Do You Have Eternal Security?

The Doctrine of Eternal Security

In the very beginning, Satan convinced Eve that she would not die if she broke the commandment of God. Tempted by the Tree of Knowledge, she allowed herself to be persuaded that she could get away with sin, but she was wrong. Satan has been telling that same lie ever since, and people are still believing it. And it is still wrong.

I have found that most adherents for the doctrine of Eternal security depend upon either anecdotes or conjecture to prove their point, but I have attempted here to let the Word of God speak for itself. If anyone thinks that these scriptures may be taken out of context, then I encourage them to go to those passages. They will find that the context will not only support it, but will in most cases strengthen it.

I could fill pages with additional passages from the Bible to prove my point, but as Jesus said, if they will not hear the Word of God, they wouldn't believe it if someone came back from the dead and told them. Unfortunately, many people are going to believe what they want to believe in spite of the facts, and, as I have always said, they will use the Bible to justify it.

Grace is a word that has been thrown about so much it has begun to lose its meaning. Grace was never meant to be a "Get Out of Jail Free" card, a cheap and easy grace that is merely an excuse to sin while we mutter out a repetitious request for forgiveness that has lost any connection with true, heart-felt repentance. Grace is not an excuse for sin, but rather, the power of God to overcome sin. When we take that element out of the equation, we lose the true meaning of Grace.

An old friend of mine put it best when he said, "The only eternal security we will have is when we are secure in Eternity."

Arguments for Eternal Security

When discussing this doctrine with its supporters, there are four main arguments that are used. I'm sure there are others, but these are the ones that are presented almost all the time.

In several places in the New Testament, most notably in Ephesians 1:13 and 4:30, we read that we are "sealed" with the Holy Spirit, and "sealed" unto the day of redemption. The proponents of Eternal Security will use these scriptures to say that we are sealed like a Mason jar of tomatoes is sealed.

That is not the correct rendering of the original Greek word. The word is "*sphragizo*". It does not mean to preserve something; it means to put a mark on it, as an official seal or mark on a jar or a letter. We can have the mark of God placed upon us, but just as with having our names blotted out of the Book of Life (Revelations 3:5), you can also remove the mark that is upon you when you wash it with the corrosion of sin.

Another widely quoted passage is from Hebrews 13:5, "for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." This passage is not talking about sin or salvation. It is talking about provision. The same verse starts out with an admonition to watch out for covetousness and to be content with the things that you already have. Why? Because God will not leave thee or forsake thee; He will provide! There is nothing there about never losing your salvation.

The writer of Hebrews is referring to some passages in the Old Testament, but none of them support anything that suggests that you can never lose your salvation no matter what you do.

In Genesis 28:15, the Lord places a promise of blessing on Jacob that He will perform all that He has promised Jacob and will not leave him until He is done. In other words, God is going to perform His oaths, but when He is done, He is done. There is no promise of eternal security.

In Deuteronomy 31:6,8 and again in Joshua 1:5, God encourages Joshua that He will stand with him as He stood with Moses to perform His word to Israel. This is a promise to the nation of Israel, not a personal license to sin for Joshua.

There is one more reference in 1 Chronicles 28:20. Again, this is a promise of provision to Solomon that God will provide everything that is needed to build the house of God "…until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord." There is that little word, "until" that limits the promise such that, even if this was about sin, there is a limit to the promise. There is nothing here that supports the doctrine of Eternal Security.

A third scripture that is often used in the defense this doctrine is the passage in Romans chapter 8:35-39. The argument used that once we have been saved, there is nothing that can separate us from God. But just for a moment, let us take a look at the things that Paul lists: tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present or things to come. There is one thing missing from this list – sin! Paul never mentions sin because it is written,

"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." (Isaiah 59:2)

Sin is the one thing that will separate you from God. To think that you can sin and somehow God will overlook it is a dangerous folly.

One last argument that I have heard a lot comes from John 10:28, 29.

