

What is meant by “eternal security”? Some Christian teachers speak against it; others defend it. Those who hold it use the Bible to support it. Those who oppose it also do so with the Word of God. Is it a harmful or helpful doctrine? Will the acceptance of this teaching strengthen or weaken our conviction that we must practice all the teachings of the New Testament? Will it promote or hinder believers’ appreciation of New Testament principles that are generally ignored by most professing Christians? Will sin look more hateful or less to the one who embraces this teaching?

THE ETERNAL SECURITY DOCTRINE

This teaching at first sight often has a great appeal to sincere believers. It expresses loyalty to the Word of God and professes to exalt Jesus Christ. 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 passing judgment, let's 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.”

— Alexander Marshall, *Straight Paths for the Children of God*

- “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.”

— A. H. Strong, *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 eternally 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.”

— Grant Stroh, *Bible Problems Fairly Met*

- “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, *Dr. C. I. Scofield's 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 (1 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 (1 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

The teaching may be summarized as follows:

- Eternal life once received can never be forfeited by any act or decision of the human will.
- Eternal life is a gift that cannot be withdrawn.
- If you deny eternal security, then you assert that salvation is by works, by means of human merit, and not by grace.
- To deny eternal security is to belittle the finished work of Christ.
- Since believers become ministers of Christ’s body, if you deny eternal security, then Christ will have a mutilated body throughout eternity.
- Christians may backslide, imperil their reward, lose their fellowship with the Master, but can never lose their salvation or go into apostasy.