

THE ETERNAL SECURITY TEACHING. By J. L. Stauffer

“Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall REMAIN in you, ye also shall CONTINUE in the Son, and in the Father.” (1 John 2:24)

What is meant by the “eternal security teaching”? Some ministers and Christian workers speak against it, others defend it. Those who hold it, claim for it a Biblical foundation. Those who oppose it do so with the Word of God. Is it a harmful or helpful doctrine? Will the acceptance of this teaching by Christian people result in strengthening or in weakening convictions on the “all things” of the Word of God? Will it aid or hinder Christian people in appreciating the so-called unpopular principles taught by Christ and the apostles that are so generally ignored by people “professing godliness”? Will sin look more hateful or less so to the one who embraces the teaching of eternal security? These thought stimulating queries should cause us to desire the truth on this live issue.

The Eternal Security Teaching Defined

There is perhaps no teaching that at first sight has a greater appeal to the sincere believer than this doctrine. There are expressions of the greatest loyalty to the Word of God. There is no teaching that apparently at first sight exalts Jesus Christ more than this does. The thought that we are eternally secure and as sure of heaven as if we were already there is inspiring, to say the least. Before we pass judgment, it would probably be better to allow the advocates of this doctrine to define their own terms, and tell us in their own words exactly what they mean:

Some Christians maintain that true believers may fall away and be eternally lost. Scriptures do not say so. The Scriptures declare that, in virtue of the original purpose and continuous operation of God, all who are united to Christ by faith will infallibly continue in a state of grace and will finally attain to everlasting life.-“Strong’s Systematic Theology.”

They whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, and effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally or finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eter-

nally saved.-“Westminster Confession of Faith.”

When a person is born from above by the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit he cannot be lost, because he has become partaker of the Divine nature, and also because God is able to keep him. -From “Bible Problems Fairly Met” by Grant Stroh.

The eternal security of the believer is a New Testament doctrine and cannot be applied to Old Testament believers, who were under a covenant of works, not of grace.... Not so with the believer, who is saved by grace, and his disobedience does not affect his salvation, but fellowship, peace, and growth.-C. I. Scofield in “Question Box.”

The sovereign and eternal choice of persons (Ephesians 1:4), infallibly secures all embraced in God’s election, and which believers now know (I Thessalonians 1:4). They cannot perish, for they were chosen in Christ before sin entered, or the course of human responsibility commenced, hence neither the state of the creature nor his doings can frustrate God’s eternal choice of individuals. If you are a child of God, you are that forever. The relationship is an eternal one. A failed and failing child has an advocate with the Father (I John 2: 1). Can anyone pluck the saved sheep out of the hand of the Son John 10:28)? Can man or devil pluck the believer out of the hand of the Father (v. 29)? Are not the Father and the Son absolutely one in counsel and purpose in the eternal preservation of every sheep (v. 30)? Is not eternal life the gift of God (Romans 6:23)? And the gifts and calling of God are without repentance (Romans 11:29), that is without change or recall.-Walter Scott.

In other words, the teaching may be summarized in the following way: that eternal life once received can never be forfeited by any act or determination of the human will; that eternal life is a gift and cannot be withdrawn; that if you deny eternal security, then you assert that salvation is by works, by means of human merit, and not by grace; that to deny eternal security is to belittle the finished work of Christ; that since believers become ministers of Christ’s body, if you deny eternal security, then Christ will have a mutilated body throughout eternity; that Christians may backslide, imperil their reward, lose their fellowship with the Master, but can never lose their salvation or go into apostasy.

Three Steps in the Eternal Security Doctrine

The eternal security teaching is presented in about three steps, occurring in logical sequence. No one who accepts the first step or presentation of the issue can avoid the other two that follow, unless he is awakened to its error. For the believer who has been reading his Bible and yet has not heard of the eternal security claims, to be approached with the full eternal security teaching at once, would be a shock that would result in his rejecting such claims. Evidently for this reason, the eternal security teaching is unfolded a step at a time. The three steps in their order of presentation to a convert to eternal security are as follows:

1. If a person is truly born again by the Spirit of God, he will not want to go out into sin. He is kept by God and is eternally secure.

2. If a person is truly born again by the Spirit of God, he may go out into sin, but since he is born again, God will certainly bring him to repentance again before He allows him to die.

3. If a person is truly born again by the Spirit of God, he is saved eternally, no matter how he lives and how he dies.

Christian people who are satisfied to abide by the Word of God will have very little criticism for the first step as stated above. The man who does not want to sin and trusts in the keeping power of Christ is certainly secure. The weakness in the first step is the fact that no conditions are admitted in connection with our keeping.