"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."
And
"…no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

The argument goes, of course, that God has a grip on you and He won't let go no matter what. You are GOING to heaven and nothing will tear you out of God's hand.

That is not what the scripture says. The conversation is between Jesus and the Pharisees about His disciples. Notice that He says that no <u>man</u> will be able to pluck them out. Again, this does not take sin into account.

Jesus makes a stark difference between the religious hypocrites and His disciples by saying that He will protect them because His sheep believe in Him, will follow Him, and know His voice. This is about separation and protection, not sin and eternal security.

The phrase, "*and they shall never perish*" certainly seems to make a strong case for Eternal Security unless we question the time period that Jesus is referring to. Those who have followed Jesus all the way and have made it to heaven will certainly never perish, but does this also include those who have turned away from following Him?

And what are the criteria for being selected to be part of this group that will never perish? Does it simply take a one-time sincere prayer of repentance to qualify us for this, or is Jesus referring to those who "endure to the end" (Matthew 24:13)? It is one or the other, and considering the great weight of scripture against "once saved, always saved", I will choose the other.

I'm sure there are other passages that are used to justify Eternal Security that I am not aware of. The argument has gone on for centuries and my purpose is not to continue the argument but to offer my answer.

While I may find this doctrine ludicrous, others have chosen to embrace it. I fear, however, that as the old saying goes, "people will believe what they <u>want</u> to believe, and they will use the Bible to justify it." I hope that is not the case with you, but that you will at least consider the weight of scripture that is presented here and prayerfully seek the face of God for wisdom.

If the doctrine of Eternal Security is correct, we can all hope for an eternity in heaven. If, however, it is not, the scripture that echoes in my head that I fear will have to do with many will be:

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matthew 7:22-23)

Hebrews 2:3

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him

[Not refuse; neglect.]

Hebrews 12:25

See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:

[This was to the Jews, who had crossed the Red Sea of Salvation and were considered God's people.]

Hebrews 3:12, 14

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the Living God … For we are made partakers of Christ, <u>if</u> we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.

[And what happens if we do not hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast?]

Hebrews 10:26-31

For if we sin willfully after that we have <u>received</u> the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, <u>wherewith he was sanctified</u>, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

[The Greek word for "received" means to take hold of, to grasp possession of. So this is those who have been saved, and yet have gone back to sin.

"Wherewith he was sanctified" denotes that this is to someone who had been saved and sanctified by the Blood, not just someone who had acknowledged the truth but had never gotten saved.]

Hebrews 10:35

Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.

[This is part of the above passage about sinning willfully after being saved. If you could not cast away your salvation, why admonish them to not cast it away?]

Hebrews 12:15

Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God;
[You can fail of the Grace of God.]

Hebrews 6:4-8

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

[This passage is talking to those who have experienced the real power and depth of Salvation but have fallen away.]

Matthew 24:13 & Matthew 10:22, Mark 13:13

But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

[The admonition is that you have to endure all the way to the end, and then you will truly be saved. And If you quit before then, what does that make you?]

Matthew 25:1-13

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish. They that *were* foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, *Not so*; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

[They were all virgins, which is always used as a reference to the virgin bride of Christ (as opposed to the whore church of idolatry). They were all expecting their Lord, all had lamps, signifying they were supposed to light the way, and they all slumbered – they were all the same -- but some made it in and some did not.]

Romans 2: 3-6

And thinkest thou this, O man that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? … Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

Luke 11:28

But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

[It is not the hearers of the Word that are justified, but the <u>doers</u>. Eternal Security disallows the necessity of keeping the commandments.]

Luke 12:46

The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will count him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

[This was the servant who was considered faithful and wise until he fell. He was a believer; but now he is sent to where the unbelievers end up.]

1 Timothy 4:16

Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

[You have to <u>continue</u> in that doctrine if you want to stay saved. You cannot quit before the end.]

