

QUESTIONABLE PASSAGES ON ETERNAL SECURITY

There are many clear passages of Scripture that teach once a person is truly saved he can never be lost (John 10:29, 6:37; Rom. 8:1). One of the basic rules of interpretation of Scripture is to start with the obvious and clear teachings on a subject and then seek to explain the difficulties.

There are no passages that state directly that a person may lose his salvation; however there are some problem passages that when read hurriedly or not in context may appear to teach that once a person is saved he might later be lost. When dealing with any scriptural subject all the passages on the subject must be considered and then a proper conclusion must be drawn.

MAJOR CONTROVERSIAL PASSAGES ON ETERNAL SECURITY

John 15:1-6

1. Loss of Reward for a Believer. There are some who feel this passage is only directed to believers, for it says “*every branch in me*” (15:2). The “in me” refers to eternal union with Jesus Christ. The Christians (believers) who do not abide (remain) in Christ (temporal fellowship) are thrown into the fire and burned (15:6). This burning is not eternal judgment in Hell but is referring to loss of rewards for the believer at the Judgment Seat of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10 and 1 Cor. 3:12-15). The fruitless Christian will be saved but his works will be burned with fire and he shall receive little or no reward.
2. Professing Christians Who Fail to Produce Fruit. Others acknowledge that our Lord is speaking about the Christian’s union with Christ in 15:1-3, but in 15:4-6 the Lord speaks about a believer’s responsibility to abide (remain) in Christ by faith. In 15:6 the Lord seems to pass from possession to profession for He says “*if anyone does not remain (abide) in me . . .*” Through the use of “anyone” a more impersonal approach is made and refers to professors who really do not abide in Christ. These professors are cast into the Lake of Fire after death because their lives did not match up to their profession.

James 2:14-26: James is not teaching that one must work to stay saved or that when works stop loss of salvation occurs. His point is that a man who has genuinely been saved will evidence this salvation by works in the life. The true Christian will have faith and will have some desire or leaning towards good works in his life.

MINOR CONTROVERSIAL PASSAGES ON ETERNAL SECURITY

Passages Dealing with Professors: They were not believers and never possessed the person of Jesus Christ. They may have had, at one time an outward form of Christianity but did not have inward reality. They were whitewashed but not washed white (1 John 2:19; 2 Pet. 2:20-22).

Passages Dealing with Legalism: Gal. 5:4 - “*you have fallen away from grace.*” This passage is talking about falling away from the grace method of salvation by trying to be saved by keeping the Mosaic Law. This verse has nothing to do with loss of salvation.

Passages Dealing with False Teachers

1. 1 Tim. 4:1-2 - “*Some will abandon the faith.*” These are false teachers who were never saved who will depart from the orthodox faith (the fundamentals of the Christian faith) in the last days.

2. 2 Pet. 2:1 – *“Even denying the Sovereign Lord who bought them.”* If this passage refers to unsaved false teachers, then it simply means that Christ made a provision for their sins, but they were not saved because they did not believe in Christ. It does not say they are purchased out or saved. Another possibility is that this refers to what the false teachers were saying about themselves. They claimed Christ bought them but it was not true because their lives proved differently.
3. Jude 4 - The context tells us that these false teachers were never saved in the first place because they did not have the Holy Spirit (Jude 19).

Passages Dealing with Fellowship: 2 Pet. 1:10 - *“For if you do these things, you will never fall”* The Greek word for “fall” is stumble. This verse is dealing with man’s responsibility to prove his election. The “falling away” or “stumbling” may have reference to the necessity of persevering in the Faith once saved or to the possibility of getting out of fellowship with Christ as a Christian.

Passages Dealing with Extreme Divine Discipline: 1 Cor. 11:30-31 – *“eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.”* This definitely teaches physical death for a wayward Christian and many feel that 1 John 5:16-17 and Rom. 8:13 also teach this truth, although the latter two verses may teach eternal death for those who profess Christ but do not evidence with their lives the reality of Christ. The Bible does teach that there is physical death as the most extreme discipline for the rebellious Christian, but there is not loss of salvation.

Passages Dealing with Rewards: 1 Cor. 9:27 - *“I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”* The Greek word for “disqualified” means one who is tested and fails the test. In this context Paul is speaking about service, not salvation. He is not thinking about loss of salvation but being disapproved and not receiving reward from the Lord at the Judgment Seat. However there is a possibility that this refers to Paul’s great desire to evidence the reality of his salvation by personal discipline. He never thought he would be disqualified from salvation, but he was going to persevere to demonstrate that he wasn’t a castaway.

Passages Contextually Misapplied

Matthew 24:13: In context this verse is teaching that those who endure physically through the Great Tribulation shall be saved spiritually and enter into the Kingdom at the Second Advent of Christ. It also may mean that true Christians will prove their salvation by persevering to the end of life. Whatever the context, this verse teaches that all those who are saved will endure in the Faith until death or the coming of the Lord. Perseverance of the saints is a Biblical truth.

Ezekiel 3:20; 18:24-26: These passages are definitely related to the nation Israel not the Church. However the context must be dealt with. Ezekiel has been called to minister to an apostate Israel in captivity. Some were saved but many more were professors or rank unbelievers. These are warnings to those who professed righteousness not to apostatize and turn away from their righteousness. Ezekiel, when giving the warning, could only look on the outward appearances of men and could not know, except by their final perseverance, who was really God’s people. If these who professed righteousness apostatized, this gave evidence that they were never really saved in the first place.