

Unconditional Eternal Security

Fact or Fable?

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Each week millions of people file into thousands of churches across America and around the world, where they hear sermons telling them that it is impossible to live above sin. Although their pastors may encourage them to strive towards living a good life, they are reminded not to be overly concerned if they fail periodically. After all, a Christian is still human, and God expects him to sin a little each day. With regularity the words come ringing from the pulpit, assuring them that salvation is in no way dependent on a daily walk with God, but on a one-time acknowledgement of Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

Yes, the doctrine of *unconditional eternal security* has persuaded millions that it is impossible to lose their salvation once they have “made a decision for Christ.” Proponents of this theory point out that since we are saved by grace and not works, we are not required to maintain a relationship with God or make any attempt to conform to His requirements as part of our salvation. Teachers of this doctrine go on to say that the very fact that we are saved by grace precludes even the most remote possibility of ever falling from a saved state. For, they reason, if we were required to make any effort towards a continuing condition of salvation, we would be gaining it through works and not by grace.

The Bible does not teach the doctrine of unconditional eternal security! One can take a few isolated verses of Scripture and construct a doctrine that seems to imply such a condition. However, it is possible to formulate a multitude of inaccurate and totally absurd theories by using isolated verses of Scripture or taking Scripture out of context.

We find in II Timothy 2:15, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” When God’s Word is carefully read, correctly interpreted, and properly applied, it is easy to see that it strongly teaches that salvation is a day-to-day relationship with God, one from which a person can fall and return to an unsaved state. The Bible is replete with examples of people who once walked with God but allowed sin to enter in, and thus lost their salvation.

Hebrews 12:14 tells us that without holiness (victory over sin) it is impossible to be saved:

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

At the same time, II Peter 3:9 tells us that the Lord is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” With these two thoughts in mind, we must conclude that it is indeed possible for us to overcome sin, but if we have unrepented sin in our lives, we cannot expect to enter heaven.

The apostle Paul wrote in II Timothy 1:12, “For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

When Jesus Christ lived on earth, He was tempted in every way that you and I are tempted. Yet He remained free from sin (Hebrews 4:15).

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

The reason for the spotless life of Jesus was twofold:

1. To provide a blemish-free sacrifice for the sins of the world.
2. To set an example for us, showing us that we can live above sin. If the Holy Spirit is the motivating force in our lives, then we are ruled by the same Spirit that dwelled in the body of Jesus. Having the same Spirit will cause our actions to resemble those of Jesus. Being a Christian in no way isolates us from the temptations of the devil. In fact, the normal course is for the attacks of Satan to intensify once a person starts serving God. With the Holy Spirit in our lives, however, we have someone to fight the battle for us. We are told in I Corinthians 10:13:

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

But what if we should happen to sin after we have started our walk with God? Are we hopelessly doomed, with no chance of salvation? No, if we approach God with a truly repentant heart, He will forgive us. True repentance, however, does not find a person living a life that is one mad circle of sin . . . repent . . . sin. The person who continually falls victim to temptation does not have the Spirit of Christ abiding in him and guiding