

On Eternal Unconditional Security

The doctrine of eternal unconditional security is derived from one of the tenets of Calvinistic teaching on soteriology, called the 5 points of Calvinism, with the acrostic TULIP; Total Depravity of Man, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace and Perseverance of the Saints.

The last point in these 5 will be the focus of this article, that is regarding the Perseverance of the Saints because this is where the belief "Once saved, always saved" came from. (Regarding the other 4, I might discuss it on future articles.)

The tenet Perseverance of the Saints says that the saints or the elects, since predestined, or chosen beforehand individually without any basis of the preference, but purely because of the will of God (the third point, Unconditional Election), to be saved, will be saved no matter what. Meaning those who have been predestined will never lose his/her salvation. The verse used to support this point is **Philippians 1:6**;

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Now, does this tenet harmonize with the entirety of the Bible?

This belief is called Eternal Unconditional Security of one's salvation. Eternal because according to the 2nd point of TULIP, the election of the individuals who will be saved, and the individuals who will be damned to hell, was already decided by God from the foundation of the world, and thus, the elect will be kept saved until eternity comes. Unconditional not only because the election was unconditional, or not based upon any conditions, or deeds, or requisites the elect has done; but also because even the keeping of the salvation of the saints is also not conditioned on them, but on God - He is the one who does the keeping, making the eternal life forever secured. As the passage in Philippians 1:6 indicates, a Calvinist or *Reformed* Theologian would say, God, who begun the work in the believer, will accomplish it, or complete it, until the coming of Christ. This would necessitate that no matter what the elect would do, at the end, he will still be saved, and salvation will not be lost, not because of what he does or does not, but because of God who keeps him.

Now, can one really not lose his salvation?

First, if no one will lose his salvation once saved, we must ask this question: Why were the epistles written? We know that the epistles (Romans up to Jude, or we may even include Revelation because it is a letter to the 7 churches) were written to the saints, the elect, and not to the unbelievers. They were written to instruct the saints, now that they were already saved, now that they were already part of the body of Christ, the church; on how to conduct their lives here on earth while waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. If no one really loses salvation, why would it be necessary to teach anyone how to live properly? Why would the Holy Spirit inspire the apostles to write these epistles and instruct the saints?

A Calvinist may say, this is so, so that the Christians may live a life, or that *ye may walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory (1Thessalonians 3:12)*. But why would it be necessary when God himself keeps the salvation, and we have no participation in it? And why would it be necessary for the saints to live a holy life before the unbelievers, if no matter what happens, those who were predestined to be damned would never come to the Lord? The epistles were written that the faithful may remain faithful to the Lord. Some of them were written, just like the Book of Jude, so that *ye should contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. (Jude 3)* For instance, the Letter to the Galatians was written by Paul since the Galatians, *“having begin in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh.” (Galatians 3:3)*. The Letter to the Colossians was written so that, *“If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister.” (Colossians 1:23)*. If salvation is secured eternally and unconditionally, why would the Colossians be moved away from the hope of the gospel? And why is there a need for the Apostle Paul to warn them?

Why would the apostle Peter warn the Christians to, *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour?”* If there is no possibility for the elect to be lost, why did the apostle warn them about being devoured by the devil?

Let's also look at these passages in the Bible:

Matthew 24:13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved

This chapter is all about the coming Great Tribulation, and when this time comes, who will be saved? Those who shall endure to the end. Meaning there will be many, who will not endure to the end, and they will not be able to keep their salvation. Here we can find a condition for a believer to keep his salvation, it is not eternally and unconditionally secured. The devout *reformed* may say, if they will not endure to the end, they were not elected in the first place. But that would put his argument in a circle. Will someone endure to the end because he is saved (or elected), or will he be saved because he endured to the end? If someone will take the verse and the Word of the Lord as it is without any preconceived tenet, the honest and correct answer would be the latter.

Matthew 25:1-12 The Parable of 10 Virgins

Here we can find the Lord telling the disciples a parable about a wedding, and we know that 5 of the virgins, or maidens, as what the Greek word *parthenos*, means were foolish; because they did not bring oil for their lamps, they were excluded from the wedding when the door was shut closed while they bought oil. Now, one would argue that these virgins do not represent the church but the Israelites, and that would be a different topic and we would not discuss it here, for the case remains true: whether church or the ethnic Israel, the foolish virgins here lost their salvation, for being foolish. Now there seemed nothing wrong with their calling, they were called just like the other 5 wise maidens. What's wrong is their conduct in waiting for the bridegroom – they did not prepare properly. In fact, that is the context of the parable, in continuation of the Olivet discourse in **Matthew 24**, that is, preparing for the coming of the Lord. They did not prepare so they lost their part in the wedding.

