

## Eternal Security Debate

By Mark E Moore, PhD

1. In some ways it is a moot point. Some say you can fall away, others argue that an apostate was never saved in the first place. Neither, however, doubt the destiny of one like Judas Iscariot (John 17:12); Simon Magus (Acts 8:18-23); or Hymenaeus & Alexander (1 Tim 1:19-20).
2. We must be cautious here because we are generally judging others' salvation, not taking any warnings to heart.
3. Both camps can be justly criticized. Eternal Security for "lawlessness" and Apostasy for preaching "Eternal INsecurity."
4. Paradox is not a horrible thing. Let each text stand on its own even if you have difficulty blending or combining two seemingly paradoxical statements.
5. Our conclusion may depend on our starting point. (See Section 76a, p. 302, Ftn 18-19). Let each text speak honestly what it desires to say.
  - a. There are wonderful promises about the faithfulness of God in protecting his people (cf. John 10:28; Rom 8:35-39). God expends more effort on sustaining our faith than we generally give him credit for.
  - b. There are also some very clear warnings about abandoning our faith (Rom 11:20-22; Gal 5:1-4; 1 Tim 1:18-20; Heb 6:4-8). We apparently are given a choice to be faithful to God's covenant or to abandon it.
    - i. Love necessitates freedom of choice.
    - ii. Covenant necessitates fidelity to the terms. There are a number of imperatives in the N.T. connected with salvation:
      1. Repentance (Luke 13:5; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30-31; Rev 2:16, 22).
      2. Confession (Mt 10:32-33; John 12:42; Rom 10:9-10; 1 John 2:23; 4:2-3, 15).
      3. Immersion (Mk 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Rom 6:3-5; Gal 3:27; 1 Pet 3:21).
      4. Forgiveness of Others (Mt 6:14-15; 18:35; Eph 4:32; James 2:13).
      5. Calling on Christ's name (Acts 2:21; 22:16; Rom 10:13).
      6. Obedience (John 3:36; Heb 5:9; 11:8; 1 John 5:1-3).
      7. Works/Fruit (Mt 7:21-23; John 15:2; James 2:20-26).
      8. Love (Gal 5:6; 1 John 3:10-24; 4:7-21).
      9. Benevolence (Mt 25:31-46; 1 John 3:17).
      10. Remaining faithful unto death (John 15:6; Heb 3:6, 12; 10:23-31, 36-39; Rev 2:10, 26).

## JOHN 10:27-29

Sheep	Shepherd
They listen to his voice	He knows them
They follow him	He gives them eternal life
They will never perish	He protects them from thieves

1. We must be careful that this text not become a battle ground and lose its ability to comfort believers.
  - a. This is the clearest declaration in the Scriptures of the eternal security of believers. At the same time, it does not as clearly address the question of whether a believer can become a non-believer. Christians need fear no power in the universe which might separate him from Christ (Rom 8:35-39).
  - b. Yet a number of passages warn a believer to cautiously avoid falling back into unbelief (Mt 10:22; 24:13; John 15:1-6; Rom 11:20-22; 1 Cor 9:24-27; 10:1-13; Gal 5:1-4; 1 Tim 1:18-19; Heb 6:4-8; 10:26-31; 2 Pet 2:20-22; Jude 6).
2. This is an allegory in the middle of a heated and confrontational sermon. That fact should shape how we interpret the text. We should concentrate primarily on the major point(s) of comparison.
3. Sheep don't always listen to their shepherds. Every Palestinian shepherd knew the heartbreak of a sheep that wandered off and died.
  - a. Even Jesus knew that heartbreak with Judas (John 17:12; 18:9).
  - b. In Ps. 95:7-10 Israel is called the flock of God and yet was warned to listen to Him lest they be forbidden to enter His rest.
4. This text's original function was not to comfort but to rebuke. For those who are in Christ, these words could not be more comforting. For Jesus' present audience, they could not be more insulting.
5. Our perseverance in Christ is not solely or even primarily dependent upon our own efforts. Our Shepherd takes seriously his obligation to protect and keep his own flock. He is responsible for bringing us into the flock (John 6:44) and sustaining us in the flock (John 10:27-30).