

Eternal Security Arguments and Proof Texts

Dan Corner

This refutation to unconditional eternal security (UES) would be incomplete if the primary proof texts and objections offered by the UES proponents were not dealt with and explained from Scripture. The following are additional objections that were not yet dealt with in this controversy. (Already explained were Jn. 6:64; Rom. 8:35-39; 2 Tim. 2:13 and 1 Jn. 2:19. Therefore, they will not be dealt with here.)

OBJECTION #1. Jesus said, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, no one can snatch them out of my hand," Jn. 10:28. Therefore, if, having received eternal life, we could lose it and perish, it would make Christ a liar.

"Notice a triple promise here concerning the security of God's sheep. First, Christ gives them 'eternal' life. Second, they shall 'never' perish, and third, neither shall any pluck them out of Christ's hand."(26)

ANSWER: Jn. 10:28 is a wonderful and true promise, but only as Jesus meant it to be understood! We must examine Jn. 10:27 carefully to understand who "them" and "they" are in verse 28 and what the Lord was saying. It reads, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they FOLLOW me." This is the only type of person, the one that meets these conditions, that will "NEVER PERISH," according to the next verse!

Did you notice the words, "they follow me"? The word translated "follow" is a PRESENT INDICATIVE ACTIVE in the Greek, which asserts something which is occurring while the speaker is making the statement. In other words, as long as we remain faithful and CONTINUE to follow Jesus, He will, indeed, assure us that we will "never perish," v.28.

No such promise, however, is given here (or anywhere in the Bible) to one that would turn and start "to follow Satan" as Paul knew could and did happen (1 Tim. 5:15)! It clearly does NOT cover such. Some read into Jn. 10:28 the words, "under any circumstance" after the words "never perish," but they are NOT there! Jesus did NOT include them in his promise and neither should we!

OBJECTION #2. Can you be "born again" again?

ANSWER: This is a rhetorical question that has confused some. To be "born again" is the same as getting saved or believing in Jesus. Therefore, if one stops believing in Jesus, then later starts believing again, he did indeed get saved again, as Rom. 11:23 declares. Remember also the Prodigal who became "alive again" (Lk. 15:24,32).

OBJECTION #3. Those that truly get saved will faithfully endure to the end and never follow another.

ANSWER: This was not true with Saul, Solomon, Judas, the unnamed disciples of Jn. 6:66 and many others! Furthermore, Jesus clearly taught that one could "believe for a while" then fall away or die (Lk. 8:13)! Paul similarly taught that one could "believe in vain" (1 Cor. 15:2) and fall "away from grace" (Gal. 5:4). Therefore, the wishful position of the UES proponent here is, again, refuted by the truth of Scripture.

OBJECTION #4. "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life," Jn. 5:24. The verse says "will not be condemned." Therefore, one cannot lose it!

ANSWER: The word in Jn. 5:24 rendered "believes" is transliterated as PISTEUON and is also a PRESENT PARTICIPLE in the Greek. Therefore, the Lord is saying here that we must

CONTINUOUSLY BE BELIEVING the Father, that is, his testimony about Jesus, which implies that Jesus alone is to be the focal point of our TRUST for our soul's salvation. See Matt. 17:5 cf. Jn. 14:6. We will never be condemned, as long as we keep this condition -- a continued 100% trusting in Jesus for our soul's salvation.

OBJECTION #5. "The Bible Answer Man" is Hank Hanegraaff. He's on coast to coast radio, he can't be wrong! He wrote the following, "And remember, eternal life comes to the believer through faith in Christ is not life for two weeks, two months, or even two years; eternal life is everlasting life. It begins at the moment of conversion and stretches on through the eons of time." (27)

ANSWER: Hank is right when he writes that eternal life (or salvation) "comes to the believer through faith in Christ" and "begins at the moment of conversion." Also, it DOES remain everlasting (or eternal) life. That can't change. However, this doesn't necessitate that we can't be lost after we receive the "gift" of eternal life. In other words, eternal life is the "gift" (Rom. 6:23). As long as we have the gift, we have eternal life. Moreover, as long as we have spiritual life, it is everlasting, but according to Scripture a person once saved can still "die" spiritually (Rom. 8:13) and miss the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21)!

