

ETERNAL SECURITY (18)

QUESTION #8 – What formula did theologians use to determine that the doctrine of eternal security was a valid doctrine?

The doctrine of eternal security really was a conclusion based upon four critical theological points that were Divinely inspired and clearly revealed by the Apostle Paul. The doctrine of eternal security, as a formulated doctrine, really has its Biblical roots in Pauline doctrine and instruction.

We would naturally expect that this doctrine would come from Paul, because God specifically gave Paul the task of writing the Gospel (**Romans 1:1; Galatians 1:11**). Paul also made it clear that the Gospel he spoke and wrote was given directly to him by Jesus Christ (**Galatians 1:12**). It comes as no surprise then that if the doctrine of eternal security is a true doctrine of New Testament, Grace Age salvation, the deep theological roots will be found in Pauline theology, which even the Apostle Peter admitted was very, very deep (**II Peter 3:15-16**).

As we shall see, all N.T. writers, which properly studied, teach the same doctrine. The Apostle John uses the words “eternal life” more than any other writer. However, the theology of the doctrine will be found in the writings of Paul, since it was Paul’s specific privilege to record the doctrine of the Gospel. We, along with other theologians, may observe that Paul stresses four critical theological points that demand the doctrine of eternal security.

(Theological Point #1) - The depravity of man.

The Apostle Paul taught over and over again that there was nothing good that sinful man could ever do to commend himself to a Holy God. Paul specifically stressed that man, in and of himself, was totally alienated from God and dead in his trespasses and sins: **Romans 3:10-12, 23; 7:18, 23; I Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1; 4:18; Titus 1:15; 3:5**.

Depravity does not mean that a man is as depraved as he may become, nor does it mean that a sinner has no knowledge of God or conscience of right and wrong. Depravity does not mean that a sinner will indulge in every sinful activity, or not recognize one who is really right with God and doing what is right. What depravity means is that **before God, a sinner stands, in and of himself, completely condemned and guilty**. There is nothing in the sinner that deserves or merits eternal life. All sinners stand before God far short of His glory and, therefore, no sinner deserves or merits the right to spend all eternity living with a Holy God. There is absolutely no doubt that Paul taught this doctrine most definitely.

(Theological Point #2) - The grace of God.

This important theological point naturally stems from the previous one. Since all men are depraved sinners in God’s estimation, and since all men have actually and factually fallen far short of the glory of God, and since no human deserves eternal life, salvation must be a gracious gift of God.

ETERNAL SECURITY (19)

Time and time again Paul emphasizes this very fact: **Romans 5:15, 17, 21; Ephesians 2:8**. In Paul's opening remarks to churches he **always** refers to God's grace: **Romans 1:7; I Corinthians 1:3; II Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2, Colossians 1:2; I Thessalonians 1:1; II Thessalonians 1:2; I Timothy 1:2; II Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4; Philemon 3**. These salutations express more than just a greeting; they express a theology that begins with the grace of God based upon the sinfulness of man. Paul never viewed salvation as something depraved sinners deserved. He viewed salvation as a marvelous provision of God's grace.

(Theological Point #3) - The election of God.

This key point naturally stems from the preceding two, namely all men are depraved sinners who, in and of themselves, cannot merit a relationship with God, nor will they choose God. This particular point basically emphasizes the Pauline teaching that since all men are sinners and cannot and will not, in and of themselves, choose God and since salvation is a gracious gift of God, then those who are saved are in fact chosen and elected by God to be saved.

Paul is the one who did emphasize the election of God in salvation: **Romans 8:30, 33; 9:14-24**. Paul also makes it clear that the elective choice of God was made before the foundation of the world (**Ephesians 1:4**). It is not surprising that Paul develops this doctrine because the gospel was taught directly to him by Jesus Christ (**Galatians 1:12**), and Jesus Christ taught the very same thing while He was here on earth (**John 6:44; 15:16, 19**). The Apostle Peter also taught this doctrine (**I Peter 1:1-2**) and ironically, so did James (**James 1:18**). Certainly it was Paul who truly stressed this doctrine (**i.e. Colossians 3:12; I Thessalonians 1:4; II Timothy 2:10; Titus 1:1**), but even Moses believed and taught the same truth (**Deuteronomy 29:4**).

