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2) The man who initially rejected the doctrine of eternal security, Pelagius, was deemed a heretic by the greatest Bible teachers alive at the time. To hold to the view of Pelagius, is to hold to the views of one judged evil and corrupt by the greatest biblical teachers who lived in his era.

3) Those who have defended the doctrine of eternal security throughout history have been known to be serious, systematic students of God's Word. Augustine, Martin Luther and John Calvin were known and still are known for their serious, systematic approach to Bible books and Bible doctrines. In fact, all three still have their writings and commentaries preserved to this very day. The conclusions that these men came to were obviously based upon careful analysis of God's Word, whereas we know in the case of Pelagius that his conclusions were primarily based upon his emotional reaction to Augustine.

4) Great defenders of the doctrine of eternal security have generally been recognized as some of the greatest Bible students to have ever been used by God. All of them are known for their systematic study of the books of the Bible and Doctrine. For example, Martin Luther is known for his famous commentaries on Romans and Galatians. God used Luther to begin the Reformation. John Calvin has written a commentary on practically every book of the Bible and he also wrote a Systematic Theology, Institutes of the Christian Religions. Any sober-minded thinker must ask why is it that men such as Donald Grey Barnhouse, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, H. A. Ironside, Lewis Sperry Chafer, C. I. Scofield, and Jonathan Edwards, all concluded that the doctrine of eternal security was a valid doctrine? Why can't we find the great expositions of the Bible by Pelagius or Arminius? Why is it that today's recognized systematic teachers of God's Word defend the doctrine of eternal security? Men like J. Vernon McGee, John Miles, John Walvoord, Charles Ryrie and Chuck Swindoll. We cannot help but observe that those who systematically study the Bible and Bible doctrine are those who come to the realization that eternal security is a true and valid doctrine of the Bible.

5) Those that reject the doctrine of eternal security are not recognized, generally speaking, as being serious, systematic students of God's Word. In fact, it may be generally observed that those who reject eternal security neglect systematic study of the Bible. It is no coincidence that serious, systematic students conclude eternal security is a valid doctrine and those who are not serious about systematic study reject it.

Based upon the history of the doctrine, one is on very solid ground when one accepts the doctrine of eternal security. On the other hand, one is in a very unstable theological arena when one rejects it.

QUESTION #50 – What passages do those who claim you can lose your salvation use to try to support their position?

Before examining the key passages used by those who claim you can lose your salvation, some preliminary matters need to be considered. We begin with an accurate statement by Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer:

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“Of all the contentions offered by Arminians, their appeal to the Scriptures is that feature most worthy of candid consideration; for it will be admitted by all who attempt to expound the Word of God that there are several passages, which, when taken in what appears on the surface to be their meaning, do seem to imply that one once saved might be lost again. The challenge is one respecting exact meaning of the portions of Scripture involved and how in the divine mind, since the Word of God cannot contradict itself, they are to be harmonized with a much greater array of Scripture testimony—a body of truth which Arminians seldom essay to discuss—which permit of no varied interpretations and which dogmatically assert the eternal security of the true child of God. The challenge is also how these supposed insecurity passages may be made to harmonize with the truth of the believer’s position both in the elective purpose of God, as an object of sovereign grace, and in the Body of Christ with all that that membership secures. It will be seen, also, that there is no strain placed upon those Scriptures, when so interpreted that they harmonize with the passages which declare the safekeeping of Christians. Over against this, the passages asserting security, along with the demands of the doctrine of sovereign election and sovereign grace, can be interpreted in but one way, unless great violence is done to them by the taking from or adding to them of mere human opinions. That Arminians do not discuss them is a significant fact in itself” (Vol. 3, pp. 290-291).

Dr. Chafer makes some valid observations regarding the Arminian’s appeal to Scripture:

- 1) Arminians neglect the context.
- 2) Arminians settle for surface level understanding.
- 3) Arminians neglect exact and precise meaning and interpretation.
- 4) Arminians fail to harmonize pet passages with other passages which clearly contradict them.
- 5) Arminians neglect and even reject the biblical doctrines of divine election and divine grace.
- 6) Arminians do not consider the matter of divine sovereignty.

Any who approach the Scriptures in this way will never come to a true understanding and interpretation of any passage or doctrine. These are critical matters of interpretation.

Arminians do tend to highlight a few verses of the Bible without any attempt to harmonize the verses with their immediate context or the rest of the Bible and its doctrines and theology. To sum up the main point, generally speaking, the Arminian fails to study to rightly divide the Word of truth.

It will be admitted that there are a couple of very difficult passages that seem to have presented a degree of difficulty in interpretation for some outstanding Bible expositors.