OBJECTION #6. We are made sons of God, not put on probation!

ANSWER: Yes, it is true that we become a son of God at the point of salvation (Jn. 1:12). However, "We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly TILL THE END the confidence we had at first," Heb. 3:14. This verse is also true! Better than the word "probation" would be to say: according to Scripture, after salvation, we are sons of God with a free will and the potential of still not inheriting the kingdom of God, because of certain sins, false doctrine about salvation and disowning Christ during persecution.

OBJECTION #7. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life," Jn. 3:16. Jesus said "shall not perish"!

ANSWER: The word "believe" is PRESENT PARTICIPLE again! Therefore, Jesus was promising only those that CONTINUE to BELIEVE on HIM the assurance that they "shall not perish." This verse does NOT cover others that just "believe for a while" then fall away, as Scripture mentions (Lk. 8:13). Remember, one can truly believe, but this doesn't mean he will always continue to believe on Jesus in the future!

OBJECTION #8. I agree with Dave Hunt who wrote, "Salvation is the full pardon by grace from the penalty of all sin, past, present or future...."(28)

ANSWER: Dave Hunt has done an excellent job exposing and refuting false doctrine and various forms of subtle deceptions that plague the church. However, regarding this subject, we disagree with him.

Yes, we are saved by GRACE. However, the rest of this argument is contrasted by Scripture! See Peter's advice to Simon (Acts 8:22,23); Prov. 28:13 and John's teaching on this subject as cited in 1 Jn. 1:9. This is the Scriptural basis for getting forgiven AFTER initial salvation. At salvation, all sin to that point is forgiven and forgotten (Lk. 23:42,43; 18:9-14; Acts 10:43-48; Psa. 103:12). However, all sins afterwards committed are NOT automatically covered! If they were, then Rom. 8:13; Gal. 5:19-21; etc. would be senseless! Furthermore, Jesus clearly taught that our future sins would not be automatically forgiven in Matt. 6:14,15!

OBJECTION #9. "...love for the one who saved us is the greatest and only acceptable motive for living a holy life...."(29)

ANSWER: FEAR, like love, is indeed a legitimate motive or reason for serving God! Jesus told the Twelve when they were about to go out: "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, BE AFRAID of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Hell," Matt. 10:28. Furthermore, Paul wrote: "...they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but BE AFRAID. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare

you either," Rom. 11:20,21. Finally, remember Psa. 2:11, "Serve the Lord with FEAR and rejoice with trembling."

OBJECTION #10. God wouldn't save a person then later send him to Hell.

ANSWER: This was not the case for Judas and Saul, the king of Israel! The real truth is God would never force a person to continue to follow Jesus even after his faith in Jesus produced salvation. Read and ponder Revelation chapters 2 and 3.

Furthermore, this objection is like saying, God would never give His Spirit to later take it away from a person. This, however, clearly wasn't the case for Saul (1 Sam. 16:14).

OBJECTION #11. Our fellowship with God can suffer, but never one's relationship as a son.

ANSWER: As "adopted" sons (Eph. 1:5), we can fall away (Lk. 8:13), lose our inheritance of the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:21), be disowned by Christ (Matt. 10:33), have our name blotted from the book of life (Rev. 3:5), have our share in the tree of life and New Jerusalem taken away (Rev. 22:19), "DIE" because we chose to live according to the sinful nature (Rom. 8:13) and as the Prodigal SON, become "dead" and "lost" (Lk. 15:24)! This obviously describes a much greater loss than just our fellowship with God (or rewards), as some would wishfully like us to believe!

OBJECTION #12. Those that are saved have an inheritance that can "never perish, spoil or fade -- kept in heaven" for us (1 Pet. 1:3,4).

ANSWER: This wonderful passage of Scripture only describes our inheritance as Christians. It doesn't say that we cannot annul it through our after-conversion activities and/or beliefs! In fact, just the opposite was repeatedly declared by Paul (Gal. 5:21; 1 Cor. 6:9,10; 15:2; etc.).