The second step is unscriptural because it throws the responsibility of the sinning saint's recovery on the Lord. Incidents will be given later on to show that man's free will enters in, and that God will do nothing in the salvation of sinners and the recovery of sinning saints that violates this God-bestowed attribute of personality.

The last step is the ultimate one that believers in eternal security will hold, if they are consistent with their avowed principles. Newly won converts do not get the "third step teaching" in the beginning. The very thought that a saved man is secure in sin would be repelling to a new disciple. As one grows in knowledge concerning the favourite arguments of the eternal security teachers and their mode of Biblical interpretation, he becomes reconciled to the third and final form in which this doctrine manifests itself.

Not Biblical Assurance

Eternal security is not Biblical assurance. Assurance is the right and heritage of every true believer in Jesus Christ. God intends that saved people should know that they are saved. The Gospel of John was written to show us how to be saved. The Epistle of John tells us how we may know we are saved. God in mercy withholds assurance from the believer who lives after the flesh and walks in darkness. Eternal security would emphasize the absolute security of the soul upon the basis that God has given man something that is eternal and unconditional. Christian assurance rests upon the promises of God, but recognizes the conditions of God's keeping. Our salvation rests upon Christ alone. Our keeping rests upon Christ alone. In each instance, however, certain conditions are laid down that dare not be ignored. Christ saves from sin, not in sin. Christ keeps from sin, not in sin. Following will be found a few of the many precious Scriptures asserting Biblical assurance: I John 3:2, 20, and 21; 2: 1, 17, 24; Romans 8:16; Hebrews 7:25; John 1:12, 13; 1 John 5:13; Jude 20:24.

Eternal Security Problems

The eternal security teaching seems to have originally grown out of such unscriptural teachings as limited atonement, unconditional election, foreordination and reprobation, and the perseverance of the saints. While many who have held these doctrines in the past have not used the term "eternal security," yet the Calvinistic term "perseverance of the saints" is recognized as adding to it. We readily admit that many now hold to the eternal security teaching (basing their faith on misinterpretations of Scripture), who are not acquainted with historical Calvinism and Calvinistic creeds. Advocates of eternal security differ much among themselves, but agree on at least one point, namely, that a believer once saved cannot be lost under any circumstances or conditions.

One of the problems facing the doctrine is the election problem. Has God elected certain ones from all eternity to be saved? Did God foreordain certain ones to be saved? If certain ones are foreordained to be saved, then others must be outside of the elect group, and they in turn are foreordained to be lost; those who are elected to be saved will be saved. Those who are elected to be lost will be lost. Neither can help it; they are the victims of God's sovereign choice of persons; the saints become such by "irresistible grace," not through any volition of their own.

We learn that God has “ordained to eternal life” certain ones, and that in consequence of His ordination, they, in due time, “believe”; that God’s ordination to salvation of His own elect, is not due to any good thing in them nor to anything meritorious from them, but solely of His “grace”; that God has designedly selected the most unlikely objects to be the recipients of His special favours, in order that “no flesh should glory in His presence”; that God chose His people in Christ before the foundation of the world, not because they were so, but in order that they “should be, holy and without blame before him”; that having selected certain ones to salvation, He also decreed the means by which His eternal counsel should be made good; that the very “grace” by which we are saved was, in God’s purpose, “given us in Christ Jesus before the world began”; that long before they were actually created, God’s elect stood present before His mind, were “foreknown” by Him, i. e., were the definite objects of His eternal love.

Has God foreordained certain ones to damnation? That many will be eternally damned is clear from Scripture, that each one will be judged according to his works and reap as he has sown, and that in consequence his “damnation is just” (Romans 3:8), is equally sure, and that God decreed that the nonelect should choose the course they follow we now undertake to prove.

From what has been before us in the previous chapter concerning the election of some to salvation, it would unavoidably follow, even if Scripture had been silent upon it, that there must be a rejection of others.... If there be some whom God has elected unto salvation (11 Thessalonians 2:13), there must be others who are not elected unto salvation.-From “Sovereignty of God” by Dr. Pink.

Others claim that volition enters in, also the preaching and influences of the Gospel, but wind up at the same place by saying that all these means are foreordained, even the volitional response is according to God’s decree. If I am a saint because of the sovereignty of God, rather than the grace of God, where is God’s honour? If, as the Westminster Confession declares, “God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will freely and unchangeably foreordain whatsoever comes to pass,” then neither the saint nor the sinner has any real or actual responsibility before God. But is not God the author of sin, if I am foreordained to be a sinner

and every act in my life is predetermined and foreordained by God? Wherein is God glorified through the life of the Christian, if it is not the result of a voluntary service and worship?

