

SOTERIOLOGY (149)

4) Psalm 51:11 - Here is one of the most famous texts of the Arminian, often cited as proof one may lose his salvation.

What needs to be immediately observed is that those who use this verse to support their position make NO attempt to “rightly divide” the context or the dispensation. No attempt is made whatsoever, to draw any distinction between the theology of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

We may easily observe that God Himself draws many sharp distinctions between the Old Testament dispensation and the New Testament dispensation.

A. In the O.T., animals were sacrificed; in the N.T. they are not.

B. In the O.T., the dispensation is law; in the N.T. it is grace (John 1:17).

C. In the O.T., God’s program is aimed at Israel, not Gentiles (John 10:16).

D. In the O.T., God’s Spirit was “with” people; in the N.T. He is “in” them (John 14:17).

These are major differences which must be admitted and considered. Those who point to this passage as a proof text for losing one’s salvation totally neglect these key theological and doctrinal matters. It stands to reason, then, that true doctrine and theology will never be understood in this neglect. Certainly many misinterpretations, misrepresentations and miscalculations will occur when these key matters are avoided or neglected.

As a N.T. believer saved by the finished work of Jesus Christ on Calvary, we need to grasp two critical biblical facts concerning our salvation:

A. Nothing can ever separate us from God or His love. Rom. 8:28-39

B. Nothing can ever take the Holy Spirit from a believer. John 14:16; Eph. 4:30

These two important N.T. points must be clearly understood before attempting to make any application of Psalm 51:11.

In interpreting the first part of the verse—“Do not cast me away from Thy presence”—two key points must be admitted:

1. It is not possible for a person to be cast someplace where God no longer sees the individual because the “eyes of the LORD are in every place.” Prov. 15:3; Psalm 139:7-10

2. David believed this was something that could happen to him while on earth. This was not something he was afraid of after death. He was concerned about this happening while he lived.

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David's concept of the "presence of the LORD" is equated with God's special observance, care and direction for a believer who is righteous. When we examine other Davidic Psalms, we learn that David used this concept to describe:

- 1) God's special direction that brings full joy. Psalm 16:11
- 2) God's special guidance that gives His wisdom. Psalm 17:2
- 3) God's special care that gives His protection. Psalm 31:20

We may legitimately understand David's concept of the "presence of the LORD" as being a blessed state in which one was in a favorable relationship with God so that God would bless the believer with joy, wisdom and protection.

The true interpretation is this:

David recognized he had greatly sinned against God (Psalm 51:1). He went to God and honestly admitted his sin and confessed it (Psalm 51:2-7). It is very clear, as any true believer will testify that when one has sinned there is a loss of joy and sense of a close relationship with God. The believer realizes he has sinned and this has blocked the blessings of God. David feared because of his sin he might never be joyful again. He feared God might punish him and not grant him the wisdom he once had. He realized God could remove His protection from David and even legitimately, in accordance with His Law, allow him to be executed. So after confessing his sin, he asked God to give him his joy once again (51:8), to create in him a clean heart and make him stable (51:10) and continue to bless him and not take His "presence" from him.

In interpreting the second part of the verse "do not take Thy Holy Spirit from me," it again becomes critical that we consider key interpretive matters.

In the Old Testament, the concept of removing the Holy Spirit was not one forfeiting salvation, it was one of forfeiting service. This is something we can certainly see from the life of Samson (Judges 14:6; 16:20), and from the life of Saul (I Sam. 16:13-14; 28:16). David had literally seen God take Saul right out of His office of being King of Israel. God had taken the kingdom away from Saul and given it to David as a result of Saul's sin (I Chron. 10:13-14). He was very aware that Saul's disobedience had cost Saul his reign (I Sam. 15:12-23).

In the context of Psalm 51, David had greatly sinned against God as King of Israel. He knew that as a great leader of Israel, he was highly accountable to God for his sin. He knew his joy was gone and he knew he needed God's wisdom and protection to function and to survive as king. He knew God could take his kingdom and reign away from him just as He did with Saul. He feared his anointing as king would be removed by God, so he specifically prayed that God would continue His presence and His power in his life. This passage has absolutely nothing to do with the thought of losing salvation. It is dealing with the thought of losing God's blessings and losing one's key role of service.

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A proper New Testament application is this—any leader who sins against God risks losing God’s blessings and God’s ministry. The leader who does sin needs to go directly to God and honestly confess his sin and ask God for His cleansing mercy and for the privilege of continuing in leadership.

This text is applicable for every N.T. believer. Many of these same principles are found in I John. Sin breaks intimate fellowship with God (1:3; 6-7). Sin causes a loss of full joy (1:4). Sin causes shame (2:28). Sin causes a lack of assurance of salvation (3:19).

When a believer chooses to sin against God, there is a loss of joy, confidence and a fear that God may send His chastisement. What should a believer do when he sins? He should do exactly what David did in Psalm 51—go straight to God and honestly and openly confess the sin (I John 1:9). Here is where one will find the forgiveness of God.

This is the true interpretation and application of Psalm 51:11. This text has nothing to do with losing one’s salvation. The LORD God had guaranteed David, long before he sinned, that He would give him special eternal blessings (II Sam. 7:4-16). David never questioned his salvation, but after his sin he did question whether or not God would still use him. He wanted once again to be used by God and blessed by God in service.

Psalm 51:11 is David’s prayer to God so that he could continue to be king and be blessed of God while being the king. According to I Chron. 29:26-28, God did positively answer David’s prayer.

5) II Thess. 2:3 - Here is a N.T. passage that is dispensationally misinterpreted and misapplied concerning the issue of eternal security. One who cites this text claims that the “apostasy” (falling away) refers to Christians who were once saved, but then fall away from their faith and are no longer saved.

There are two immediate contextual observations which may be made:

1) Nowhere does the context suggest that those who fall away are believers.

The word “apostasy” is one that means to tear away or to fall away (Smith, p. 54). Although the text is designed to instruct the “brethren” (2:1), it is not apostasy committed by the brethren.

2) This apostasy or falling away precedes the “man of lawlessness” being revealed.

The point Paul is making here is that the Antichrist will not be revealed until there has been a great turning from God. By using the word “apostasy,” Paul is referring to some major revolt or defection, some major tearing away from God that will precede the revealing of the “man of lawlessness.” The true interpretation is that just prior to the revealing of the Antichrist, there will be a major revolt against God and His Word.