OBJECTION #13. Jesus prayed to the Father that He would protect His disciples and that none would be lost. Certainly, the Father heard Jesus' prayer!

ANSWER: The verse referred to is from John 17. This, however, is not a certainty of remaining saved! In the very same prayer, Jesus also prayed for "complete unity" among the believers (Jn. 17:24). Clearly, from 1 Cor. 1:10-13, this didn't occur. Therefore, there must be some unnamed, outside factor to consider here. Remember, it was Jesus Himself who told His disciples that they would have to "stand firm to the end to be saved" on more than one occasion (Matt. 10:22; 24:13) and to "REMAIN" in Him or be thrown into the fire (Jn. 15:4-6)! Also, according to Rom. 8:34, Jesus is now praying for us from the right hand of God. This, however, doesn't mean that His servants cannot be deceived by false teachers, grow lukewarm, fall into impurity, etc. His powerful prayers and our free will work together. Our free will can, however, override His incredibly powerful prayers and His will for us. This is also evident from the following: It is His will that none should perish (2 Pet. 3:9), yet most will perish (Matt. 7:13,14), in spite of His will! This is also the answer for the UES proponent who argues from Heb. 7:25 or Rom. 8:34 regarding Jesus' prayers for us now.

OBJECTION #14. "...if salvation from the penalty of breaking God's laws cannot be earned by good deeds, then it CANNOT BE LOST BY BAD DEEDS" (30) (emphasis his, but capitalized words are italicized in original).

ANSWER: This type of statement-conclusion must be carefully examined. Yes, it is true that we don't gain our salvation by good deeds, according to Eph. 2:8,9; Tit. 3:5; 2 Tim. 1:9 and Rom. 4:4-6. However, the conclusion is FALSE, according to MANY Scriptural passages. See 1 Cor. 6:9,10 and Gal. 5:19-21 just to mention two. Remember also the many other references cited in this study. (Also, let's call it "sin" not just "bad deeds.")

Please note that sins such as worry and unthankfulness are not listed anywhere in Scripture as being spiritually lethal, as drunkenness, greed, sexual immorality, idolatry, slander and lying are!

OBJECTION #15. A child cannot become unborn, and the relationship of a father and a child cannot be ended. Once a son, always a son.

ANSWER: This argument is based on natural fact, then applied to the spiritual, which doesn't always hold up as truth. (UES adherents frequently make this kind of mistake!) This type of error can be demonstrated by the following facts: Before we became Christians, we were all "children of the devil" (Acts 13:10; 1 Jn. 3:10) and "sons of the evil one" (Matt. 13:38). In other words, the devil was our spiritual father (Jn. 8:44). However, this spiritual father-child relationship changed at the point of salvation, according to Scripture! Aren't you glad that spiritual father-child relationships CAN be ended?

Furthermore, many UES adherents who know the fallacy of the deification of man teaching would be quick to reject one of their arguments which is, likewise, based on natural fact then applied to the spiritual! That faulty argument put forth by Earl Paulk is: "Dogs have puppies and cats have kittens, so God has little gods."(31) Therefore, this type of reasoning must be carefully compared with Scripture.

OBJECTION #16. "...I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day," (2 Tim. 1:12). The only way Paul could have made this statement for himself was if he believed in unconditional eternal security.

ANSWER: Paul certainly knew that a "know-so" salvation existed and that he had it. However, we can assume that Paul believed personally the things he wrote to others. This means that Paul knew his "know-so" salvation at the moment could be negated in the future, as already cited.

Furthermore, Paul obviously believed God would guard or keep him. However, he also knew about the human responsibility for this: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7). Here we see Paul believed in human responsibility too.

OBJECTION #17. A real Christian won't ever be condemned as Romans 8:1 reads, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus..."

ANSWER: This "no condemnation" mentioned in Rom. 8:1 refers ONLY to those that are in Christ Jesus! This can only be the case if we continue in the faith, for it's definitely possible NOT to remain in the Son (Jn. 15:6; 1 Jn. 2:24; 2 Jn. 9). Furthermore, the K. J. V. renders the "no condemnation" as conditional for only the ones who "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit"!