Another problem facing the eternal security believer is the question concerning infants. Most Evangelical Christians believe that all infants come under the provisions of the atonement of Christ until accountability arrives. The teachings of Calvinistic election and foreordination make it clear that there must be nonelect infants, if there are nonelect adults. How can one consistently hold the true Biblical principles and yet cherish such a God-dishonouring doctrine as foreordination and reprobation?

A third problem that the eternal security believer must face is that of the extent of the atonement. If God has foreordained that certain ones are elect, then Christ certainly did not die for all men as the Scriptures constantly affirm. Christ's death on the cross was sufficient for all, but is efficient only to those who believe. He "is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe. "If a limited atonement is the teaching of Scriptures, as Calvinists would have us believe, why do those who have it in their creeds not preach "the whole counsel of God" including reprobation?

A fourth problem concerns the sincerity of the offer of the Gospel to all men. Can we be sincere in announcing, "whosoever will may come," when only elect ones can come, and the others cannot, according to some eternal security teachers? Calvinists have wrestled with this problem for centuries. The present tendency among them is to abandon much of their creedal teaching along this line.

The writer is aware that many converts to the eternal security teaching did not think through all that this doctrine can lead to before they accepted it. The writer gives this as a personal testimony concerning a past experience in his own life. Many today hastily accept this doctrine, feeling that here is a new mine of truth that they have just discovered, but in reality it is an old mine that is largely abandoned, except the eternal security vein, which is still worked hard.

Errors of the Eternal Security Teaching

Reader, if you have become involved in this erroneous teaching, do not throw aside this article hastily. If you have the truth, it will stand investigation. If you do not have the whole truth, certainly as an honest and conscientious individual you should desire it. The writer (who once believed this doctrine) well remembers his reaction when accosted by well-meaning brethren who informed him he was in error in connection with this particular teaching. It is not according to human nature to relish the information that we are wrong. On the other hand, it is our friends, our real friends, who tell us of our errors. We shall endeavour to show that the eternal security teaching is erroneous from a number of viewpoints, while Christian assurance is a specific Bible teaching for the children of God.

1.] Eternal security as a teaching is based on partial Scriptures.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable.” The eternal security teaching magnifies the “verities,” but discounts the “ifs”; yet both are given by God and are equally inspired. Conditions of salvation and conditions of keeping are not named in every Scripture. Scriptures of warning are addressed to such believers as may be careless, indifferent, trifling, boastful, or presumptuous.

The usual group of Scriptures quoted by the eternal security believers are the kind that are needed to encourage and sustain the fearful, trembling, and weak saints who earnestly desire to do the will of their Lord, but are harassed by the devil and beset with doubts. “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed, was a “verily” as far as the statement was concerned, but there was an “if” implied in one of the promises of God. (See Jeremiah 18:1-12.) Such Scriptures as John 10:27, 28; Colossians 3:1-3; John 3:36; 5:24; Jude 24; Romans 8:34-39; Hebrews 7:25 and a lot of others that might be given are precious to every believer. They make it clear that we are safe in Christ Jesus. No outside power or influence, neither men, angels, nor devils, can come between us and our Lord; but there are conditions of salvation and there are conditions that govern our keeping. We do not question God’s sovereignty, His power, His omnipotence; we believe and hold to all of them. On the other hand as honest people, we dare not close our eyes to the fact that God has laid a responsibility upon free moral agents that He does not violate by His sovereignty, His omnipotence, His election, or any other office or attribute belonging to Deity. The condition

that saves is the same condition that keeps.

Eternal security believers constantly underscore “hath” in John 5:24 but overlook the condition, “believeth.” They will take John 10:27-29 and underscore the “never perish” and “no man is able to pluck them out of my hand,” but ignore the fact that this promise is made to the sheep that hear his voice and follow him. As long as this condition continues, the keeping continues. No other interpretation is consistent with free moral agency.

2.] Eternal security teaching wrests Scripture to establish its claims. It starts out with an unscriptural premise and is then compelled to give forced (and many times inconsistent and illogical) interpretations to some Scriptures to sustain the premise. The eternal security teachers will tell you that it is a New Testament doctrine, but they do not hesitate to gather “proof verses” from the Old Testament. They will declare that a troublesome Scripture in the New Testament, that stands in the way of maintaining their doctrine, belongs to some other age, or it may have been written to the Jews, and is therefore not applicable to the Christian believer.

a. They cannot find an appropriate New Testament Scripture to show that what God does, He does for ever, so they will quote Ecclesiastes 3:14. It is not sound Biblical exegesis to support a New Testament teaching by the isolation of an Old Testament text from its context as is done in this instance.

b. They will use Romans 11:29 to prove that the gift of eternal life is not subject to recall by God, but deny the right of anyone to use Romans 11:19-28, which is the context of verse 29 to show that the Gentile’s continuance in favour of God was conditioned upon faith. It is poor exegesis, to say the least, to use verse 29 to prove a doctrine for Christian believers and then deny the application of verses 19-28 to the same group.