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However, it must also be admitted that whenever one does come across one of these rare passages, it is imperative that obscure passages always be interpreted in light of clear and plain passages that deal with the same theme. It is never right to interpret several clear and plain passages by one or two obscure texts. Direct, clear revelation is always the basis of interpretation for seemingly difficult passages.

In any form of study, one always moves from the simple to the complex, not the reverse.

In most instances, the context will clear up the supposed problem. But in situations where there appears to still be some difficulty, one must always begin with the plain teachings of other passages which deal with the same theme. It is always the majority of passages that determine key doctrine and true meaning and interpretation.

There are a series of major interpretive errors that Arminians tend to make in their handling of the Word of God. For example, they tend to totally overlook any dispensational setting of the passage. They also fail to distinguish between passages that are dealing with false teachers. They also fail to draw a distinction between the profession of salvation and the possession of salvation. They also fail to distinguish between passages that pertain to fellowship as opposed to those that pertain to salvation. There is also a neglect to distinguish between passages that refer to a believer's rewards rather than to his salvation. In fact, it is not uncommon to discover that Arminians have never even heard of the concept of earning or losing rewards.

The root of this whole problem is a failure to "rightly divide" the Word of God. As Dr. Chafer so eloquently said, "Failure to rightly divide the Word of Truth is the root of doctrinal evil" (*Ibid.*, p. 292).

In order to systematize this section, we will examine the various passages under key interpretive headings:

Interpretive Heading #1 - Passages of Scripture which are misinterpreted dispensationally.

There are certain passages that an Arminian claims will support his belief that one can lose his salvation, which do not even remotely refer to New Testament, Grace Age salvation. Passages under this heading refer to a completely different dispensation and have nothing to do with the doctrine of eternal security as it relates to the present dispensation:

1) Matthew 24:13 - When this passage is used to support a view that you can lose your salvation, it is done so by suggesting that being saved is conditioned by enduring to the end.

A close examination of the context will quickly inform us that the passage is not dealing with the salvation of a soul in the Church Age; it is referring to the survival of an Israelite in the Tribulation. The primary thrust of this text is one aimed at Israel.

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The prophet Jeremiah predicted an unprecedented time of trouble and distress for the nation Israel. He also predicted that many of the nation Israel would be saved and delivered from this terrible time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7). The Apostle Paul would later reveal that this event would occur after the Church Age or Gentile Age was complete (Rom. 11:25-26).

The context of Matthew 24 is that the disciples were interested in knowing when Christ would return to deliver Israel to her Kingdom in view of the fact that He had just told Israel that the program of God was leaving her for awhile (Matt. 23:37-39; 24:3). These Jewish disciples wanted to know what signs would precede Christ's second coming in which He would deliver Israel to her Kingdom. We must realize that the book of Matthew is designed to present Jesus Christ as King of the Jews, who specifically came to Israel to offer her the kingdom.

Christ, in answering the question, gives a series of things that will happen to Israel just prior to His return to establish His kingdom (i.e. Matt. 25:34). One of the things He specifically points out is that ALL nations will turn against Israel (Matt. 24:9). The Psalmist described the same event (Psalm 79).

There will be a major worldwide outbreak of anti-Semitism prior to Christ's return and many Jewish people will be killed. For the Jew, living during this time known as "Jacob's distress or trouble," it will appear that the entire race is about to be extinguished, which, in fact, it actually would be were it not for the sovereign intervention of God (Matt. 24:22). Christ promises that the Jews will not be totally extinguished and says, "whoever endures to the end will be saved" (Matt. 24:13, 29-31). That word "endure" is a Greek word that means to patiently wait. Christ is challenging Israel, the nation who will be His primary emphasis during the tribulation (i.e. Rev. 7), not to give up hope during the Tribulation, but to wait patiently for His return. He wants His disciples to realize that even though it may appear that the nation will be utterly destroyed, it will not be. Christ will return and will deliver many Jews who endured the seven-year Tribulation to the Kingdom. At this point in history, every Jew will say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord" (Matt. 23:39).

This passage, this context and this verse has nothing to do with N.T. salvation or Christianity. This passage, this context and this verse has nothing to do with the doctrine of eternal security. In fact, for Israel, this text proves just the opposite—God will always preserve His people.

A proper application of this text is not using it to suggest that one may lose his salvation, but to use it to encourage the believer that we need to patiently endure troubles and trials and wait on God, for in His time He will deliver us from them all.

2) Ezekiel 18:20-26 - This is an extremely popular text that the Arminian uses in his attempt to prove one may lose his salvation.

Before giving the true interpretation of the passage, what immediately should be observed is that this is an O.T. passage, specifically aimed at Israel, several hundred years before N.T. Christianity.