OBJECTION #18. Phil. 1:6 declares, "Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." This proves unconditional eternal security.

ANSWER: The New Testament declares this promise to be true ONLY in the lives of those who meet the conditions stated elsewhere in Scripture as in Matt. 10:22; Rom. 8:13; Gal. 6:8; etc.

Also, Phil. 1:6 needs to be understood in the light of the context of that book. Phil. 2:12 declares that this church group "always obeyed" in Paul's presence. Though not perfect, this was not a lukewarm, worldly church group, for not only did they "always obey," they were enduring the same types of struggles that Paul had (1:29,30), and they alone helped support Paul financially from the very beginning and were still doing so as this epistle was being written (4:14-16).

Besides the context of the book, the immediate context of the verse CLEARLY shows WHY Paul was so "confident," as he states in verse 6, which is really the whole basis of this favorite UES argument. Verse 7 reads, "It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart..." Note: The basis of the "confidence" mentioned in verse 6 was NOT a guaranteed eternal security which all Christians have in common! The basis of Paul's "confidence" mentioned in verse 6 was that he had them "IN HIS HEART" -- meaning they would be aided in their personal struggles by his heart felt prayers cited in verses 9-11. Note the same phrase mentioned in verse 6, "until the day of Christ Jesus" is repeated in verse 10 as "until the day of Christ," which connects Paul's "confidence" for them to his prayers for them.

OBJECTION #19. Samson was sexually immoral and he's mentioned as a hero in Hebrews 11. Therefore, one can be sexually immoral, like him, and be saved.

ANSWER: It's true that Samson is mentioned in Heb. 11:32, and why he was included in this chapter is mentioned in verse 34. This, however, has nothing to do with the conclusion that one can be sexually immoral and be saved. The Apostle Paul, in no uncertain terms, stated that the sexually immoral are wicked, impure, and God rejects who will NOT inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9,10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5,6; 1 Thess. 4:3-8). Furthermore, God Himself declared that the sexually immoral will go to the fiery lake of burning sulfur (Rev. 21:5-8). Samson, David and/or any living person today is no exception!

OBJECTION #20. Fritz Ridenour has done an excellent job showing the differences between Roman Catholicism and true Christianity in his book, in which he also cites 1 Pet. 1:5 for support of UES.(32) I believe both points.

ANSWER: Ridenour is absolutely correct about those differences between Catholicism and true Christianity, including their false plan of salvation, which has misled hundreds of millions of sincere Catholics into a dangerous, spiritual deception. For this he needs to be commended, especially in this day of rampant, ecumenical compromise with Catholicism for the sake of personal ministry. However, it's unfortunate that he would taint his excellent book by trying to support UES!

1 Pet. 1:5 says, "Who through faith, are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time." The key words in this verse are, "through faith." This verse shows the shield of protection that believers have exists ONLY as long as we keep the faith! The Lord taught this is certainly no guarantee, though, with His words, "They believe for a while, but in time of testing they fall away," Lk. 8:13. Also, Paul wrote, "But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either....sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off," Rom. 11:20-22.

OBJECTION #21. 1 Jn. 3:9 says, "No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God." This seems clear to me that someone truly saved can't go back to a life of sin.

ANSWER: In part, this verse deals with initial salvation, which frees one from sin's slavery and changes his desire for sin. However, to conclude from this verse that one can't go back to a life of sin is error as the Biblical examples of Solomon, the younger widows of 1 Tim. 5:11-15, those referred to in 2 Pet. 2:20-22, etc. show! "God's seed," His Word, impedes sin IF HIDDEN IN OUR HEART (Psa. 119:9-11). However, as one might not "remain" in the Vine (Jn. 15:6), God's seed might not "remain" in the person who gets born of God! If 1 Jn. 3:9 had the meaning the UES advocates give it, then Paul's multiple warnings to the Christians would be meaningless (Gal. 5:19-21)!

OBJECTION #22. I believe in UES because I believe in the finished work of Christ!