Luke 15:11-32 The Parable of the Prodigal Son

This well known parable is about a son who was already in his Father's house, but because of wanderlust, went to a far country, spent all his inheritance in riotous living, only to become basically a beggar, feeding on husks that swine eat. He decided to go back to his father's house, and was restored. Reading the whole chapter, we would know that this parable is about the Pharisees and the scribes murmuring because the Lord Jesus Christ received publicans and sinners to hear him and to eat with them (**Luke 15:1-2**). So clearly, the Father in the parable is God, the older brother is the scribes and Pharisees, and the prodigal son represents the sinners. Now, would it possible for the prodigal son to not come back to his father's house? Yes, if he did not realize his sin, he would not go back to his father. Verse 18, "*I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee.*" If he did not decide to go back to his father, he would have died in that far country, and he would have been lost forever. When he was lost, he was actually rendered dead by his father, verse 32, "*It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.*" He would have remained dead if he did not come back. What does this tell us? Someone who is lost can be lost forever, if he decides not to come back to God and repent. If he does not repent, is he a son? Yes, but a son forever lost.

John 10:27-29 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand.

Now this is a passage used to defend the tenet of perseverance of the saints. The subscriber to this belief would say that according to this passage, especially verse 29, the Lord give unto them eternal life, they shall never perish, neither any man be able to pluck them out of the hands of the Lord, and in verse 29, the hands of the Father (how is that so? Because verse 30, the Father and the Son is one, this could be another topic). Now, let us examine the passage. The context is about the sheep of the Lord, whom he knows, and follows Him. To them he gives eternal life. They shall never perish, as long as they hear their voice and they follow the Lord. Those who would not follow the voice of the Lord will perish of course! One could not say that a person who doesn't follow the Lord will not perish no matter what. We must continue to become sheep, we must continue to hear the shepherd's voice and we must continue to follow him to the end. As long as we do that, we shall never perish.

Now pertaining to the phrase *neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand*, we must note that to pluck, is the Greek word *harpazo*, the same word from which the term rapture came from, and it means to snatch away, to take away by force. This plucking out, or snatching away is an outside force. Once we are in the hands of the Lord, no outside force could take us out from his hands, just as **Romans 8:38-39** said, "*For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" It says other creature. No outside force nor outside creature can pluck us out, can take us by force away from the Lord's love, inside his hands. But what if just like the prodigal son, we wander away from the Father's house? Did the father force him not to go? Nor did he force him to go back? No He did not. We see here God's power and

gentleness. His love is too powerful that not any outside force will be able to pluck us out of it, not any power of the devil can pluck us out by force, but if we will go out by ourselves, God is too gentle that He does not force you to remain. Not that we are more powerful than God, but because He is gentle and good. And His gentleness allows for us to exercise our will. Can we go out on our own volition from God's loving hand if we decide to? Yes, if we decide to. We can prove that many times in the Bible.

Adam and Eve were already inside the garden, in perfect communion with God Himself, but when they chose to disobey God's command, they also chose to be cast out from Him. The devil cannot take them by force out of the garden. The devil deceived Eve, then consequently making Adam sin also, then by their own choice of disobedience, they have been cast out. We can also find that many times in the history of the nation Israel. Were they elect people? Yes. Were they chosen nation? Yes, very much so, but we see, their being chosen and peculiar treasure of God has the condition of remaining faithful to the Lord. **Exodus 19:5-6**, "*Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.*" And we know many times the Israelites were unfaithful to the Lord, so they have been punished and cast out of their nation. Yes, God remains faithful to His covenant, that one day He will turn back to the nation Israel His salvation. But those who have not been faithful along the line of history has been cast out. We can site examples like Achan, Saul and other evil kings of Israel and Judah, including many Israelites who worshipped Baal and other idols. Their sins and disobedience, which they did willfully and consciously earned the rightful consequence of being cast out of the covenant. The same thing with the church. The church was *predestined to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will* (Ephesians 1:5, *us* there pertains to the church as a whole), but if we as individual believers would wander away and not be faithful to the end, we will be cast out and will not be a part of this great plan the church was predestined to.