Election is a very important doctrine to eternal security, because those who are the elect are those who will be glorified (**Romans 8:30**). Dr. Chafer, in quoting Dr. Ralph Wardlaw, writes: "Election is election to salvation; not to privilege merely, or the enjoyment of the means of salvation, but through these means, to salvation itself. If this be the Bible doctrine, then it follows inevitably, that all who are elected to salvation shall obtain salvation. To hold the former and question the latter would be self-contradictory. Perseverance is a consequence of election and involved in it. There can properly be no personal election to salvation without it. The one doctrine is necessary to the integrity of the other. Instead of being distinct doctrines, they are integrate parts of the same doctrine" (Vol. 3, p. 269).

Since no man seeks God nor merits salvation (**depravity**), and since salvation is a Divine gift of God to an undeserving, unmeriting sinner (**grace**), God obviously determines to give this gift of salvation to whomever He desires (**election**).

(Theological Point #4) - The eternal security of God.

Eternal security, then, becomes a doctrine that is based upon Pauline teaching concerning salvation. Paul reveals that no man deserves to be saved or, in and of himself, will choose to be saved (depravity). Paul teaches that salvation is a gracious gift of God (grace).

ETERNAL SECURITY (20)

Paul teaches that God chooses to give salvation to some before the foundation of the world (election). Therefore, eternal security is a substantiated Pauline doctrine, not only due to the fact that he says it, but also because his theology demands it.

The Pauline formula is this: Depravity + Grace + Election = Security.

Since salvation is not based on the works or merits of sinful men and is based purely on the grace of God, then whoever receives the gift of salvation from God is automatically secure because it was never based on any merit. Election based on no merit demands eternal security. Grace takes any possibility of merit out of salvation. Election means God's choice for salvation cannot ever be based on merit. Eternal security means God's eternal salvation is not based on man's merit but on God's gracious elective choices.

Those who deny the doctrine of eternal security also tamper with other precious doctrines. Eternal security is much more than just some tossed out data for people to play some mental and theological gymnastics. It is doctrine intricately weaved into other critical doctrines. The doctrine of eternal security is a doctrine rooted in "the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God (**Romans 11:33**). To deny eternal security is also to deny other precious doctrines of God's Word.

When one holds to the Biblical record which teaches a no works, pure grace salvation given by God as a gift to whomever He chooses, one must agree with and hold to the doctrine of eternal security.

QUESTION #9 – Is there any hint of eternal security in the first passage that brings up the subject of sin?

One who claims a person may lose his salvation does so on the basis of sin. The basic belief is if one believes and then backslides into sin, one may lose his salvation. It would seem that a very logical place to begin looking for clues as to whether or not this is a valid doctrine would be at the beginning, when sin entered the world. Had not sin entered the world, there would be no need of salvation. It stands to reason that we must carefully look at the passage that describes that first act that brought about the need for salvation.

The chapter of the Bible in which sin entered the world is **Genesis 3**. A careful examination of the context and of certain facts in this chapter clearly enable us to observe that a onetime decision, not multiple decisions, is all it takes to forever make one right with God.

According to **Genesis 2:9**, there were two critical trees that existed in the Garden of Eden. Obviously there were many other trees (**i.e. Genesis 2:16**), but these two were 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.

ETERNAL SECURITY (21)

Concerning the second tree, there is a **warning** given in Genesis 2:17. God provided many trees in the garden from which one could eat; however, He warned against eating from the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” The specific warning was, “in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.”

