

**Discipleship:
An
Introduction to
Systematic Theology and
Apologetics**

Protestant Reformation Doctrines of Salvation

The Heights Church February 10, 2019

Reformed vs Arminian Soteriology – Preservation of the Saints Review

- Because of the clear teaching that every elect person is enabled by God to persevere in “true” faith to the end, it is certain that the elect could not commit the unpardonable sin.
- The Evangelical answer to what is the unpardonable sin is to attribute the works of Jesus to the power of Satan. Matthew

Note: Beelzebub was a Philistine god worshiped in the city of Ekron (2 Kings 1:2). The word *Beelzebub* is the Greek spelling of *Baal-zebub* meaning "lord of the high place. It was common in the ancient Middle East for a nation to demonize the god of its enemy. There is a phonetic similarity to the Aramaic word for Satan hence Beelzebub became a word for Satan .

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And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "by the prince of demons he casts out the demons." And he called them to him and said to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end... "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"-- for they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit." (Mark 3:22 – 26; 28 - 30)

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- The elect may experience times of doubt or even backslide into grievous sin. However, the true elect will always return to faith.
- When an apparent true believer falls away and does not return to faith it does not follow that the elect can lose their salvation but that the apparent believer had not been irresistibly called by God.

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. (1 John 2:19)

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- The ultimate confirmation of being of the elect is perseverance in faith to the end (death or the second coming of Christ).
- We must keep in mind we are never absolutely certain if an unbeliever or apparent believer who has fallen away will ultimately come to true faith.
- Nevertheless, Scripture does teach that a person can become so hardened that they cannot be saved:

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21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, **23** and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. **24**

Therefore, God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, **25** because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. **26** For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions... **28** And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done...**32** Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. (Romans 1)

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- Another verse that is often cited to challenge Preservation of the Saints is Hebrews 6:4 – 6)

For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. (Hebrews 6: 4 - 6)

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- Many interpretations have been suggested for this sober warning. The four most common are:
 1. It refers to “true” believers who permanently lose their salvation.
 2. It is directed against an unknown Judaizing heresy that if embraced would result in loss of all hope of salvation.
 3. It is a hypothetical warning that if a “true” believer fell away they would permanently lose their salvation **OR** This warning could also be an exhortation for “true” believers to prove their salvation by persevering.
 4. The warning is for those who have appeared to have made a “true” profession of faith and have been part of a local church. As such they have seen the work of the Spirit but not experienced it.

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1. Analysis: It refers to “true” believers who permanently lose their salvation.

This view does not fit with either the Reformed or Arminian Soteriology. The Reformed teach a “true” believer (the elect) cannot lose their salvation while Arminians teach a person may oscillate between a state of “true” belief and a state of unbelief as a result of Free Will.

2. Analysis: It is directed against an unknown Judaizing heresy that if embraced would result in loss of all hope of salvation.

Given the Jewish/Christian context of Hebrews, this view is possible but unlikely because it would be restricted to a heresy which is unidentified and may no longer be relevant.

- It could also be a warning to nominal Jewish Christians to not fall back into the rebellious apostasy that characterized the long OT history of the Jews.

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Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.' As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'" Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. **For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.** (Hebrews 3:7 – 14)

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3. Analysis: It is a hypothetical warning that if a “true” believer fell away they would permanently lose their salvation.
- Considering the warning to be hypothetical may lead some to not take the warning seriously. On the other hand it is by taking the warning seriously that a “true” believer remains in faith by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (Philippians 2:12 – 13)

- This interpretation has some merit but should not be taken as the primary intent of the warning.

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4. Analysis: The warning is for those who have appeared to have made a “true” profession of faith and have been part of a local church. As such they have seen the work of the Spirit but not experienced it in a saving way.
- Every local church has a group of people who think they are and appear to be “true” believers, **BUT** they are not saved. There is a false assurance that comes from this but in the end is reflected in the rocky soil in the Parable of the Sower.
 - Billy Graham often addressed this group of people by pointing out that church membership, baptism, confirmation, involvement in ministry and the like are not a guarantee of being a true believer.
 - Supporting this view is Hebrews 6:9 – 12 that shows this is not a majority problem.

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Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things--things that belong to salvation. For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do. And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. (Hebrews 6:9 – 12)

- Good works are evidence of true faith.

Reformed vs Arminian Soteriology – Does God Want Everyone to be Saved?

- Two basic facts that both Arminians and the Reformed agree upon:
 1. Every person in the history of the World has not been saved.
 2. The only way a person can be saved is to believe in Jesus.
- In many ways the Arminian view of Soteriology stems from a belief that God does want every person to be saved. Usually Arminians object to the Reformed view, not primarily because of disagreements over Scriptural interpretation, but out of a philosophical moral objection that election is unfair and that God must be absolved of blame for not saving everyone.
- By creating the concept of human autonomy through “Free Will,” God is not unfair because everyone has an equal chance to be saved and God is not responsible for those who choose not to believe or are not told about Jesus.
- Arminians have traditionally grounded their belief in God’s desire to have all people saved on 1 Timothy 2:1 – 4 and 2 Peter 3:9.

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First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for **all people**, for kings and **all who are in high positions**, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who **desires all people to be saved** and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:1 – 4)

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward **you**, **not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.** (2 Peter 3:9)

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- If these verses truly teach that God literally wants each and every person to be saved **BUT** not every person is ultimately saved, then there are at least four possible explanations:
 1. God wants everyone to be saved but lacks the power to accomplish it.
 2. The Bible is self contradictory because it teaches God wants everyone to be saved and teaches that God does not want everyone to be saved.
 3. God wants everyone to be saved in one sense BUT God has a higher priority than saving everyone.
 4. A literal interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:1 – 4 and 2 Peter 3:9 is incorrect.