c. They will quote Psalm 51:12 to prove that a believer loses the JOY of salvation” when he sins, but deny the right of others to quote Psalm 51:11. Let me quote from a pamphlet by one of the eternal security defenders: “One of the results of David’s terrible fall was the loss of his joy of God’s salvation. ‘Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation’ was his heart-broken cry ... David prayed, ‘Take not thy Holy Spirit from me’ (Psalm 51:11), but this was under the dispensation of the law. “Here you have two quotations from the same author and the same publication; a most unfortunate exam-

ple of playing fast and loose with Scripture. You have the startling paradox here that David was a believer who had the Holy Spirit, and further that David was in danger of losing the Holy Spirit, but could not lose his salvation, nothing but the joy of it. Reader, do you believe that David could have had salvation without the Holy Spirit?

d. They will tell you that Hebrews 6:4-6 does not describe a true believer, and then will misinterpret the various statements to confirm their claim. They will deny that the word “partaker” (meaning “having part with”) in this reference could mean actual connection with the Holy Spirit, but they accept the same word and allow the real meaning of the word without quibbling in Hebrews 3:1, 14; 12:8; 2 Timothy 1:8; 2 Peter 1:4.

e. They will attempt to show that the word “taste” in Hebrews 6:4-6 did not mean participation in salvation or to experience anything of salvation, but they accept the same word without reserve and allow it to hold that very meaning in Matthew 16:28; Luke 14:24; John 8:52; Hebrews 2:9; 1 Peter 2:3.

f. They will attempt to mar the force of the word “abide” as found in John 15:1-7, but will accept it without question when found in such verses as John 3:36; 8:35; 1 John 2:6; 3:14, 15. In John 15 we have the language of a parable. Christ is the Vine. He says so. Christians are the branches. Unfruitful ones are taken away. They were in Him in verse two. “If any man” is usually applied to an unconverted one, but the unconverted are not in Him. This message was for age-long application and so Christ simply said: “If any man [literally ‘any one’] abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch . . . and men gather them, and cast them into the fire.” Let us review the symbols. Christ is the Vine, Christians are the branches. Why should not the men (reapers) be the angels here like in Matthew 13? Fire in Matthew represents future punishment, why not the same here? Why insist upon symbolical language only where it fits the theory? Better adapt the theory to the Scriptures, than to attempt the reverse.

g. Eternal security teachers play on the word “eternal.” They say “that which is eternal cannot cease to be.” But eternal life had a beginning in the believer. It is the life of God. It is the result of union with Christ. Eternal life adds nothing to the duration of the believer’s existence. All men have eternal existence. Scofield says: “Eternal life is a phrase of quality of life, rather than of duration merely.” Can this quality of life end in the believer?

Has God given free moral agents something unconditionally that He cannot withdraw? The eternal security teaching so affirms. We believe the Scriptures state otherwise. Saints are always dependent upon God, even after receiving eternal life.

3.] The eternal security teaching, if true, makes it safe for a believer to live in sin if he desires to do so.

One who has just accepted the eternal security teaching will flatly deny this statement. In fact, the eternal security teachers will likely deny it also; but when pressed with the many problems that this doctrine develops, they will finally admit that a once-saved person though living in sin is safe as far as his eternal life and destiny are concerned. That my readers may know that I am not misrepresenting the doctrine, I shall give a few quotations from several different teachers:

But the relationship once formed by God Himself, is not maintained by a consistent life, nor can it be broken by unworthy conduct. Hence a child of God dying under circumstances of an ungodly kind has passed away into the presence of Christ under a cloud. But neither sin nor death can destroy a relationship which is necessarily eternal, because spiritual. Scott in "Holding On."

What then are the consequences of a believer's sinning? And particularly what are the penalties involved by conscious, deliberate, repeated, unconfessed sins, on the part of a child of God?

First, we shall consider the negative answer:

1. He does not cease to be God's child.
2. He does not forfeit eternal life.
3. He does not lose the Holy Spirit.
4. He does not become unfit for heaven.
5. He does not eternally perish.

Positive side:

1. His communion with God is broken.
2. His joy of salvation is lost.
3. His power for service is destroyed.
4. His witness for Christ is nullified.
5. His position in glory is affected.

