

SOTERIOLOGY (128)

Jesus Christ was the greatest historical figure to ever walk this earth; therefore, most people have some acknowledgement of Christ. But that does not mean they have Him as their personal Savior.

Fact #2 - One who persists in continual disobedience does not possess eternal life. I John 2:4

Present tense verbs here indicate that one who continually says he knows Jesus Christ, but continually lives contrary to the Word of God, “is a liar and the truth is not in him.”

It has been my observation that when one is truly saved and is not living in accordance to God’s Word, there are continual doubts about one’s relationship with God and not a continual confidence. The believer who is living life in sin will often wonder if he is really saved. There is certainly anything but a confident testimony from one living life in the flesh.

Fact #3 - One who possesses eternal life and continues in sin will lose eternal rewards.
I Cor. 3:15; 9:24, 26

There is much on the line for the believer who refuses to live a spiritually disciplined life. It is biblically revealed that one may possess eternal life and lose eternal rewards. This would include a loss of governmental, management level responsibilities in eternity (i.e. Luke 12:42-44).

Fact #4 - One who possesses eternal life and continues in sin risks weakness, sickness or death. I Cor. 11:30; I John 5:16

It is a very serious matter for a true believer to persist in some sin for God can and will take a believer’s life home to be with Him (Rev. 2:21-23). We may observe that this kind of Divine action occurs after a time for repentance has been given.

Fact #5 - One who possesses eternal life and continues in sin risks church excommunication.
Matt. 18:15-18; Rom. 16:17-18; I Cor. 5:11-13; II Thess. 3:14-15; I Tim. 5:20;
Titus 3:10-11; Rev. 2:20

It will be eternally damaging for one to receive a testimony from the elders before Jesus Christ that one persisted in sin and would not repent (Heb. 13:17).

Fact #6 - One who possesses eternal life possesses it, in part, so he may produce good fruit.
John 15:8; Eph. 2:8-10; Titus 3:8

No believer is saved “by” good works, but he is saved “for” good works. We obviously have not been saved just so we can go to heaven or God would take us there at the moment of salvation. We have been saved, in part, to make a statement for Him.

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Fact #7 - The understanding of the doctrine of eternal life does not lead to a sinful lifestyle.

When we read a verse like I John 5:13, it is evident that God has written much of His Word so His people may “know” they have eternal life. Sound doctrine will always strengthen a person and will never weaken a person. It is knowledge that produces spiritual growth (II Pet. 3:18). It has often been observed that it is poor doctrine that corrupts morals, not sound doctrine (I Cor. 15:33).

The line of reasoning that says one who believes in the doctrine of eternal security is destined to go out and live in sin is purely humanistic and is not theistic. God wants His people to know they are saved.

Dr. S. Lewis Johnson, the former professor of theology at Dallas Seminary, once told the story of a banker in Scotland who was saved at a small Gospel hall in Scotland. The banker had a friend who knew of this Gospel hall and knew they taught the doctrine of eternal security. One particular day the banker’s friend approached the banker and said to him, “Ah, now you believe ‘once saved always saved!’” The banker replied, “Yes.” The banker’s friend then said, “Then you believe that you can do what you like?” The banker thought and then wisely responded, “Yes, I do, but I’ve got different likes now!”

As a pastor, I have never seen one come to an understanding of the doctrine of eternal security who wanted to go out and get into sin because he knows he is secure. In fact, I have observed just the opposite effect, time and time again, in which a person hungers to know and serve the God who saved him and sealed him.

Clarification #3 - The doctrine of eternal life is not a continual perseverance of man, but a continual perseverance of God.

The doctrine of eternal security emphasizes the faithfulness of God, not man (II Tim. 2:13). No man reaches complete sanctification and holiness in this life (Phil. 3:13). Although the new nature begins a righteous and purifying work, there will, at times, always be evidence of the old nature (Rom. 7:15-23). To place the responsibility of maintaining eternal life on any sinful human is to place an impossible burden on one who cannot possibly carry the burden. If eternal life were left to the perseverance of any man, certainly there would be no such doctrine of eternal security. However, the doctrine of eternal security rests in God who predestines, calls, justifies and glorifies (Rom. 8:30).

Again we cite Dr. Johnson on Romans 8:30: “Now I want you to notice the apostle’s use of his pronouns in verse 30. He writes, ‘moreover whom he did predestinate, them He also called.’ Note the ‘whom’ and the ‘them.’ Was anyone lost in the process of moving from predestination to calling? Then follow on in the verse as the apostle continues, ‘whom He called, them He justified.’ Was anyone lost in the process of calling and justification? Finally, Paul concludes with ‘and whom He justified, them He also glorified.’

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A glorification so certain that he writes, ‘glorified, not ‘will glorify.’ Is anyone lost in the process? ...Not a single one is lost, nor can be lost.’”

Since it is the Sovereign God who saves, it is also the Sovereign God who keeps. Salvation is God’s work, not man’s work.

QUESTION #47 – Is it possible to defend the doctrine of eternal security from the first passage in the Bible that brings up the subject of sin?

It would certainly seem logical that one place to begin looking for clues concerning this doctrine would be when sin entered the world. Had not sin entered the world, there would be no need of salvation. It stands to reason that this is a good place to begin for one who claims you can lose your salvation, doing so on the basis of sin.

The chapter of the Bible in which sin entered the world is Genesis 3. A careful examination of this chapter will prove that a onetime decision is all that is necessary to forever resolve eternity.

According to Genesis 2:9, there were two critical trees that existed in the Garden of Eden. Obviously there were many other trees, but these two were specifically significant to the eternal destiny of man. The two trees were: 1) The tree of life; 2) The tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Concerning the second tree, “knowledge of good and evil,” there is a specific warning given in Genesis 2:17. God had provided many trees in the garden from which Adam and Eve could eat (2:16), but He specifically warned that they were not to eat from the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” The warning was this–“in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.”

It is right here where we find a major grammatical point concerning this doctrinal study. The warning is clear–a onetime eating from the tree in just one day was enough to bring the sentence of death. God’s warning was not against a continual eating, but against a onetime eating.

As we move into the account of the fall of man in Genesis 3, we discover that the emphasis is on a onetime eating (i.e. Gen. 3:6). Verse 7 informs us that this onetime act was enough to open their eyes. It was this one act of disobedient eating that brought various penalties (3:16-18) and, ultimately, the death penalty upon man (Gen. 3:19). Once Adam and Eve ate of the fruit one time, neither could undo their sin. As Dr. Willard Aldrich writes, “One attitude of unbelief and act of disobedience brought death. No future abstinence from eating could undo what had taken place” (Willard M. Aldrich, “Safekeeping: What the Bible Teaches About Final Salvation,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, July 1956, p. 252).

In the aftermath of this fall, God blocked access to the “tree of life” (Gen. 3:22-24). The clear implication of verse 22 is that if one ate onetime from the tree of life, he would “forever live.” The antithetical picture here is that just as eating once from one tree brings death, so eating once from another tree could give life.

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The problem for Adam and Eve was that if they ate of the tree of life, they would “live forever” in their present death state. So God’s blocking of access to this tree is a very gracious act.

Now a critical picture in the N.T. which clearly has to do with salvation and security is the picture of eating something just once. Jesus Christ refers to Himself as the Bread of life and the only one who can give eternal life. In using this illustration, He uses an eating picture to stress that one must individually and personally accept Him as Savior (John 6:35, 41, 47-48, 50-51, 54, 58).

Now specifically in verse 51, we have the picture of eating connected to having eternal life. The simple question to ask is this—how many times does one have to eat to have eternal life? If the text indicates a onetime eating is all that is necessary for having eternal life, then eternal security is a valid and established doctrine.

Fortunately, God chose to write His N.T. Word in Greek, a very precise language. Just as in all languages, there are various tenses used to communicate various types of action. For example, if a writer wanted to communicate action that is habitual and continuous, he would use the present tense. If a writer wanted to communicate action that would take place in the future, he would use the future tense. If a writer wanted to communicate action that had been taking place in the past from some point and would continue to take place into the future, he would use the perfect tense. If a writer wanted to communicate action that took place at one specific moment or point (punctiliar) in time, he would use the aorist tense. In Greek, one is not left to guess concerning which tense is used because certain things are done to a word to clearly define the tense.

Based upon this, if the doctrine of eternal security is valid, we would expect to find the verb “eats” (6:51) in the aorist tense. The emphasis of such a verb tense would mean that if one ate at one moment or at one point in time, he would have eternal life.

When we turn to the Greek text, we discover that the verb is aorist. When we look at the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the O.T., we discover that the verb “eat” in Genesis 2:17 is also aorist. In both contexts, the act of a onetime eating or one act at one point or moment in time insures the consequences. In Genesis 2:17, eating once would bring death and it did. In John 6:51, eating once would bring eternal life and it does.

If we are honest with what God has put in writing, the first glimpse we get of sin clearly proves and establishes the validity and the reality of the doctrine of eternal security. Dr. Aldrich called this the “reversal of the same principle.” He writes: “In God’s prohibition of eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden, He stated that the one act of eating would bring death; so here we have the reversal of the same principle. There it was: “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17), and here it is, ‘If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever.’ ...In a similar way the condition in the promise of Christ is met by one act of eating” (*Ibid.*, pp. 252-253).