We see, God wants his people to love and serve Him, but there is no true love when there is no choice, or if done against the will. He will not let anyone or anything take us away from Him, but if we choose to disobey Him, we will lose this security and protection of His mighty hands. We can also find the Lord saying to Jerusalem in **Matthew 23:37-38**, "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.*" He would like to gather the people of Jerusalem under His wings, but they would not, they do not want to, therefore, the Lord let them in their desolation.

1 Corinthians 15:1-2 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

This is another verse that opposes eternal unconditional security, as the passage says, ye are saved, **if** ye keep in memory what I preached unto you. The phrase keep in memory is the Greek *katecho* which means to hold fast, or to retain, to stay, seize and withhold. We see here a condition for the continuous keeping of one's salvation, as indicated by the word *if*.

2 Corinthians 1:10 *Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;*

. Although the context may tell us that the Apostle Paul pertained to the perils they experienced Asia (verse 8), this alludes to the tenses of God's salvation, as the word redemption also has past, present and future indicatives.

Delivered us, this is in the past tense, those who have been born again has been saved from the effect of sin: this is justification. *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."* **2 Corinthians 5:17.**

And doth deliver pertains to present salvation. He delivered us from the sins of the past, and now He still delivers us from the sins in the present time until His coming: this is sanctification. *"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."* **1 Thessalonians 5:23.**

Will yet deliver us, pertains to future salvation: This is glorification or redemption of the body. As in **Ephesians 1:14**, *"Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."* In **Romans 8:23**, *"And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."*

We see here that salvation is a continuous process, we need to live it and keep it, as it did not stop on the day we received the Lord. Of course, this keeping of the salvation does not rely on our own power to keep it, but we rely fully to the power of God to keep us

Galatians 1:6 *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into his grace of Christ unto another gospel.*

As above mentioned, Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians, since they are being persuaded to perform the Jewish rituals and rely on them for salvation. So the Apostle wrote to them rebuking them that they have been removed from the Lord Jesus Christ. How have they been removed from the Lord, if salvation is truly eternally and unconditionally secured? It is because by their own decision, they followed these Judaizers instead of placing their trust and obeying Christ. If it had been possible for the Galatians, it would be possible for anyone to be removed from the Lord, if we will not take heed to the right doctrine.

Philippians 2:12 *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*

Here we are told that we must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Note, we do not work for our salvation, for it is God who worked it out for us, by His grace and love, He planned and fulfilled it, He paid the price for it, by His precious blood. So we don't work so to receive it, but rather, now that we received it, we need to work it out. The word work out is the Greek *katergazomai* means to work fully, to perform. Meaning the salvation we received we need to continuously keep it, until our

salvation be complete, the redemption of the purchased possession as stated by **Ephesians 1:14**, and **Romans 8:23**.

So this verse says we need to perform it, accomplish it, to keep it, to work it out, even with so much care and attention, as with *fear and trembling*, making it the most important thing in our lives. Does not it contradict Philippians 1:6, where it says God will be the one to perform it until the day of Christ? Who does the performing of the good work which God begun in us, will it be God or us?

The answer is both. It is a partnership. We don't rely on our own strength to do it, for it is the power of God that enables us to do it, nevertheless, we must perform it. He gives the strength, even the desire to do it, but we must work it out ourselves. This is confirmed by the next verse, Philippians 2:13, "*For it is God which **worketh in** you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*" While it is true we need to work it out, It is God who *worketh in* – He gives the power to do it.

Colossians 2:8 *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

This is another verse that opposes "once saved always saved". The Colossians were warned by the Apostle regarding philosophy and vain deceit, tradition of men and the rudiments of the world. False teaching was rampant along the region, since pagan philosophers have joined the church those times, and brought their beliefs to the Christian faith, and seducing many Christians to their false teachings. The word he used here *spoil* means to rob, to take away by force, to plunder, just as a victorious army can plunder the possessions of the losing side. So these false teachings can spoil the Christians, rob them of their reward, just as in Colossians 2:18, "*Let no man beguile you of your reward*". Here beguile means to disqualify someone by an umpire or judge, as in the games in their times. This indicates these false teachings the apostle was warning them against, can disqualify them of their reward, by seducing them away from the salvation through the gospel of Christ. If salvation is something that cannot be lost, this warning would not be necessary.