6. His conduct will bring chastisement from the Lord.
7. His physical life is endangered.*

*I have quoted from the older edition of the pamphlet by Pink called "Sins of the Saints." It had been circulated for over ten years as above outlined, but the statement concerning the consequences of deliberate, repeated, unconfessed sins was too rank for many people, so the pamphlet was revised and reprinted, this statement being left out, but no note concerning the revision was ever placed in the new edition. In place of the objectionable preamble to the above points, the following is given: "But what of the one who is overtaken in a fault" (Galatians 6:1)? What of the one who really hates sin and resists it; who truly and daily endeavours with all his might to please God and glorify Christ, who actually does seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33), but who, nevertheless, is conscious that he offends in many things (James 3:2), what are the consequences of such sins in the believer?" Then follow the five negatives and the seven positives as given above. As now stated in the revised pamphlet, there is very little objection to it from a Biblical viewpoint. Later writings of Pink, however, prove that the way the tract appeared before its last revision, is the way Pink believes, and this is in harmony with the eternal security teaching in general according to their literature and addresses.

Dr. L. S. Chafer gives the following:

What if a Christian dies with unconfessed sin?

Answer: It is quite impossible that any believer knows, remembers, or has confessed every sin. Confession, after all, is but telling Him, and this could better be done, perhaps, in His gracious presence than otherwise.

In other words Dr. Chafer would tell us a person may die in his sins and confess them when he gets to heaven. It is true that no one remembers all his sins at the time of his conversion, but we confess our sinful state, and as the Holy Spirit convicts of specific sins we confess them and make restitution. If the Spirit of God would bring all of our sins before us at one time, it is quite possible the new born believer would be overwhelmed with despair.

Reader, what about the many danger signals and Scriptural warnings

found in the Word of God and addressed to believers? Does God warn where there is no danger? Is God less consistent and reliable than our state highway department? To accuse God of such folly is unthinkable.

It was written to Christians, “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die” (Romans 8:13). How can Christians continue to live after the flesh and remain secure in their standing before God?

“But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world” (I Corinthians 11:32). Here the purpose of chastisement for sin is stated. The object is to keep believers from being condemned with the world. If the chastened ones do not repent and turn from their sins, they will be condemned with the world. If eternal security were true, then these believers would be as sure of heaven in their sin as if they were already there, whether they repented or not.

“That ye receive not the grace of God in vain” (II Corinthians 6:1). Here is a possibility. Here is a warning to believers. Eternal security virtually denies that a believer can receive the grace of God in vain. Was Paul wrong?

“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in DEPARTING from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12). Is this an empty warning? Is there no possibility of departure here? Certainly one who knows not God, could not depart from the living God through an evil heart of unbelief. A sinner with an evil heart knows not God and is already far from God by nature. This warning was addressed to “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly @ling” (Hebrews 3:1).

“For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end” (Hebrews 3:14). Then follows an actual historical incident that is held up to us as a warning, Hebrews 3:15-19, d I Corinthians 10:1-12.

The excommunication of the sinning believer in I Corinthians 5 was designed for his repentance and restoration. Eternal security teachers declare this man would have remained saved, even though he would not have confessed his sin and forsaken it. Then we are face to face with the words that follow in the sixth chapter, verses 9 and 10. (1) If this man would have been saved without repenting of his fornication, then God would have had a fornicator in glory despite the testimony of about a dozen Scriptures to the contrary. (2) Or we will have to decide that fornication is no longer

fornication when committed by a saint, and then Paul was wrong in so designating it. (3) Or we are faced with the fact that this man needed to confess and disown his sin or be condemned. We are thankful he did the latter, according to 11 Corinthians 2:3-10, and again came into fellowship with his Lord.

Peter likewise sinned grievously in his denial of the Lord. Jesus had said: "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." For faith to fail would have been fatal, for we are "Kept by the power of God through faith." We are saved by faith and kept by faith. God does the saving and the keeping, but human responsibility is involved in the word FAITH. If there had been no possibility of faith failing in Peter, then Christ's prayer was unnecessary. If Peter's faith had failed, then Christ's prayer was not answered. That Peter's faith did not fail is evident from the effect that Peter's denial had upon him: "He went out, and wept bitterly." Peter Owned his Lord upon the first occasion possible, and confessed Him publicly before his fellow apostles.

Many of the eternal security teachers gave beautiful expositions of the Bible doctrine of non-resistance before World War I broke out. After the United States declared war, many of them allowed themselves to be governed by the cry of the multitude and sought by the Word of God to justify the awful carnage. One wrote a pamphlet of about one hundred pages entitled, "SHOULD A CHRISTIAN FIGHT?" In this booklet he characterized war as "butchery," "dirty," "hell," "denial of Jesus," "drunk with blood," "assisting the prince of hell, I'll murder," "idolatry," a modern Moloch," and many other names that were quite fitting to describe the awful carnage.

