

Your Salvation is Not Assured Until the End!

The evangelist paces back and forth across the stage like a caged tiger. With neck veins visible and sweat trickling down his cheeks, he shakes his finger at the auditorium ceiling and thunders to his audience, “Will the Father in heaven permit one of His own children, for whom the Savior died on the cross, to ever fall into the depths of hell and become lost? I’m telling you right now — the answer is NEVER! Give Him praise and glow-ry!”

Many professed “born-again” evangelicals would respond with a collective “Amen, brother!” to this man’s statement. There is no doubt in their minds that their salvation is already a certainty.

They believe they are destined for heavenly bliss no matter what they do or how they may sin between now and their last breath. As one evangelical describes it, “It is as if they have boarded a nonstop train bound for heaven. This faith train may pass through dark and perilous places, but it will never discharge a person with a reservation short of his glorious destination.”

The doctrine of eternal security or “once saved, always saved” is a widely believed teaching. Although no such terms exist anywhere in the Bible, what the preacher says about the belief may on first glance sound plausible, but is he right?

A representative passage very popular with those who believe in being forever saved at conversion is John 10:27-29: “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand.”

“See,” they say, “once He saves us we can never perish and no one can separate us from Him. His word is absolute and He cannot lie.”

Their statement cannot be denied. The question is, when does He grant us life everlasting? Are we “saved” immediately at our conversion? Is it ever possible to fall from grace? The issue of timing is the crux of the matter.

A companion verse to John 10:27-29 and a key that unlocks it and similar passages is found in Matthew 25:32-34, speaking of the Savior on the day of judgment: “And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

The setting in Yahshua’s statement is the earth at His Second Coming. When He returns he will judge the earth and at that specific time will reward the faithful, both living and dead, with salvation. He confirms this in Revelation 22:12, showing the basis on which He gives rewards: “Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work

shall be.” Two verses later He adds, “Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”

Doing His commandments — obeying His laws — is what makes us worthy for eternal life, symbolized by the tree of life. The implied opposite, then, means that if we don’t do His commandments we will not have this special right to everlasting life.

To be judged worthy by adhering to commandments and being rewarded according to works certainly doesn’t square with the popular teaching that salvation is immediate, automatic, and inevitable for the chosen. Unless we understand the truth about when and how we are saved, resting in the false notion that our salvation is forever secure could give us false security and in fact jeopardize our eternal future.

Some Believe They Have No Choice

There are those who take this idea of eternal security even a step further. They believe that because salvation is “all of Yahweh,” you are saved whether you want to be or not! Even though salvation involves both you and Yahweh, even if you decide you don’t want it Yahweh will carry you through anyway because it is His will to do so.

One such proponent explains it this way, “Eternal security, then, is the unbreakable relationship with the integrity of [Elohim]. Neither [Elohim] nor man nor angel can destroy the relationship which begins at salvation. There is no sin we can commit. There is no activity on our part that can neutralize it or destroy it. It is something we have permanently and perfectly both now and forever.”

An even more extreme position, promoted by men like Charles Stanley and Charles Ryrie, says that even if a person becomes an unbeliever, that person will still remain saved. This teaching essentially takes away any free choice from human beings. Yahweh may just as well have created humankind with an inability to sin. The whole idea of freedom to choose right over wrong that Yahweh has granted human beings since Eden is pointless in view of this extreme doctrine. He’ll save you in spite of yourself! But is that really the case?

A Scriptural truth that is not understood by many is that Yahweh does not save us **in** our sins, He saves us **from** our sins — from the death penalty that we because of our sins deserve. We cannot continue in sin and still expect Him to redeem us for His Kingdom. In fact, He makes it clear that He will not do so. “The wages of sin is death,” Paul wrote in Romans 6:23. Sins must be repented of and no longer indulged in. If we are in unrepented sin we will not be granted everlasting life.

Yahweh does not reward sin. Notice: “Know you not that the unrighteous [lawbreakers] shall not inherit the Kingdom of Elohim? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom,” 1Corinthians 6:9-10.

By definition, sin is the breaking of any of Yahweh’s laws, 1John 3:4.

Clearly, it does matter if a person remains true to Yahweh and it matters very much whether he or she indulges in the sin of this world. Paul tells us, “Be not deceived; Elohim is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. For he that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting,” Galatians 6:7-8.

Was Paul Even Sure of His Own Salvation?

Surely a man like the Apostle Paul, who wrote the majority of the New Testament and had direct revelatory teaching from Yahshua (Gal. 1:11-12), would know whether he himself had salvation assured. If the eternal security doctrine is true, then Paul of all people believed it and taught it. Right? On the contrary.

Read the Apostle’s own statements about the doubts he entertained about his own life, and what he admonished about persevering and being faithful until the end:

- “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway,” 1Corinthians 9:27. (Castaway is the Greek *adokimos*, one disapproved by the judge as not having fairly deserved the prize.)
- “All I want is to know [Messiah Yahshua] and the power of His resurrection...That is the way I can hope to take my place in the resurrection of the dead. Not that I have become perfect yet: I have not yet won, but I am still running, trying to capture the prize for which [Messiah Yahshua] captured me. I can assure you my brothers, I am far from thinking that I have already won,” Philippians 3:10-13, Jerusalem Bible.
- “Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves...” 2Corinthians 13:5.
- “For we are made partakers of Messiah, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end,” Hebrews 3:14.

Knowing exactly when the saints are saved will reveal the error of both the once saved, always saved doctrine and the popular understanding about being “born again” at conversion. Neither teaching is scriptural, based on what the Bible says about how and when salvation occurs.