2 Thessalonians 2:3 *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;*

Here we find what will happen before the day of the Lord Jesus Christ, there will come a falling away first and the antichrist will be revealed. The term falling away means apostasy from the faith, or deflecting or forsaking truth. Who would be these people that would fall away or apostatize? These are believers or Christians that would be offended, deceived and whose love would wax cold because iniquity would abound and persecution would come (Matthew 24:10-12). How would they be offended if they were not sincere Christians? Why is the need for them to be deceived if they did not know the truth in the first place? How would their love wax cold if it was not aflame with fervor before? These are true believers who would not endure unto the end, and thus lose their salvation.

1 Timothy 1:19 *Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck:*

Here Timothy was told by the apostle Paul to hold the faith, be steady, stand firm on it, be not moved by anything, and also good conscience. And that there are others, like Hymenaeus and Alexander (verse 20), who put away these things and their faith have made shipwreck. Their faith was destroyed.

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.*

Here we see the great responsibility of a pastor or teacher of the Word, in that salvation is guaranteed for him and they that listen to him, if, he will take heed to himself and to the doctrine. We need to continue in the right doctrine, therefore continuing in the right lifestyle, for us to be continuously saved.

1 Timothy 6:12 *Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.*

Here we are told to fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life. We need to seize the eternal life, hold fast to it. Make sure we will not be spoiled or beguiled of this reward. Why the need to lay hold on it, if it is something that is eternally secured no matter what?

Hebrews 6:4-6 *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 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.*

Here is a clear picture of a believer that falls away or apostatize from the faith. It is very much possible to happen, and so a believer's salvation is not eternally secured unconditionally. We have to endure and remain faithful to the end. No one can argue that those who were described here are true believers, because:

1. They were once enlightened. They were no longer in the darkness. They were translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of the Lord, from darkness unto his marvelous light.

2. They have tasted the heavenly gift - that is the gift of the word of God, and all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (**Ephesians 1:3**)

3. They were made partakers of the Holy Ghost – they have been fully born again. They have been saved. They have been once sealed by the Spirit, they have been made partakers of his righteousness and holiness, even the very Spirit of Christ.

No doubt these are real Christians, but take note, the word *if they shall fall away*, as it denotes probability, and not impossibility. The choice to fall away is always there for every believer, and this we must not do, not that we cannot do, but that we must by the help of the Lord, we endeavor not to do. This is a solemn and serious warning, along with **Hebrews 10:26,29**, "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, Of how much

sooner punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"

Revelation 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.*

Here we can find that the overcomer (pertaining to the church of Sardis, but by application, to every believer), the Lord promised He will not blot out his name out of the book of life. We know that in the book of life is written the name of those who will be saved. But here we see that it is possible for our name to be blotted out from the book of life, and we must overcome for our name to not be blotted out. Because if the overcomer's name will not be blotted out, what would happen to those who would not overcome? The opposite would be the consequence: Those who would not overcome, their name would be blotted out from the book of life. We can also find somewhat of an allusion to this in the time of Moses, in **Exodus 32:32-33**, "*Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.*"

This is a long list of passages that stands in opposition to this tenet of Perseverance of the Saints, but it is surely not exhaustive. The point is that it is not in accordance to the whole doctrine of Scriptures. This doctrine is also dangerous, as this teaching simply removes the responsibility of a godly life off from the believer. And in a way, also removes the responsibility of sin off from the sinner's guilt, as if they just acted out their nature, and there is no guilt in that, much more than an animal acting out their wild instincts. Because for example, for a believer, why would I ever need to live in Godly fear and a life that is worthy of the gospel, why would I deprive myself from the pleasures of this world, if in any case, I will remain saved? This encourages believers to be neglectful and not serious of their spiritual lives, to compromise in the world, because anyway, I will still go to heaven since I am an elect. The result is generations of believers with pale spirituality and a false hope of eternal life despite it. We would be lukewarm at the most, and we know that is not enough as the Lord will spew us out.

This is a very popular tenet to subscribe to, as it is comforting and convenient. Convenient Christianity makes people comfortable, making them believe that half hearted service is fine. This theology does not require full commitment *to the Lord*, but demands full commitment *from* Him. This invites for licentious living among the believers, all the while removing Godly fear and hatred for sin.

Dear readers, we need to be careful about this teaching, we must fully adhere to the Scriptures, and must not take it lightly. We must shun sin and remain faithful in serving the Lord, and just as the Apostle Peter said,

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:" **2 Peter 1:10**