After a loyal Biblical discussion all the way through the book, with one small paragraph, he revealed his eternal security bias and discounted all he said in these words: "This truth (the unscripturalness of war) is the logical, practical, and inevitable application of what you have espoused so long and with such remarkable and God-given success. We therefore implore you with tears, now that the test has come, not to deny the faith through cowardice as Peter denied his Lord. This truth though not vital to salvation, is like many others, vital to future rewards." According to this teacher, war is murder and "ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him"; yet, according to his teaching, believers can murder their fellowman and go to heaven and lose nothing but some of their reward.

Reader, beware of a teaching that holds it possible for a believer to live after the flesh, follow the dictates of a hostile world, deny his Lord, and still be sure of heaven. The Gospel of Jesus Christ delivers us from the guilt of sin, the intercessory work of Christ gives us power over sin if we appropriate it, and His second coming will deliver us from the presence of sin. There is no security in sin for either saint or sinner.

4.] The eternal security teaching cannot consistently hold man to be a free moral agent.

Free moral agency (freedom to choose) and eternal security are incompatible. Our Lord said, "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel." Eternal security teachers declare that according to Ephesians 2:1 man is "dead in trespasses and sins." They say: "How can a dead man repent?" Yet they repeatedly say: "Believe, believe, believe!" We would like to inquire as to how a dead man can believe?

"Dead in trespasses and sins" is not the only description of the natural man. Man is an enemy. This suggests the hostility of a living man needing reconciliation. Man is said to be without strength. This suggests helplessness. Man is blinded by the devil and Christ alone can give sight. Man is a foreigner. Christ alone can make him a fellow citizen with the saints. Many other figures are used to describe man. If "dead in trespasses and sins" were the only description of the natural man, or of a man in sin, then we might feel that the Calvinist's interpretation was true and the denial of the free moral agency of man was 'justified, but since there are so many other terms used to uphold the teaching of free moral agency while emphasizing depravity, we have another evidence that eternal security interpretations are built upon only a part of the word. of a free moral agent, how can he be held responsible for his sin if he is not a free moral agent?

On what basis can God judge the world of men? If a man is not a free moral agent, but the victim of God's foreordination, then the responsibility for the existence of evil and of evil men rests with God. It is "begging the question" for a believer in eternal security to affirm the salvation of the effect and the reprobation of the nonelect, then to assert the free moral agency of man and thus create what we admit is a difficulty, but throw it

over on God by saying that it is one of the divine hiddenness, and mysteries that baffles our solution. God has not created the conflict

He does not need to solve the mystery. The mystery is with man, not God. How can man in the face of Scriptures be content to create such a difficulty? as found in

Read the following testimonies to the free moral agency in both Testaments:

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord. Isaiah 1:18.

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye. Isaiah 55:1.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden. Matthew 11:28.

I have set before you life and death, choose life. Deuteronomy 30:19.

Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Ezekiel 18:30.

Bethsaida had. See Matthew 11:21.

He that believeth ... he that believeth not. John 3:18, 19.

God gave them over. Romans 1:26, 28.

Every one of us shall give account of himself to God. See Romans 14:12.

Render to every man according to his deeds. Romans 2:6.

How often would I ... ye would not. Matthew 23:37.

God desires salvation of all. See 1 Timothy 2:4.

Ye will not come [not cannot come] to me, that ye might have life. John 5:40.

If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins. John 8:24.

As many as received him. John 1:12.

5.] The eternal security teaching denies the Biblical conditions for saving and keeping the believer.

The fact that man is a free moral agent is further proved by the conditions that are laid down for his salvation and for his keeping. Eternal security teachers cannot consistently hold otherwise than that those whom God has decreed to save, will be saved and that irrespective of conditions. But what saith the Scripture?

Repentance is a condition leading to salvation (Mark 1:15). It was the answer given to those who wanted salvation on Pentecost (Acts 2:38).

The following Scriptures make it clear that repentance is absolutely required of all believers in this dispensation: Luke 24:47, 48; Acts 8:22; 17:30; 11:18; 26:20.

Faith is another condition. The jailer was told, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31; Mark 16:16).

Confession of Christ openly is another condition (Romans 10:9-10). Other Scriptures make it plain that continued confession of Christ before the adulterous and sinful generation in which we live is absolutely essential to Christ's confession of us before the Father.

It is true there is no merit that contributes toward our salvation in any of these conditions. These conditions call for the confession of Jesus Christ and our disowning of sin. There is no merit in confession of sin or making of restitution. "By grace are ye saved THROUGH FAITH; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10). "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us" (Titus 3:5). "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ" (Romans 6:23).

I offer you a great and expensive gift. You have your hands full of worthless objects. You refuse to drop the trash and consequently refuse to accept the gift. So it is with God and salvation. On the other hand, suppose you drop your trash and accept the gift. YOU DID NOT MERIT IT BY PUTTING FORTH YOUR HAND, but you met a condition necessary to receiving the gift, and so with salvation. When you accept the gift you come into a covenant relation with God. A covenant implies a twofold responsibility. A covenant is a voluntary agreement, or it is no covenant at all. Can a man who has voluntarily come into covenant relation with God, also voluntarily withdraw from this relation? Eternal security says, "No." The Bible on the other hand teaches the possibility, because the same conditions that were essential to becoming saved, are also necessary to remain saved. The following Scriptures make clear that the Gospel of grace is a covenant as real as the Sinaitic covenant:

For these are the two covenants. Galatians 4:22-31.

He is the mediator of a better covenant. Hebrews 8:6.

Hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified.
Hebrews 10:29.

Jesus the mediator of the new covenant. Hebrews 12:24.

The blood of the everlasting covenant. Hebrews 13:20.

(This same Greek word is also translated “testament” in a number of instances.

This cup is the New Testament in my blood. Luke 22:20.

Able ministers of the New Testament. 11 Corinthians 3:6.

We cannot overemphasize the power of God, but we can under emphasize and ignore man’s responsibility. God cannot save a sinner independent of his meeting certain conditions. To do so would violate man’s free moral agency that is likewise of divine origin. For the same reason God cannot keep a saint independent of his meeting certain conditions. Let me illustrate by quoting four very precious Scriptures:

He is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.
II Timothy 1:12.

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost. Hebrews 7:25.

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling. Jude 24.

Who are kept by the power of God; through faith unto salvation. I Peter 1:5.

These Scriptures teach a condition. Eternal security holds that God and Christ have promised to keep them without condition and therefore the divine integrity is at stake if believers could be lost. There is no question here as to His ability to perform what is promised in every Scripture, but the will and cooperation of man is necessary in order for Christ to exercise His keeping ability. God’s continued keeping is dependent upon our continued committal, our continued coming, and our continued faith.

To prove that eternal security believers admit conditions in the language of Scripture where it does not involve their pet doctrine, I want to call attention to John 3:36: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath Of God abideth on him.” Eternal security believers underscore HATH, but ignore the

condition in the present, progressive tense of BELIEVETH. Note the more serious inconsistency, yea, wicked error.

If “believeth” is one act that assures eternal life, then with the same consistency and logic, believeth not would be the one act that insures eternal damnation. On the other hand, eternal security believers will tell you that IF the unbeliever does not continue in his unbelief, he can be saved, thus admitting a condition. How can they admit a condition in reference to the unbeliever and deny it with the believer? “Believeth” is a continuing condition and the believer HATH life only as he CONTINUES to believe. If no condition were associated with the unbeliever, alas, no one could get saved.

6. Eternal security deniestheBiblicalteachingonapostasy. “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (I Timothy 4: 1). A brother wrote me recently that it does not say “depart from their faith,” but “depart from the faith,” implying that these people were not true believers at any time in their life, and this is the position the eternal security teaching is forced to take in order to sustain its doctrine. But the people referred to here will depart from the faith because they are seduced and give heed to doctrines of demons.

You can’t seduce the unregenerate. They are already walking “according to the course of this world” and according to “the prince of the power of the air.” They are already “children of wrath.” Satan never ceased to dominate them. It cannot be people like this that the Spirit meant. The p Other uses of the word “depart” as found in Hebrews 3:12; II Timothy 2:19; II Corinthians 12:8; Acts 12: 10; 15:38; 19:9, always involve reality’

Eleven out of the twelve apostles were kept. God and Christ would have kept Judas Iscariot, if he had been minded as the others were. We do not have the space to give quotations from eternal security teachers in order to note the disposition that they make of this problem concerning Judas, but there is a unison of testimony among them that Judas was never a true believer, never really saved. “To the law and to the testimony.” We much prefer the testimony of Scripture to the evasions of eternal security teachers. If Judas was saved, then you have a clear case of apostasy. We believe Judas offers just such an example. It should be noted that the state-

ments that our Lord made about Judas being a devil, were made toward the close of His ministry. Note some Biblical facts:

1.] Christ chose twelve apostles, including Judas Iscariot. No intimations are made at the time of the choosing the twelve that Judas was not a true believer the same as the others (see Matthew 10; Mark 3; Luke 6). Reference to Judas Iscariot as the traitor is made by several writers of Scripture, long years after the incident of his death to distinguish him from the other Judas. It is a mark of identification and in itself throws no light upon the character of Judas Iscariot when he was chosen by our Lord. We have a similar designation regarding “Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin,” which throws no light upon Jeroboams’s character at the time the prophet Ahijah brought him the message from the Lord (I Kings 11:26-40).