2 Corinthians 7:1

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

2 Peter 2:20-21

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

[They had escaped sin and they knew the Lord and Savior, but they fell back into sin and now it would have been better that they had never gotten saved. What is worse than going to hell? Going to a hotter place in Hell because you knew the Truth and chose sin over the Blood of Jesus and thought you could get away with it because you believed "once saved, always saved"!]

Luke 9:62

And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians 10:1-11

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as *were* some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

[This is written for us so that we will know what He will do to us if we follow the same example as these Israelites who were also given the promises of the Promised Land, passed through the Red Sea of Salvation, ate of the manna and drank of the waters. If that is not so, then what example is he showing us?]

Revelations 3:5

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

[Your name can be written in the Book of Life and still be blotted out.]

James 1:14-15

But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth for death.

[Every man. That means Christians who are overcome by lust as well as sinners.]

Revelations 21:8

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and **all liars**, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

[All liars. That means Christian liars as well as unsaved liars.]

Ephesians 5:5

For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

[Again, there is no separation or distinction made for Christians who fall into the same sins. The designation here is made upon the sin, not the belief.]

1 Corinthians 10:12

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

[Again, Paul is using the Israelites for our admonition. They thought they were sealed in as the people of God, but they lost their inheritance because of sin. Paul is telling us that if we make the same mistake of thinking that we cannot lose our salvation, we will see the same results.]

John 14:15, 21-24

If ye love me, keep my commandments…

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me:

… If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.   He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

[We can talk all we want about our love, our faith, and our salvation, but the bottom line for God is whether we back up our words by keeping His commandments.]

1John 2: 3-5

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

[Eternal Security allows for a profession of knowing Him <u>without</u> keeping the commandments simply because at one time you had gotten saved, and that you now cannot lose that salvation. But here John tells us how we are able to tell whether we are saved or not – not by our profession of faith, but by whether or not we keep the commandments of God.]

Hebrews 12:14

…and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

[Not faith, not belief, not church, not religion … holiness, the keeping of the commandments of God.]

Matthew 19:17

… if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

[If that was not a condition for salvation, why would Jesus insist on it?]

2 Chronicles 15:2

And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.

[The same applies to us all.]

Ezekiel 33:13

When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.

[In other words, if you turn to sin, you lose your salvation. You made the choice and you suffer the consequences. This is why Jesus said many would say to him in the day of Judgment that they did many works, but he will say he never knew them because it was all forgotten when they turned from righteousness.]

Matthew 10:33

But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

Proverbs 16:17

The highway of the upright is to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul.

[IF you keep your way on the right highway, you preserve it. If you do not, you will not.]

Proverbs 14:8

The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit.

[The prudent man's wisdom is to take the precautions to understand the path he is on because he fears God and knows the dangers of sin. The fool, on the other hand, does not and his folly is that he has allowed himself to believe in the deceit that he does not have to worry or fear because he cannot lose his salvation.]

Proverbs 14: 9

Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favour.

[To say that we can still sin after what Jesus has done to deliver us from it, is that not mocking sin?]

Proverbs 14: 12

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

[Just because you think you are right does not excuse you from judgment.]

Romans 6:1

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

1 John 3: 6-8

Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil: for the devil sinneth from the beginning.

[The Greek for "committeh" is in the present participle, meaning a habitual practice of committing sin. Regardless of your profession of salvation, if you make that habitual choice, you are no longer of the Lord.]

1 John 3:10

In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God …

[If you sin as a habitual lifestyle of sin, you are not of God. It doesn't matter what your beliefs are. This is not a singular failure that you repent for, but a continual choice that you make to go ahead and break the commandments of God.]]

1 John 3:15

Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

[If this is about your brother, then John is addressing you as a believer, someone who is saved. If you hate your brother, you are do NOT have eternal life in you, neither do you have eternal security.]

2 John 1: 9

Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hat both the Father and the Son.

[Simply put. It is not contingent upon whether you got saved, but whether you stay saved.]

Colossians 1:23

If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel…

John 8:31

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.

[IF… discipleship is contingent upon obedience.]

Matthew 7:21

Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

[It's not what you say; but what you do]

Luke 13:24

Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

Proverbs 16:17

The highway of the upright is to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul.