How Salvation Actually Works

What few today grasp is that saving is a process, which starts with being begotten of the Holy Spirit at baptism and ends with being born again at the resurrection. An analogy about being saved is helpful here.

Let’s say a bush pilot crashes his plane in the cold wilderness of the arctic. Injured, he sends out an SOS, sets off flares, and radios for help. After some days he hears the distant drone of another plane. “I’m saved!” he cries.

But is he really saved? His exact location has not even been pinpointed by the rescuers.

What he means is that he now has the hope of being saved, the same thing Paul said he had in Philippians 3. He is technically not saved until he is safe and recovering in a hospital bed. For all he knows, his rescue plane itself may hit bad weather on the way back and be forced down. The ambulance picking him up at the airport may crash on icy roads. He may succumb to his injuries. All sorts of things could happen between now and the time he is in fact saved and on his way to recovery. As the popular expression goes, "It's not over till it's over."

Yahshua said that men would hate the truth, "but he that endures to the end shall be saved," Matthew 10:22. We may have hope of salvation, but it isn't assured until the "end"—either the end of our lives or the end of this age when Yahshua comes to gather His elect.

Why? Because at any point we could become apostate. We could fall from grace by slipping back into the world through its many sins and temptations. If that happens to us we are in jeopardy, because Yahweh does not save sinners. Rather, he saves those who have repented of sin and turned to walk in His ways. Yahweh said through the prophet, "But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he has committed, and keep all My statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die," Ezekiel 18:21.

We learn from 1Corinthians 3:16 that Yahweh will destroy those who once knew the truth but become defiled. "Know you not that you are the temple of Elohim, and that the Spirit of Elohim dwells in you? If any man defile the temple of Elohim, him shall Elohim destroy; for the temple of Elohim is holy, which temple you are. Let no man deceive himself." Even though the last verse of this passage, 23, says that we are Messiah's, Paul shows that the possibility still exists that we could fall.

We see abundant evidence in the Scriptures that even though we are called His, we can still become debased through our choice to sin, and therefore jeopardize our eternal reward.

Those that do fall through disobedience will be cut off. "Be not highminded, but fear: For if Elohim spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not you. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of Elohim: on them which fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in his goodness: otherwise you also shall be cut off," Romans 11:21-22. "Goodness" means moral excellence. To fall from moral excellence is to disobey, as verse 30 reveals ("have not believed" means to disobey, see ASV and Rotherham).

Justified and Sanctified: The Key

Most who hold to the eternal security teaching dread what they call "works salvation." They believe that Yahweh requires nothing of His people but faith alone. Any hint of the necessity of obedience sends them into paroxysms

of distress and incredulity. Certainly we are not saved by our works. The Scriptures are clear on that. We are not justified by keeping the law, Romans 3:20, but by His grace, v. 24. Justification means "just as if" we had not sinned. Nothing we can do will "earn" us righteous stand-

ing in His sight because we have all sinned and are nothing but filthy rags, Romans 3:23.

Once we are justified by His grace, however, then we are set apart for a holy purpose, which is called sanctification. Through sanctification Yahweh expects His people to live pure and righteous lives. “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of Elohim,” 2Corinthians 7:1. Notice the verse does not say, “Let Yahweh cleanse us,” but rather, “let us cleanse ourselves.” Live purely. Overcome the pulls of sin.

In the same vein we are commanded to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,” Philippians 2:12. If one is already saved, no fear and trembling would be necessary! Neither would there be a need to work out any salvation.

A sanctified individual not only lives a life apart from sin, but also is obedient to what Yahweh tells Him to do. “For this is the love of Elohim, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous,” 1John 5:3. He has commanded His people to keep His laws, including His Feasts and Sabbaths. They do so not because they are earning their salvation, but because they now live for Him and are in the process of taking on His very nature. We reflect His nature when we do what He would do and follow His direction. He is the Father and we His children. We obey Him just as we obey our earthly parents. We don’t obey our parents for a reward, but because they are our parents and they demand obedience. Our love for them makes us want to obey them.

Backsliders Will Slide on Out

Yahweh is adamant about the failure of those who once accepted Him but now turn back to sin. He will not save them in spite of themselves. He will, in fact, judge them!

The prophet Ezekiel warns, “But when the righteous turns away from his righteousness, and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All his righteousness that he has done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he has trespassed, and in his sin that he has sinned, in them shall he die,” 18:24.

Does this passage just apply to ancient Israel? Ezekiel and other prophets prophesied not only for their day but also for our day and beyond. Yahweh does not change, Malachi 3:6. What was true of His people anciently is true of His people today. He has but one standard. Paul said that all that happened in the Old Testament was for our example, 1Corinthians 10:11.

Backsliding is as hazardous to the people of Yahweh today as it was with Israel of old. Read in the New Testament Book of Hebrews, 6:4-6: “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, And have tasted the good word of Elohim, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they impale to themselves the Son of Elohim afresh, and put him to an open shame.”

Stark and serious words. To throw away the truth once you know it is as grave as it gets. Obvi-

ously such a result leaves no room for being eternally saved.

The Bible is filled with assurances that Yahweh will reward His chosen according to their deeds. Both an obedient life and a sinful life will be rewarded accordingly, Romans 2:6-9. The final book of the Bible shows that the saints are those who keep the commandments of Yahweh and have the faith of Yahshua, Revelation 14:12. Faith and obedience go hand in hand. Clearly, it is the obedient — who are faithful until the end — who are saved, Hebrews 5:9, and not those who flout His commands and live the life they choose still expecting a Kingdom reward.