

Eternal Security???

by Doug Hamilton

At the end of all of my small home group Bible studies, I ask if there are any questions. Recently a religious visitor posed a series of questions to me. The exchange went like this:

The Visitor: "If a Christian was in the act of a sin when Jesus came back, will they still go to heaven?"

My Reply: "Is the sin 'unto death' or 'not unto death?'"

The Visitor: "What do you mean?"

My Reply: John the apostle states in 1John 5:16-17 "If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not *leading* to death, he shall ask and *God* will for him give life to those who commit sin not *leading* to death. There is a sin *leading* to death; I do not say that he should make request for this. ¹⁷ All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not *leading* to death." Is this hypothetical sin 'unto death' or 'not unto death?'"

The Visitor: "What is the difference between the two?"

My Reply: "One is practiced and other is not. One is embraced and the other is not. John explained prior to this in *1 John 3:7-9 Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; ⁸ the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. ⁹ No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.* When someone slips in their faith and sins, does he get back up with repentance or does he embrace it? It is in the practice that one becomes perfected, whether good or bad".

The Visitor: "What if the Christian committing the sin of adultery was doing it for the first time, then is that a practice?"

My Reply: "I would not like to be that person on the Day of Judgment, for by the time he has reached that point, there has already been many practiced steps in place. This is why Paul stated in Galatians 5:19-21 *Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."*

The questioner was visibly puzzled. To me this was not too difficult a concept to grasp, a God expecting a believer's overall actions to line up with the statement of their faith. Something was blocking her understanding that faith without works is a dead faith (James 2:17). We can walk away from God if we so choose to do it. I asked the visitor if she believed that a person could fall from their faith or is it once saved always saved. To that she stated that a Christian cannot lose their salvation once they become a Christian. Bingo, roadblock found!

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The Calvinist Barber

Once upon a time there was a man that went to a barber for a shave. He said to the barber, "Give me the best and closest shave you can." The barber shaved his face up, down and sideways. It was the best shave the man ever received. He paid him well and went his way. A couple of days later the man's face still felt whisker-free. A few days after that, there was still no stubble. After another week with no facial hair growth, he became concerned and went back to the barber. He said with concern, "I know I asked for a close shave and you delivered, but it has been nearly two weeks and I have yet to grow any facial hair since. What did you do to me?" The barber replied that he was a Calvinist and believed in Once Shaved Always Shaved.

Obviously this logic might fit a fictional joke in a sermon, but it just does not harmonize with the whole word of God. There are hundreds of examples from the New Testament which confirm that it is not "Once Saved, Always Saved" when it comes to salvation. Here are just a few types of them.

Inferred Examples:

- In Matthew 13, Jesus taught the *Parable of the Sower* to communicate reception of the populace to the gospel. There was a sower that went out to sow, in this case the seed was the word of God (Luke 8:11). The seed fell among four soils, the wayside soil, the stony soil, the thorny soil and the good soil. All the soils received the seed, but only in the good soil was there a many-fold growth. A brief look at the explanation of the second soil points out something of interest.
 - The rocky soil hears and receives the word with joy, but in times of persecution and trials, falls away (Matthew 13:20-21).
 - Luke's account of the same actually states in Luke 8:13 "Those on the rocky *soil are* those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no *firm* root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away."
 - Jesus seems to believe that there are those who would hear the message, receive it with joy and believe it for a short time, but fall away in the end.
- Hebrews 3:18-19 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? ¹⁹ So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.
 - The Hebrews writer uses the example of the rebellious Israelites, whom believed, but never entered the rest because of "unning" their belief. They were on the right path, but fell short of it in rebellion.
- If and If Not Statements: There are many statements that mention the promises of God with the contingent "if". Here are just a few:
 - 1 Th 3:8 for now we *really* live, if you stand firm in the Lord.
 - 1 Cor 15:2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.
 - 1 John 1:7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.
- If we negate each if, then the proposed opposite becomes the reality. IF we don't stand firm, IF we don't hold fast and IF we don't walk in the light, THEN we won't live, we

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won't be saved and we won't be forgiven. There are many hundreds of examples of these in the Bible.

Direct References:

- James, in his letter to the Christians that were scattered abroad, wrote in *James 5:19-20* *My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back,* ²⁰ *let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.*
 - James recognizes that Christians can stray from the truth and end up risking their soul to death. This is a soul death, not a physical death.
- 2 Peter 2:20 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

Some Ways to Fall Away from Christ

1) False Teaching

- 2 Pet 3:17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness,
- 1 Tim 4:1 But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,
- 1 Tim 6:20-21 O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly *and* empty chatter *and* the opposing arguments of what is falsely called “knowledge”²¹ which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith.
- Hebrew 2:1 For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it.

2) False Thinking

- Hebrews 3:12 Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.
- Galatians 5:4 You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.
- Hebrews 10:12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.
- 1 Timothy 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

3) False Living

- Hebrews 10:26-27 For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES.
- James 1:13-16 Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. ¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. ¹⁵ Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. ¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

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- Hebrews 12:15-16 See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; ¹⁶ that *there be* no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a *single* meal.
- Revelation 2:5 ‘Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent.

SIMPLY PUT: We end up walking away from God. There is not one single passage in the Bible that teaches a Christian does not have the option to walk away from God. What do the proponents of this doctrine propose in response? As long as we are walking with Christ, not being perfect, but sinning not unto death, then we should have all the confidence.

- A person whom believes that the Bible is teaching a person cannot choose to walk away from God, then the struggle ensues over many verses written to Christians like the following:
 - 1 Cor 6:9-10 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.
- The only possible explanation for Christians whom take up these practices is denial of the practice or denial that the person was saved to begin with.

<Use the Night Auditor Story>

We can be confident in our salvation!

- Romans 8:38-39 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. **<Nobody can take us away from our God if we refuse them.>**
- Jesus said in John 10:27 “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; ²⁸ and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ “My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father’s hand. **<Nobody can pluck us out of the hand of Jesus.>**
- Philippians 1:6 *For I am* confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. **<Nobody can stop the work that God began in our lives if we will simply will keep hanging onto the cross.>**

We can have confidence in our salvation, confidence in our God and confidence in our Savior! Just keep pressing on to the mark of the prize of the upward call which is in Christ Jesus.