[the opposite of preserving your soul is destroying it.]

Matthew 7:22

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works?

And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

[These were people who actually did things under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, which means that they had to have been right with God at some time but have lost that place in God.]

Jude 12

…clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.

[they had fruit, but it is now withered. They are twice dead - in other words, they were dead in sin, then got saved, and are now dead again.]

Revelations 22:19

And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

[If their name was in the Book of Life, then that means they had been saved, but if God has taken their name out, then they will not pass over the Great Judgment.]

2 Peter 1:10

Wherefore the rather brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

[This is literally, in the Greek, your invitation and selection. The things Peter is telling them to do are a list of virtues that define a Christian and will strengthen your stand as Christian so that you will not fall from Grace. If you cannot fall, why would Peter warn you about falling?]

Matthew 7:19

Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

John 15:2,6

Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

… If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

[These branches were at one time in the vine. The sap flowed through them at one time. But now they are no longer in the Spirit of God and have become dead branches that will now be relegated to the fire.]

Romans 11:19-22

Thou wilt say then, the branches were broken off, that I might be graffed in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, *take heed* lest he also spare not thee.

Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in *his* goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

[Continue in his goodness? In other words, you were saved. You cannot be cut off if you were not part of the tree. Paul is telling born-again Christian Gentiles that they can be broken off just like the unbelieving Jews were.

If your salvation were so secure that you could not lose it, then it would be impossible to be cut off, but Paul is warning them that if they do not CONTINUE in his goodness they will, not may, be cut off.]

1 Corinthians 9: 27

But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjections: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

[The Greek word for "castaway" means to be rejected and considered reprobate and abhorred by God. By this statement, Paul is admitting that even he can be lost if he does not stay in subjection to the righteousness of God. If Paul did not have Eternal Security, how is it that we think we do?]

Luke 22: 31

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

Matthew 4: 6-7

And saith unto him, if thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

[This is the same temptation Satan gave to Eve, that you can cross the line of obedience and still retain your salvation. But it is not so.]

Romans 14:12

So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Amen.

A HISTORICAL EXAMINATION OF THE DOCTRINE OF ETERNAL SECURITY by JEFF PATON

Almost every doctrine within the Christian religion has gone through a developmental stage resulting in what is considered orthodoxy today. Our understanding of many current doctrines are the result of heated theological battles that have sprung up and challenged the common thought of their day. The victor in these theological battles has always become orthodoxy, and the loser's position has generally become known as heresy.

Orthodoxy has been a fluid idea which the majority has held to be true. Heresy, it has been said, is an opinion held by a minority of men which the majority declares unacceptable. Upon this observation we can gather that "orthodoxy" is not necessarily "truth" since the establishment of truth is not to be determined by a popularity contest. In our modern age where "truth" is determined by the latest opinion poll, we can see the necessity of a "more sure" means of measuring what is the genuine orthodoxy of the Christian religion and what is not.

One principle that was brought forth from John Wesley was, "whatever is true is not new; whatever is new is not true." The only sure truth we can know comes from the Bible. If what we believe is a new and novel idea that has never been given any sanction within the Church, we must conclude that it is not the doctrine of the Bible.

Most Christians are very leery of the approach of modern day cults where an individual is elevated to the status of "prophet." The introduction of new "revelations" from God are supposedly given to supersede the doctrines of the Bible, the established teachings of the early Church, and the cumulative weight of accepted doctrine throughout all of Christian history. Some of these groups do not claim new revelations, but have based their speculative interpretation upon the limited information we have about the New Testament Church. In light of this, they insist that the modern church is corrupt. Their strategy is to decipher the New Testament and restore the church to its original condition. By doing so, they have chosen to bypass all of church history. The mistake that they make is not in their intent, but in their approach. The information we get from the Bible about the New Testament Church is vague enough that we cannot reassemble the original without the aid of extra-Biblical literature. Even with the aid of all the available resources, it is not possible for a 20th century mind to place itself into the unique culture and social situation in which the Church was birthed. Our Westernized understanding of Christianity can do nothing but interfere and distort our thinking of the original Church.

