

## Non-Essential: Eternal vs Conditional Security

One way that many Christians divide (but shouldn't) is over the doctrine of *Eternal Security*. You may have heard this called *Eternal Perseverance* (if you read the KJV ;) or in English as, "Once Saved, Always Saved." The sides:

1. **Eternal Security** is "a teaching that asserts that once persons are truly "born of God", or "regenerated" nothing in heaven or earth "shall be able to separate (them) from the love of God." This is a traditional Calvinist doctrine "which argues that all men are "dead in trespasses and sins", and thus, apart from being resurrected from spiritual death to spiritual life none choose salvation of their own accord."

•**Unconditional Election ("U" in Calvinism's TULIP)** "is bestowed by God on the elect according to his sovereign decrees... Those chosen have done nothing to deserve this grace." (Calvinists, Reformed, Anabaptists, Presbyterians).

•**Free Grace** "emphasizes that people are saved purely by an act of divine grace that does not depend at all on the deeds of the individual, and for that reason, advocates insist that nothing the person can do can affect his or her salvation." (Free Will Baptists, Charles Stanley, Bill Bright/ Campus Crusade for Christ). *NOTE: Calvinists don't consider this in the same group. Typical.*

2. **Conditional Security** is the "belief that believers are kept safe by God in their saving relationship with Him upon the condition of a persevering faith in Christ." This doctrine allows the doctrine of *Apostasy*.

- **Arminianism** believes that "salvation (and condemnation on the day of judgment) was conditioned by the graciously-enabled faith (or unbelief) of man... That man has not saving grace of himself, nor of the energy of his free will, and unaided by the Holy Spirit, no person is able to respond to God's will... yet man may resist the Holy Spirit." (Springhouse, Pentecostals, Catholic, Methodist, some Baptists, Orthodox).

### What Does the Bible Say?

There are two key theological differences here about conversion:

- **Monergistic** "is the position in Christian theology that God, through the Holy Spirit, works to bring about the salvation of individuals through spiritual regeneration without cooperation from the individual."
- **Synergistic** "is the position of those who hold that salvation involves some form of cooperation between divine grace and human freedom."

There are two key theological similarities here about conversion:

- God initiates salvation.
- God is responsible for salvation.

Predestination is Biblical: “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will” - Eph 1:4

God is the initiator in the relationship: “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day.” – Jn 6:44

The difference is in what part (if any) we play in salvation. Did we have any choice? Could we reject God’s revelation?

Consider that first passage above in Ephesians. Just a few verses later, Paul continues his “predestination” talk with this, “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. *When you believed*, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.” (Eph 1:12-13, *emphasis mine*.) The key is what role belief plays in salvation.

No one can cause God to change his mind about our salvation and no one can take away our salvation: “*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* ...For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able

to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” – Romans 8:35a, 38—39 (*emphasis mine*)

### Can We Turn Away?

In the Old Testament there is a clear understanding that Israel (the believers in and followers of Yahweh, which now includes all Christians) could fall away. The whole Old Testament is the same story over and over of Israel turning away from God.

"Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the LORD our God to go and worship the gods of those nations; make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison. When such a person hears the words of this oath, he invokes a blessing on himself and therefore thinks, 'I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way.' ... The LORD will never be willing to forgive him; his wrath and zeal will burn against that man. All the curses written in this book will fall upon him, and the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven." – Duet 29:18-20

In the New Testament we see a couple of repetitive refrains about this concept of turning away. Jesus told his disciples (!) to remove whatever causes stumbling because it’s better to do without X body part than to burn in hell. (Mk 8:34-38, Mat 5:27-30, for instance.)

Jesus tells the parable of the seeds as well: “And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away.” (Lk 8:11-13)

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 11:3, “But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.”

In Acts 20:30, we are warned of wolves who will try to lead disciples away, “Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.”

### **The Unpardonable Sin**

Jesus tells us in Mark 3:28-29, “Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.”

What is this and can a Christian commit this sin? In a word: No.

This sin is the continual (unto death) rejection of the witness of the Holy Spirit that Jesus is who he said he is.

If God comes to you (Jn 6:44) and you realize who Jesus is and you persist in denying him you have committed this sin. You are choosing to reject the

witness of the Holy Spirit. That’s unforgiveable.

### **Eternal Insecurity**

What’s important to emphasize in this debate is why each group believes what they believe is totally Biblical! Calvinists emphasize the complete sovereignty of God (good!) while Arminians emphasize the responsibility of sinful mankind (good!).

How God “predestines” through whatever / none / all of these theological views is important but not important enough to divide over.

What is important enough to divide over is the answer to this question in Mark 8:29:

“Who do you say I am?”

### **Essential: The Godhood of Jesus**

In the last two classes, we have discussed how God has three main characteristics and that both the Father and the Holy Spirit meet the criteria for deity. God must be:

**Omniscient** – Knows Everything

**Omnipresent** – Everywhere / Everywhen

**Omnipotent** – All Powerful/ Almighty

## What About Jesus?

There are a lot of passages that support the deity of Christ, but the one I like the most is this one from John 1, which I will break down.

1:1,2 - In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. (*co-eternal with God*)

1:3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. (All powerful creator)

1:14 - The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (co-existence with God, begotten, which is to say made of the same stuff as.)

### Jesus called himself God (a Lot)

Why did the Jewish leaders want to kill Jesus? Because he called himself God and did things only God should do.

He was Lord of the Sabbath (Lk 6:5), forgave sins (Mk 2:1-12), God's son (Jn 10:34-36), the same as the Father (Jn 14:7), in charge of Angels (Matt 13:37,41-42), one with the father (Jn 10:30), eternal I am (Jn 8:58) and more.

Others called him God as well: Thomas called him Lord and God (Jn 20-26-29), Paul said he was in his very nature God (Phil 2:6), the Magi worshiped him (Matt 2:11), the women who found him resurrected worshipped him (Matt 28:9), Luke says that "God purchased the church with his shed blood" (Act 20:28), Paul says Jesus is our God and Savior (Tit 2:13), God the Father calls Jesus God! (Heb 1:8 "But about the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.'")

Jesus is "the image of the invisible God." (Col 1:15)

### Conclusion Questions

Can someone be a Calvinist, believe in Eternal Security and still be a Christian?

Can someone be an Arminian, believe in Conditional Security and still be a Christian?

Can someone believe that Jesus is not God and still be a Christian?

### Food For Thought (1 Cor 15):

"By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins...was buried...raised on the third day... if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ... If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied."