

SOTERIOLOGY (132)

At one moment of time, believing on Jesus Christ guarantees eternal life. If one rejects the doctrine of eternal security, one rejects the truth that God put in writing, for God's choice of verb tenses and words clearly establish this doctrine.

As we have already observed, the Gospel in which the words "eternal life" most frequently occur is the Gospel of John. In this Gospel, Jesus Christ Himself uses three different metaphorical pictures to illustrate that one finds eternal life only by believing on Him:

1. He uses the metaphorical picture of a look. John 3:14-15
2. He uses the metaphorical picture of a drink. John 4:13-14
3. He uses the metaphorical picture of eating. John 6:51

Pertaining to the first metaphor, which is a comparison of Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness with Christ's work on the cross, we discover in Num. 21:9 that the verb "looked" is aorist. In the second metaphor we discover that the verb "drinks" (John 4:14) is also aorist. In the third metaphor, the verb "eats" is also aorist.

Jesus Christ is clearly teaching that one look, one drink, one eating at one moment or point in time is enough to give eternal life. The person who looks once drinks once or eats once by believing once is guaranteed eternal life. One act of disobedience brought death and one act of believing gives eternal life. This is precisely what God has put in writing.

The person who looks one time to Jesus Christ for salvation is saved forever. Just as Paul said, "But to the one who does not work but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness" (Rom. 4:5).

QUESTION #48 – How does the word "never" establish the doctrine of eternal security?

There is a word in English that we use to express the emphatic meaning "not at any time or not on any occasion." That word is the word "never."

For example, if we say, "He will never be paroled" we actually mean there is no way at any time that this one will ever get out of prison. If we say, "He will never pass the course" what we actually mean is he has reached a point in which it is impossible for him to get a passing grade. If we say, "He never saw it coming" what we mean is at no time did he see or suspect what was about to happen. The word "never" is the strongest form of negation in English.

We believe, in this church, in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible. What this means is we believe that the Bible is all equally inspired by God (plenary) right down to the very word used (verbal). This would certainly include the word "never."

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In the Greek language, there are primarily two different words used to negate something:

- 1) “Ouk” or “ou” which is used to deny the reality of an alleged fact—“no, it did not happen;”
- 2) “May” (μη) which is used to deny something indefinitely—“no it did not happen, but the possibility is there.”

Dr. A. T. Robertson gives an excellent illustration between these two Greek negations—“ou” and “may.” If a young man decides to propose to a lady and she answers him “may” (μη), she is saying “no” but is uncertain as to whether she really means “no” and may desire to be coaxed a little more. If, on the other hand, the lady answers “ou,” she is definitely saying no and in this case there is no chance of her changing her mind at the present time.

There is, however, in Greek, a third way the woman could respond and that would be to combine the two negatives together, “ou-may” meaning “I will not marry you and there is no chance of me ever changing my mind and marrying you ever.” In other words, “I will never marry you.”

When the two negatives are combined together, the prohibition or the negation is emphatic. Dana and Mantey write: “...this doubling of the negatives we can now say unreservedly that the negatives were doubled for the purpose of stating denials or prohibitions emphatically” (H. E. Dana & Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, pp. 263-267).

The strongest way in Greek to emphatically intensify and stress the possibility of something not happening is to combine these two words—“ou may.” When this happens, the emphasis is that something will “never” occur and there is no possibility of it ever occurring. When these words are used, it is impossible for something to ever happen.

The combination of these two Greek words occurs some 94 times in the New Testament. Sometimes they are simply translated in English “not” and “no,” and sometimes they are translated by the English word “never” (W. F. Moulton, A. S. Geden, H. K. Moulton, *Concordance to the Greek Testament*, pp. 646-647).

Regardless of how the English translators translate the word, the meaning of the writer is to emphatically deny or negate both the reality and the possibility. When these two words are used in composition, we may legitimately understand them to mean that there is no possibility of something ever happening.

In the study of the doctrine of eternal security, this combination of words is extremely important because there are several passages which specifically deal with the subject of salvation and eternal life, which have been inspired by God, which contain this negation, which would cause us to conclude that the loss of salvation is an absolute impossibility.

In examining ten key passages, we must come to this conclusion if we are honest with what God put in writing:

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Passage #1 - John 4:14

The statement of Jesus Christ is “whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall “NEVER thirst” but shall spring “up to eternal life.” Three critical observations must be made: 1) The verb “drinks” is aorist, indicating a one point in time moment; 2) The word “never” is “ou may” meaning there is never any possibility of one who drinks once, to thirst again for life; 3) The promise to one who does drink once is that he will have eternal life. This one verse clearly promotes the doctrine of eternal security. Any honest examination of the grammar reveals the impossibility of losing eternal life once one has believed on Christ (John 6:40). The point is if you take Jesus Christ one, you have eternal life and there is “NEVER” a possibility of you thirsting again for eternal life.

Passage #2 - John 6:35-37

In these three verses, Jesus Christ uses “ou may” three different times to emphatically stress that one who comes to Him by faith will—1) NEVER hunger, 2) NEVER thirst, and 3) NEVER be cast out. Three impossibilities are stated: 1) It is impossible for one who believes on Christ to ever hunger for life again; 2) It is impossible for one who believes on Christ to ever thirst for life again; 3) It is impossible for one who believes on Christ, who has been brought to the Son by the Father, to ever be cast out. The point is one who has believed on Christ is completely secure because certain things are no longer a possibility. In fact, it is explicitly stated in this very context that the will of the Father is to give eternal life to those He brought to the Son (John 6:39-40).

William Van Doren, an esteemed Bible expositor and grammarian of the 1800's, said the negations—These “Greek words express double exclusion” which means “for no reason or account” (Gospel of John, p. 563). In other words, one cannot be cast out because of any reason once one has been brought to the Son by the Father.

We must always remember what Christ actually did to guarantee this promise of “never.” He came and He died and He arose which is proof positive that when we trust in Him for salvation our justification is secure and we cannot ever hunger again, we cannot ever thirst again and we cannot ever be cast out. Eternal security is not based on our faithfulness, it is based, in part, on the “ou may” promise of Jesus Christ, who, by His death, burial and resurrection, proved unequivocally that His promises are true. Our security for our salvation is found totally and completely in the work of Jesus Christ and in the Word of Jesus Christ, not in our works or human words.

Passage #3 - John 10:28

In this verse, the statement of Jesus Christ is that once He gives eternal life, he “shall NEVER (ou may) perish.” Dr. S. L. Johnson, former professor of theology at Dallas Theological Seminary, writes concerning this verse: “First take a careful look at the term ‘eternal life.’

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Jesus does not say, 'I give unto them six months life,' nor 'five years life,' nor 'eternal life until one sins.' The life He gives is 'eternal.' If it can be lost, it is not eternal life that believers receive. And second, in order to emphasize the point, our Lord adds, 'and they shall never perish.' The construction in the original text is the strongest way that one can express emphatic negation. In fact, it would not be wrong to render the clause and they shall by no means ever perish.' ...Spurgeon has a telling word here: 'See, then, Christian, you may be deprived of a thousand things without any violation of the promise. The promise is not that the ship shall not go to the bottom, but that the passengers shall get to the shore. The promise is not that the house shall not be burned; the pledge is that you who are in the house shall escape. 'They never perish'" (S. L. Johnson, *Once Saved, Always Saved*, p. 5).

In this one verse, Jesus Christ clearly states that when He gives eternal life to someone, they shall NEVER perish. In Christ's mind, the concept of having eternal life is equated with the concept of never perishing. Thus one who has eternal life is eternally secure. It is impossible for one who has eternal life to potentially perish; it cannot ever happen.

Willard Aldrich observed: "The Greek negative employed in this passage is a combination of two negatives ('ou' and 'may') thus forming the strongest possible statement 'they shall NEVER perish.' This leaves no room for the supposition that one having eternal life 'could' give it back" (Willard Aldrich, "Is Salvation Probationary," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, p. 95).

In other words, for one who is saved there is never the possibility of him perishing or not being saved. This is precisely the point of Jesus Christ.

Passage #4 - John 11:26

Here is another NEVER promise of our Lord. The promise is that one who believes in Him "shall NEVER (ou may) die." The point of eternal security is further strengthened if we realize that Christ is saying this in the context of the death of Lazarus (11:14) and He is saying this to Martha, one of Lazarus' sisters (11:21). Although in this context Christ intended to physically raise Lazarus to show that life is found in Him, this discussion occurs in the context of one who has physically and literally died.

The Apostle Paul makes it clear that no one lives for himself or dies for himself (Rom. 14:7). In other words, both life and death are ordained by God and the destiny of one's eternity is in His hands. The ONE and ONLY issue that determines whether when one physically dies he has eternal life or eternal damnation (sometimes referred to as eternal death) is the issue of believing on Jesus Christ (John 3:16; 5:24; 6:40, 47).

Now the point of this verse (John 11:26) is that once one has believed on Jesus Christ, it is impossible for him to suffer eternal death. There is NEVER (ou may) the possibility of one who has believed on Christ to eternally perish. Christ's question to Martha is one that needs to be asked to every person: "Do you believe this?" (11:26b).

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In this case, the physical proof of this eternal reality is the resurrection of Lazarus (11:43-44). When Christ gives one eternal life, he shall NEVER die.

Passage #5 - Romans 4:8

Here is a remarkable text concerning salvation, for it speaks of a man who is in such a blessed state that God will NEVER (ou may) take sin into account. The Greek text can literally be translated this way: “Blessed is a man whom NEVER the Lord will calculate sin” (My own translation of—(μακαριος ου (ου μη) λογισηται κυριος αμαρτιαν).

The verb “take into account” (NASV) is one that means to judicially calculate, count or reckon. It speaks of a judicial decree in which one, in this context, NEVER has his sin calculated against him in any condemnatory way (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 270).

Naturally, one who stands in a relationship with God in such a way that God will NEVER calculate his sin against him is unquestionably a “blessed man.” The main and most obvious question to answer is—how does one get into this state of blessedness?

In the context of Romans 4, the word “take into account” is repeatedly used: 4:3 - “reckoned”; 4:4 - “reckoned”; 4:5 - “reckoned”; 4:6 - “reckons”; and 4:8 - “take into account.” Now the specific point Paul is making concerning this judicial calculation is that it does not come by works, but only by faith in Jesus Christ (4:2, 3, 5, 6). When one believes on Jesus Christ, apart from any human works, his lawless deeds are forgiven, his sins are gone and he NEVER needs to worry about the condemnatory wrath of God (Rom. 4:7-8, 24).

In very plain, legal and inspired language, God states that it is possible for one to be in a relationship with Him in which the possibility of Him calculating sin against the individual is an impossibility. This privileged relationship cannot be entered into by works, even the works of a man like Abraham, but only by faith in Jesus Christ.

Once a person believes on Jesus Christ, he is judicially declared righteous by God forever (justification) and the Lord will NEVER calculate sin against him and condemn him. This is a blessed state of being eternally secure.

Passage #6 - Hebrews 10:17

Here is a verse that states it is possible for one to be in a relationship with God in which God will NEVER remember sins and lawless acts. The words “no more” are “ou may” meaning “never,” “no not ever!”

What is certainly implied by this statement is that there are sins that could be remembered if God chose to remember them. Something obviously happened that moved God to cancel the sin debt or condemnation and moved God to not even remember the sin account. It is well to note from verse 17 that the word “sins” is plural as is the word “deeds.”

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In other words, when God decides not to remember the sin of a person, it includes all the sins and all the lawless deeds. There have been many times and many ways that we have sinned against God. The plurality indicates that sinless perfectionism is not a real possibility in the mind of God.

Now, of course the real question is what does one have to do in order to get into the position where God never remembers one's sins and deeds? The answer is found in the context of Hebrews 10. The context is the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ came to do something that the blood of animals could never do—take away sin (Heb. 10:3-4, 11). Christ came and offered Himself once as a sacrifice for sin (10:12). The point of verse 17 is this—once one has entered into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ by faith, his sins have been forgiven (10:18) and there is nothing further anyone needs to do. God will NEVER remember the condemnatory sins or lawless deeds. They are washed away by the blood of the Lamb (10:19) and He who promises to do this “is faithful” (10:23).

Passage #7 - Hebrews 13:5

The promise to the believer is that God will NEVER (ou may) desert the believer or NEVER (ou may) forsake the believer. If a believer can lose his salvation, then God is a liar in this statement for He would leave or forsake the believer if the believer backslid or crossed some imagined line of sin. If God states that He NEVER will forsake or desert a believer, that believer cannot ever be lost, therefore, he is completely secure.

Passage #8 - I Peter 2:6

Here is another “ou may” construction and the statement is “he who believes shall NEVER be disappointed.”

The Greek word “disappointed” is one that refers to being in a state of dishonor, disgrace or shame (Smith, pp. 233-234). Logically speaking, there cannot be any worse state of dishonor, disgrace or shame than to have been one who, as those who teach you may lose your salvation suggest, was once in some state of salvation and then lost it. Such a one would be eternally disappointed forever.

The specific promise of this verse is that one who believes in Christ shall NEVER be eternally disappointed. Believing in Christ will NEVER leave one in an eternal state of dishonor, disgrace or shame. This immediately negates any possibility of a loss of salvation.

One who believes on Christ may be ashamed of his lack of dedication (I John 2:28) and he may lose his rewards (I Cor. 3:15), but he will NEVER be ashamed that he believed on Christ and will NEVER be disappointed with eternal life.