The best gauge that we have of what the early church believed is the record of the Apostolic Fathers. They were the first to have anything that resembled what we have today as the completed New Testament. Some were taught by the Apostles themselves, or were one generation removed. This does not mean that they were inspired, or that they were infallible, but in all probability they were more accurate in their understanding as to the essential nature and unwritten thoughts of the early church. This does not mean that they understood everything more fully that we can seeing that we have a complete Bible and 2,000 years of reflection on its truths. What we

can conclude is, that compared to us, they were probably more accurate in what they did know.

Anytime someone endeavors to trace the history of a doctrine they must decide on a method of approach. Some start from the beginning and work forward to show how the doctrine developed. Others start with the present, and work back, showing the historical connection with the past. Since the history of a doctrine can span such a large period of time, I will take a different approach, I will start in the middle. This I believe will simplify things for most readers. By doing this I will start Augustine, the Father of Western thought. It will be easier for most readers to identify with this reference point since his influence has had the greatest impact on our modern theology. I will trace the doctrine of eternal security forward from Augustine, and then I will trace it back from Augustine to the Early Church to show any influences upon his thought.

AUGUSTINE AND ETERNAL SECURITY

Many of our doctrines have developed from doctrines in their infant stages to what we know and understand today. This is the case with Augustine. He did not teach eternal security as we know it today, but he was a key figure in setting the groundwork that is the basis in which this doctrine could thrive. His influence on theology and Christian thought as a whole is without question.

This portion of the history of Eternal Security follows Augustine's influence on forward. The development of his thought on back to the birth of Christianity will be discussed later. What is important for the reader to know is that this influence exists before we take a look at whether it is a Scripturally sound influence.

We all have a paradigm on how we approach what we see in the Scriptures. We come to the table with pre-conceived biases that at times will determine what we see as truth from the Scriptures. The foundational beliefs and biases that many Christians have today are to be discovered in the roots of what Augustine has started. For this reason, "Saint" Augustine is referred to with great favor amongst most theologians. While most of these theologians agree with Augustine, many of them don't. All of them will concede his great influence on Christian thought.

Augustine, the bishop of Hippo, was born in Tagaste, in Numidia, on November 13, 354. He was raised in a divided household where his mother attempted to influence him with Christianity, and his father, also a Christian, directed him towards worldly and secular knowledge that could bring him profit. When he moved to Carthage as an adult, he took an interest in rhetoric and was influenced by the Manichaean error. He believed and taught these errors for around 9-13 years until he was influenced and baptized a Christian on Easter of 387 by Ambrose.

Perhaps there has been no one that has ever lived that has impacted the world of theology as Augustine has. He was a Roman Catholic, and is responsible for much of what we consider "Catholic" doctrine today. Surprisingly, he can also be credited with being a major player in Protestant thought also. Here is a short list, which shows many of the doctrines that he was credited with introducing into the church.

AUGUSTINE'S CONTRIBUTIONS

1. Absolute predestination
2. Impossibility of falling away or apostasy. (Eternal Security)
3. Man has no free will.
4. One cannot know if they are saved.
5. God commands impossibilities.
6. The supreme authority of the Roman church.
7. Purgatory.
8. Prayers for the dead.
9. The damnation of unbaptized infants and adults.
10. Sex is sinful because depravity is inherited.

The first five "contributions" may appear to be what is known as "Calvinism." This is exactly where the basis of Calvin's theory comes from. Points 6-10, do not fit the Protestant model of salvation in any way, it is Roman Catholicism. The question is, how can we accept the first five points that are listed in light of the egregious errors about salvation that this man taught that promotes Roman Catholicism? It is clear that his view of things is at best confusing, self-contradictory, and outright unbiblical at points. Because of this we must cautiously entertain what he taught with great skepticism. How can we blindly accept what he had to say when we know that he obviously was not clear about salvation?