It is right here where we find a critical grammatical point concerning this doctrinal study. The warning is very, very clear - a **onetime** eating from this tree is enough to bring the sentence of death. God’s warning is not against continual eating, it is against a onetime eating.

As we move next to the account of the fall of man in **Genesis 3**, we discover that again the text emphasizes a onetime eating of both Adam and Eve (**Genesis 3:6**). **Verse 7** informs us that just this one act was enough to open their eyes. It was this one act of disobedience that brought to them various penalties (**Genesis 3:16-18**) and ultimately the death penalty (**Genesis 3:19**). Once Adam and Eve ate of the fruit one time, they could not undo the sin. Dr. Willard Aldrich, an esteemed Bible teacher in the mid part of the 20th century, 1950s, wrote: “One attitude of unbelief and 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*, Bibiotheca Sacra, July 1956, p. 252).

In the aftermath of this fall, God blocked access to the “tree of life” (**Genesis 3:22-24**). The clear implication of **verse 22** is that if one ate one time from the tree of life, he would “live forever,” or he would have “eternal life.” The antithetical picture is just as eating once from one tree brings death, so eating once from another tree could give life. The problem for Adam and Eve was if they ate of the tree of life after their sin, they would live forever in their death state. God’s blocking of Adam and Eve from eating from this tree was really a gracious act. However, for the purpose of this study, the point to observe is that eating once from the tree is enough to give eternal life.

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

In **John 6:51**, we have the picture of eating connected with having eternal life. The question to resolve in the matter of eternal security is “**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 doctrine. If on the other hand the text indicates a more than once eating is required, then the doctrine can be called into question.

Fortunately for us, God put into writing in the Greek language His N.T. revelation. The language chosen by God was very common and very precise. There are various tenses used in Greek to communicate various kinds of actions. For example, if a N.T. writer wanted to communicate a habitual and continuous type of action, he would use the present tense.

ETERNAL SECURITY (22)

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 and would continue on into the future, he would use the perfect tense. If a writer wanted to communicate action that took place at a specific moment or point (punctiliar) in time, he would use the aorist tense.

Now, obviously, if eternal security is in fact a true and sound doctrine, we would expect to find the verb “eats” (**John 6:51**) in the aorist tense. The emphasis of this tense of verb would mean that if one ate at one moment or point in time, one would have eternal life. When we look at the Septuagint - the Greek translation of the O.T., we discover that the verb “eat” in **Genesis 2:17** is also in the aorist tense. **In other words, in both contexts the act of a onetime eating, or one act in one point or moment of time, insures the consequences. In Genesis 2:17, eating once would bring death, which it did. In John 6:51, eating once would bring eternal life, which it does.**

If one is honest with what God has actually put into writing, the first glimpse we get of sin clearly establishes the validity and the reality of the doctrine of eternal security. Dr. Aldrich calls 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 that condition in the promise of Christ is met by one act of eating” (*Ibid.*, pp. 252-253).

A one moment in time believing on Jesus Christ guarantees eternal life. If one rejects the doctrine of eternal security, one rejects the choice of verbs and words God put into writing.

*As we have already observed, the Gospel of the Bible in which the words “eternal life” occur most is the Gospel of John. In this Gospel, Jesus Christ uses three different metaphorical pictures to illustrate that one finds eternal life by believing on Him: 1) He uses the picture of a look (**John 3:14-15**); 2) He uses the picture of a drink (**John 4:13-14**); 3) He uses the picture of eating (**John 6:51**). In **Numbers 21:9**, the verb “looked” is aorist. In **John 4:14**, the verb “drinks” is aorist. In **John 6:51**, the verb “eats” is aorist. Jesus Christ is teaching one look, one drink, one eating at one moment or point in time gives eternal life. The man who looks once to Jesus Christ, or drinks once from Jesus Christ, or eats once of Jesus Christ by believing once on Jesus Christ is guaranteed eternal life. One act of disobedience brought death. One act of believing on Jesus Christ gives eternal life.

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