesus is who He says He is – the Son of God – and that He will do what He says He will – save us if we sincerely ask Him to. But is there any way we can “prove” that we're saved? Well, according to GotQuestions.org:

Thankfully, God has given us ample instruction for how we can know for sure that we have eternal life. The first epistle of John was actually written for that purpose, as it states in 1 John 5:13:

I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life. - 1 John 5:13 (NLT)

There is a series of tests in 1 John that we can use to examine ourselves and our faith. As we look at them, remember that no one will perfectly fulfill all of them all the time, but they should reveal a consistent trend that characterizes our lives as we grow in grace.

- ☐ *Do you enjoy having fellowship with Christ and His redeemed people? (1 John 1:3)*
- ☐ *Would people say you walk in the light, or walk in the darkness? (1 John 1:6-7)*
- ☐ *Do you admit and confess your sin? (1 John 1:8)*
- ☐ *Are you obedient to God's Word? (1 John 2:3-5)*
- ☐ *Does your life indicate you love God rather than the world? (1 John 2:15)*
- ☐ *Is your life characterized by "doing what is right"? (1 John 2:29)*
- ☐ *Do you seek to maintain a pure life? (1 John 3:3)*
- ☐ *Do you see a decreasing pattern of sin in your life? (1 John 3:5-6) [Note: this refers to not continuing in sin as a way of life, not a total absence of sin.]*
- ☐ *Do you demonstrate love for other Christians? (1 John 3:14)*
- ☐ *Do you "walk the walk," versus just "talking the talk"? (1 John 3:18-19)*
- ☐ *Do you maintain a clear conscience? (1 John 3:21)*
- ☐ *Do you experience victory in your Christian walk? (1 John 5:4)*

If you are able to truthfully answer "Yes" to these questions (or a majority of them, and are working on the others), then your life is bearing the fruit of true salvation. Jesus said that it is by our fruits that we are known as His disciples (Matthew 7:20). Fruitless branches—professing believers who do not display the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) are cut off and thrown into the fire (John 15:6). A genuine faith is one that not only believes in God (the demons themselves do that – James 2:19), but leads to open confession of sin and obedience to Christ's commands... Genuine saving faith will always produce works; a faith that is perpetually without works is no faith at all and saves no one. (Source: <https://www.gotquestions.org/signs-saving-faith.html>) (Modifications were made to the original post to create the checklist. Please see the GotQuestions website for the full, original article.)

Please note that we all go through “seasons” in our lives. Sometimes our faith is stronger; other times we become weak or face HUGE obstacles. Like GotQuestions mentioned, this “checklist” should be viewed as a “trend”; not a “snapshot”. For example, if at college you find no healthy churches in your community, you may NOT “enjoy having fellowship with...His redeemed people”. But that's a season. The better question is: “Overall, do I enjoy having fellowship with other true Christians?”

So, based on all of this list, how are you doing?

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