This does not mean that everything that Augustine thought and taught is to be thrown out because of what he believed at other points. I believe the Catholic Church is in great error on the issue of salvation. However, I agree with them about the Trinity of God. Because someone is wrong in one point does not mean that they are wrong in all points, though they may be! I believe that while Augustine may have touched on truth in some ideas that are not listed above, I have singled out the preceding list as an example of what I believe to be his errors. The subject of why I believe that these are all errors will be covered later as I trace the thought of Augustine back to its source. For now, I only want to establish the starting point of these doctrines and to follow them where we are today.

Calvinism

John Calvin is a better-known figure to Protestants today. He wrote the most talked about systematic theology the world has ever known. His ideas have permeated the Protestant world and will perhaps do so until our Lord returns.

Calvin took the ideas set forth by Augustine and developed them even further. Instead of just touching upon the ideas of predestination, final perseverance, and the believers security, he developed an incredible system of thought that knows few rivals. John Calvin took the concept of Augustine and filled in the unanswered voids to form his theology. He followed these ideas to their logical end. If man is not free and God must predestinate, and all are not saved, then God must be Sovereign in salvation. This tends to ignore the fact that if God willed man to be free, and thus responsible for his own damnation, this would still mean that God is Sovereign. Sovereignty and predestination are in no way essential partners.

The acronym for Calvinism is TULIP. This is what is known as the "Five points of Calvinism."

1. Total Depravity (Free will lost) (3)
2. Unconditional Election (Salvation is decreed apart from any change in an individual.) (4)(1)
3. Limited Atonement (Jesus "paid" for the "elect" that he desired to save. No one else!) (1)
4. Imputed righteousness (mystical transfer of righteousness in place of our filthy rags) (5)
5. Perseverance of the saints. (Assurance, eternal security) (2) (1)

(A technical note: The official "I" in TULIP is "Irresistible Grace," which is tied to Unconditional Election. I use Imputed Righteousness because it is the logical progression of explaining "how" a predestined sinner (Points 1-3) is allowed into God's perfect heaven).

After each of the five points there is a number that corresponds to the previous list of Augustine. It is almost as if Augustine had most of the pieces of the puzzle and Calvin put them together and added the ones that he thought were missing.

Following in the footsteps of Calvin we have Theodore Beza who took the conclusions of Calvin to its logical end and developed what we would consider "Calvinism" today. We can attribute the development of the Calvinistic theory of the atonement around this later stage.

We can follow the trail of Calvinism throughout history, mainly through the Church of England and the Puritans. The Baptists held to this system quite consistently until about 1800. At this point there was a compromise on the issue of predestination and the extent of the atonement. This was perhaps due to the influence of the Wesleyan revival or possibly the New Light movement of Barton Stone and Alexander Campbell. For whatever the reason was, there was a definite shift in their thought around this time.

The most definite deviation from Augustine and Calvin, while holding tenaciously to their end conclusion, came with the entry of the theology of dispensationalism. J.N. Darby put this into motion with the Plymouth Brethren, and it was later catapulted into prominence with the revival associated with D.L. Moody.

The significance of dispensationalism to the development of eternal security lies in the approach in which they divide Scripture. They viewed God as having a different plan of salvation in different times or "dispensations." This seemed to give sufficient allowance to accept the "Biblical" idea of irrefutable security and free-will at the same time. At this point the idea of a Gospel that allowed all men freedom to enter into eternal life while at the same time denying them freedom in their eternal destiny afterwards, has come to full acceptance within 20th century Christianity.

To understand the impact of this shift we must look back to the high-Calvinistic theory. If you will observe, the logical conclusion of predestination to salvation is the unfailing salvation of the one who is elect. The fact that the elect will never fail or apostatize is in the fact that they were predestined. They are not free to do otherwise. The logical conclusion of the opposite doctrine is that salvation is conditionally based upon faith and available to all. This implication of free grace to all leads us to the inevitable conclusion that we are not "locked in" to salvation in any way. If

we take the position that we are given the opportunity to choose whether we wish to be saved or not, does this not infer that we are free to choose not to be saved at a later date? Eternal Security logically requires absolute predestination.