2.] If Judas was a “devil” from the beginning as some claim, then you have the startling fact to face that our Lord chose a devil as an apostle.

3.] Our Lord foreknew who should betray Him from the beginning, but Judas had the same teaching, call, environment, and opportunity to make good as did the others. Divine foreknowledge does not interfere with man’s free moral agency.

4.] If Judas was a devil from the beginning, then such terms as were prophesied of him are hard to reconcile with the other teachings and principles of the Master. “Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me” (Psalm 41:9). Would Jesus, knowing Judas was a devil, trusting him or call him His “own familiar friend”? A “devil” is an adversary and enemy; but if, as some eternal security teachers think, Psalm 55 is a prophetic Messianic psalm of which Ahithophel turning traitor to David was a type of Judas turning against the Lord, then we have a second witness from the Psalms that it was not an enemy that reproached me. It was a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company” (Psalm 55:12-14). Certainly this language does not describe one who was a devil from the beginning, as eternal security teachers affirm.

5.] If Judas was a devil, while the other eleven were ordinary men, then you have another contradiction; viz., Satan casting out Satan, because the apostles Judas included) were sent out two by two to heal the sick, cast out

devils, and preach the Gospel. There is no intimation in the Gospel records that Judas was a misfit on this missionary journey. Other emissaries of Satan, when they tried to cast out a demon by the use of the name of Jesus, were not at all successful (see Acts 19:13-18). Christ made it clear that Satan does not cast out demons (see Matthew 12:22-26; Luke 11:14-23).

6.] It was not until at the last feast that the devil entered into Judas, although Christ towards the close of His Galilean ministry (John 6:64-71) announced that one of the twelve would betray Him. Christ was omniscient and knew all events that would be connected with His life here on earth. Covetousness, greed, love of money, were doubtless the besetting sins of Judas and despite the warnings of our Lord against covetousness and “the deceitfulness of riches,” these sins got the upper hand of Judas. He finally went to the chief priests, and of his own free will bargained about the sale of our Lord for silver.

7.] John 17 does not say that Christ only received eleven apostles from the Father. He chose twelve at the beginning of His ministry that they might be with Him, and Christ was unable to keep one. Not because of a lack of power on Christ’s part, but because Judas was unwilling and this limited Christ’s keeping power. “Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them [that thou gavest me] is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled.” The literal Greek of part of John 17:21 is “And no one of them has perished, except the son of perdition that Scripture might be fulfilled. “This implies that Judas was once saved with the rest, but not fulfilling the conditions for Christ’s keeping, perished spiritually.

The Scriptures prophesied that there should be a betrayer, and God foreknew that Judas would be he, but God did not foreordain Judas to be the betrayer of his Lord. If Judas, against his own will, was foreordained to be the betrayer, then the one who foreordained Judas would be responsible because Judas could not have helped it.

8.] Last, “Judas by transgression fell” (Acts 1:16, 17, 25). Judas was a man into whom Satan entered. He was no demon incarnate. If there were no erroneous doctrine to defend, the various references about Judas Iscariot would present no difficulty at all to the eternal security teachers. The Judas episode would be simply a clear case of apostasy from the truth.

Any teaching that deals so carelessly with the Word of truth should be

shunned. Any doctrine is false that tells you:

1. That Ananias and Sapphira as saved people could lie to God and the Holy Spirit and be smitten with divine judgment so that they died without repentance and were still sure of heaven. (See Revelation 21:8, noting particularly the words, “all liars.”)

2. That the prodigal son was safe, as a son, away from the father in the far country, although he himself declared he would perish if he did not return and the father said he was both dead and lost.

3. That tells you that you can make “shipwreck of faith” and still anchor safely in the harbour of heaven. Shipwrecks do not reach the harbour, unless salvaged (I Timothy 1:9).

4. That tells you the salvation of the fornicator referred to in I Corinthians 5 would have been secure; and that he would have reached heaven even though he had not repented; and despite the fact that the apostle Paul demanded his excommunication because he was unfit to remain in the fellowship of saints on earth.

Any doctrine should be shunned that so perverts Scripture and thrusts sin within the veil, on the pretext that grace is not a covenant, and that God has given an unconditional pledge to all believers to carry them through, no matter how grossly they may disregard His Word. Dear reader, let me entreat you to look well to the possibilities before nurturing a doctrine so alien to the spirit of the Gospel of the grace of God. If eternal security teaching is true, then the opposer of the doctrine who has had a genuine Christian experience will fare equally with the eternal security promoter. On the other hand, if eternal security is not a Biblical teaching-and we do not hesitate to say it is not-then the eternal security promoter will have a sad record to face in the judgment day because of the blood of lost backsliders who were made to believe that their salvation was secure in sin and backsliding when it was not.

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