ANSWER: The unnamed writer of Hebrews certainly believed in the finished work of Christ also (Heb. 7:27; 9:26; 10:11-14)! This, however, didn't mean he believed in UES as well (Heb. 3:12-14; 6:4-6; 10:26-31)! The same can be said elsewhere about Paul (Rom. 6:10 cf. Rom. 8:13; Gal. 5:19-21; 2 Tim. 2:12; etc.).

Such UES proponents infer that it is impossible to believe in the finished work of Christ and not believe in UES at the same time, in an effort to immediately discredit the opposing view. Obviously, they are wrong, according to what was just cited. The finished work of Christ is foundational to Christianity, but irrelevant in this controversy regarding the believer's security.

OBJECTION #23. I know I am eternally secure because God has promised that He will never leave me and never forsake me.

ANSWER: This is quoted from Heb. 13:5b which is taken from the Old Testament reference of Deut. 31:6,8. Though God's promise to Israel in Deut. 31 verses 6 and 8 is that He [God] will never "forsake" them, about ten verses later in the same chapter God predicts Israel will "forsake" Him,

then in verse 17 He said, "On that day I will become angry with them and forsake them; I will hide my face from them, and they will be destroyed. Many DISASTERS AND DIFFICULTIES will come upon them, and on that day they will ask, 'Have not these disasters come upon us because our God is not with us?' And I will certainly hide my face on that day because of all their wickedness in turning to other gods." [This is a conditional promise, as the whole chapter bears out, which can be nullified by "wickedness." If we "forsake" God by turning to wickedness, He will "forsake" us!]

What does it mean then to be forsaken by God here? When this occurred, various "calamities" came upon them: wasting famine, consuming pestilence, deadly plague, wild beasts, vipers and sword, according to Deut. 32:23-25. Therefore, the UES people read into this Scripture found in Heb. 13 something that is not there, for it does not even deal with an assured and guaranteed entrance into the kingdom of God at all, but instead a promise for temporal protection and well-being only, which can be negated by sin!

OBJECTION #24. Samson committed suicide and he went to heaven because he is listed in the faith chapter. Therefore, we know Christians can likewise commit this awful sin and still go to heaven.

ANSWER: Samson did not commit suicide. His prayer shows he asked God to let him die with the Philistines, but left the matter entirely in God's hands (Jdg. 16:28-30). Unlike Samson, suicide victims decidedly take into their own hands the termination of their own physical lives. God honored Samson's prayer, but didn't honor Jonah's prayer for the same (Jonah 4:3) nor Elijah's prayer (1 Ki. 19:4)!

OBJECTION #25. If I'm wrong as a UES advocate, I want to be wrong because I overemphasize the infinite work of Christ on the cross.

ANSWER: This sounds like a good reason to accept UES or stay with this position. However, the infinite work of Christ, as just shown, doesn't relate to this controversy about the believer's security! In fact, many people who embrace once saved, always saved actually deny the infinite work of Christ by denying He died for every single person who ever lived. So, this is irrelevant to the issue! Truth is the deciding factor, which shows UES is a myth that holds its adherents in a false security with obvious spiritual disadvantages.

End Notes

26. John R. Rice, *Can A Saved Person Ever Be Lost?*, Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1943, p.21.
27. Hank Hanegraaff, *CRI Perspective*, Christians and the Assurance of Salvation.
28. Dave Hunt, *CIB Bulletin*, Christian Information Bureau, June 1989, Vol. 5, No. 6, p.1.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Earl Paulk, *Satan Unmasked*, Atlanta: K Dimension Publishers, 1984, p.96.
32. Fritz Ridenour, *So What's The Difference?*, Regal Books, 1984, pp.44,45.

Permission is granted to copy this chapter in its entirety for free distribution.

Address: P.O. Box 265, Washington, PA 15301-0265, USA

E-mail: gospel@voicenet.com

**Chapter 7 of the book, *The Believer's Security: Conditional or Unconditional?*
copyright 1994 by Daniel D. Corner, ISBN #0-9639076- 5-4**