In fairness to the Calvinistic theory we must understand that they believe that a true believer will be evidenced by the fact that they "persevere unto the end" in the faith. Those that depart or fall away show that they were deceived and never really elect. Even though the Calvinistic theory of the perseverance of the saints is expressed differently than our modern idea of eternal security, it must be admitted that the logical outcome of Augustine's and Calvin's predestination inevitably demands an Eternal Security for the elect. In this the Baptist and dispensational teaching follows the line of thought properly, but misses the mark of logic and consistency when it denies the doctrine of absolute predestination.

If we are to follow this path backwards we cannot deny the dependence upon the ideas that preceded them. The path can vary a little on our way back, but inevitably it arrives at the doorstep of the man named Augustine. One cannot trace the doctrine of Eternal Security all the way back through the Apostolic Fathers and to the Scriptures. The doctrine had a specific time of arrival in history and it was around the beginning of the 19th century. Its beginning has its springboard taken from the absolute predestination and perseverance of the saints as propagated by the Calvinists. John Calvin himself was not the first to discover these ideas but found them loosely stated in the doctrines of St. Augustine. The trail ends here and does not have any endorsement of the early Church Fathers that preceded Augustine.

Where we are Today

It seems like most Christians today uncritically adhere to this idea of eternal security. It has been the predominate doctrine of the Church for the last 80 years and continues to gain strength. Looking at the basis of where we derive this doctrine from, we must ask ourselves as to where Augustine's comes from. If it is derived solely from the Scriptures, we must listen up and learn from his great observations. If it comes from an outside source we must question it and potentially discard it. Of the two options available to us I believe that the latter is the truth.

Up to this point I only wished to show you the theological connection of Eternal Security to the idea of predestination that was taught by Augustine and Calvin. To see this connection is vital and necessary in order for you to see that eternal security is a theological invention based upon theological presuppositions and not upon Biblical and historical examination.

If Augustine was correct in his conclusions about predestination, then he was correct in his determination about the security of the elect. The two doctrines go hand-in-hand.

The historical question confronts us; did Augustine derive his doctrine from the Scriptures? Or did he derive these conclusions from some philosophy outside of Christianity? Does he adhere to the teachings of the early Church Fathers on the subject? Or does he take a drastic deviation

from the accepted truth of historical Christianity up to his day? These are important questions for any believer who loves truth.

Augustine, the Manichaean

As discussed in the brief biography of Augustine near the beginning of this history we noted that he was a Manichaean for at least nine years before he entered the priesthood of the Roman Catholic Church.

Manichaeanism was a heretical sect that gained such popularity in Augustine's time that it nearly superseded Christianity. The founder of this religion was called Mani, in which the term Manichaenism is derived. He lived around 216-276 A.D. He set out to found a universal religion that was a combination of Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, and Christianity. The "Christianity" that Mani was exposed to was the Gnostic form of the religion that the apostle John wrote so vigorously against in his First Epistle. He interpreted the N.T. history in a allegorical and symbolical way which was made to represent an entirely new religious system that was totally at odds with Christianity and its fundamental teachings.

There is a question that confronts every one of us. When we concede to the indisputable fact that Augustine was the focal point in Christian history where several doctrines took an unprecedented shift to prominence, and from that point they became the standards in which to build our theologies, we must evaluate where these ideas actually come from. Are they truly expressions of Christian philosophy or Manichaean influence? This is not an unfair question since the introduction of several of Augustine's contributions were not accepted as orthodox Christianity prior to this time, but were associated with Manichaeanism and "Christian" Gnosticism; both being unbiblical heresies. Some historians have noted that they thought that Augustine brought this influence into the Church. Mainly, this was the Gnostic doctrine of the evil nature of matter and the purity of the spirit, (duality) and absolute predestination. Both of which are the basis and essential elements of the doctrine of eternal security that was to follow after centuries of development.

Because of his influence, much of Catholic and Protestant history has been founded on the belief that matter, (the physical body and its appetites,) are the embodiment of evil. This belief is undeniably Gnostic and not Christian. This duality that the Gnostics taught was illustrated by describing a pure golden ring as the spirit, and a pile of manure as matter, or the body. The ring can be put into the pile of dung and completely surrounded, but the filthiness of the dung does not permeate it. It remains as pure as it always has.

Augustine taught that the body, flesh, was the seat of evil and sin. This is why procreation was a sinful act in his mind. To this day I have heard eternal security teachers refer to the flesh as an entity that cannot help but sin, while at the same time they have asserted that sin cannot affect the spirit or the spiritual security of the believer. Gnosticism is alive today in those who propagate a salvation that makes the spirit pure, while maintaining the sinfulness of matter. The spirit is pure, but the body is sinful at the same time. A little Christian varnish may make this doctrine more appealing, but under the surface it is still pagan and not Christian!

One idea brought over from Buddhism is the idea that we are to die to "self." Being delivered from "self" might get us to Nirvana but not to heaven. The problem here is that the idea of "flesh" is thought of as the person, (self), which being matter, is therefore considered sinful. The Scriptures do not tell us that we are to be saved from "self." There is nothing wrong being the people we were created to be. God's qualm with us is not our "person" or "self"; it is our rebellion with Him. The thing we are to be cleansed from is not the "self," but the defilement and the filthiness of flesh. We are commanded "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Jesus Himself made the proper love of our "self" as a duty and a virtue when He said: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

There are many preachers that are mistaken when they teach that we "should die to self." It is true that we should not be selfish, but it is also true that "selflessness" does not save us or make us holy. The Bible reveals to us that there is no one more absolutely "dead to self" than the vilest sinner. They disrespect their own health and welfare through addictions to drugs and alcohol. They are dead to the voice of reason and conscience. They take no care for the future...they are dead to self.

It is an interesting fact that Romans chapter seven, where Paul cries out "Oh wretched man that I am! Who shall save me from this body of death!" was universally understood to be Paul's cry for conversion from Judaism before Augustine changed this defeated image of a convicted and hopelessly sinful man into the norm for the Christian life. He changed his own previously held interpretation of this verse (the historical position) in order to rob his doctrinal opponent Pelagius of a proof text. By doing so he changed the historically accepted meaning of this passage forever, and created a proof text that bolstered his belief in Gnostic dualism. The spirit is holy; the body is evil. The spiritual man is secure while the physical man remains hopelessly corrupt and sinful; holy and unholy at the same time.

Augustine had written refutations to Manichaeanism before he had to contend with Pelagius. It is clear that he maintained the portions that he thought were part of his upbringing in the Christian tradition. The difficulty comes in when we consider the type of Christianity that Mani included into this equation that Augustine draws from. It was Gnostic "christianity," the very one that the apostle John condemns and warns us about! (1 John 1:1-9)

Augustine thought that Pelagius had taken a heretical stance by saying that man can "will" his own way into the kingdom of God and does not need any special drawing of the Spirit to compel them. To counteract this argument, Augustine went to the extreme opposite end by drawing from the absolute predestination that he was taught as a Manichaean. He brought this belief over with himself when he became a Christian. This was the beginning of what was to become Calvinism and then modern day Eternal Security. Ultimately, the roots of Eternal Security are in the Gnosticism that preceded Augustine, but it was Augustine that has the unwelcome honor of leavening the whole lump.

Eternal Security is pagan in its origin and is a thought that is in opposition to the Bible and genuine Christianity. Its lineage cannot be traced back but a few hundred years where it draws its inspiration from the

"perseverance of the Saints" which in turn was drawn from Augustine's introduction of Gnostic and Buddhist thought into the Church. Eternal Security has a history, but not a very good one for the Christian who knows its origin.

May God save us from its falsehood.

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